

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, November 12, 2014, 7:30 PM**

MINUTES

Regular meeting begins at 7:30 pm or immediately following Closed Session, whichever comes last.

OPENING; ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order. Those present were Mr. Anderson, Mr. Avery, Mr. Lance, Mrs. Price and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia and Attorney Kevin Benbrook.

The **FLAG SALUTE** was conducted.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

Mayor Shoemaker read the following statement: Notice of this meeting has been sent to two newspapers of general circulation in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers, 3 minutes each

Jim Gilmore, Partridge Drive, spoke to the Committee about his qualifications as a Risk Management Consultant. He distributed a handout outlining the qualifications of Gallagher Bollinger in risk management services. Mr. Gilmore said that as Blirstown's Risk Management Consultant in 2011, he proposed changes that resulted in a savings to the township in the amount of \$93,000.00. He asked the Committee to consider appointing him as Risk Management Consultant in 2015.

Joel McGreen, Open Space Chair, spoke to the Committee regarding the letter he prepared outlining properties that the township may be interested in preserving as open space properties. Mr. McGreen included approximately 20 properties on his list. Mrs. Price said that the Tax Assessor indicated to her that some of these properties are landlocked and not good candidates for development. She would like to amend this list before sending it to the County. After discussion, it was decided that Mrs. Price, Mr. Lance and Mr. McGreen will work on this list before submitting it to the County.

Sylvia Zika, Four Corners Road, congratulated Mr. Lance and Mayor Shoemaker on their reelection to the Committee. She read a statement that indicated that she feels many residents are dissatisfied with the Committee's responsiveness to the public.

David Fine, Carhart Street, said that he was impressed with Sylvia Zika's campaign literature. He intends to support Mrs. Zika at future Committee meetings.

MINUTES

October 8, 2014 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the October 8th minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Shoemaker
 NAY – Price

CONSENT AGENDA

1 – R.2014 – 131 Authorization to Pay Bills

- 2 – R.2014 – 132 Authorization to Dispose of Police Vehicle
- 3 – R.2014 – 133 Requesting Approval of Items of Revenue and Appropriation – Second Chance Body Armor
- 4 – R.2014 – 134 Authorizing the Transfer of Funds
- 5 – Application for Blue Light Permit – Allen P. Bickhardt, Blirstown Ambulance Corps

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Clerk – October Report
- Finance – October Finance and Fuel Reports
- Fire Department – September and October Reports
- Police Department – October Report
- Tax Collector – October Report
- Municipal Court of North Warren – September Report
- Warren County Health Department – October 13, 2014

Mr. Anderson made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

- 1 – from Michael B. Lavery, Courter, Kobert & Cohen, re: Hardwick Township’s Intent to Rename Paulinskill Road to Ward Road

Mayor Shoemaker said that he will respond to this correspondence, stating that Blirstown will take action on renaming that small portion of the road to Ward Road after Hardwick takes formal action.

- 2 – from Jamie Oatley, Blirstown MOMS Club, requesting the use of Sycamore Park on June 20 and 21, 2015 to host car show

Ms. Oatley spoke to the Committee, indicating that the MOMS Club held this event two years ago and it was a success. Mr. Lance made a motion to approve this request, which was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

- 3 – from Richard A. Miller, Warren County Planning Department, re: Open Space Plan

Mayor Shoemaker advised that Mr. McGreen’s letter was in response to this communication. Mrs. Price clarified that she, Mr. Lance and Mr. McGreen will draft an amended list, which will not need to come before the Committee for approval.

- 4 – from Jason Sarnoski, Freeholder, requesting the establishment of an Economic Development Advisory Committee in Blirstown

Mayor Shoemaker explained that this letter is an invitation to participate in a meeting on November 13th. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss present economic development opportunities within the municipality. Mr. Avery and Mayor Shoemaker will attend this meeting.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

There were no comments on the General Correspondence list.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook reported that he has been in contact with the AOC with regard to transitional issues involved in moving our court to Knowlton Township. The main issue is the adjudication of tickets after the move. Mr. Benbrook said that the remaining transition issues are moving forward.

Mr. Benbrook reported that he has received no response from Service Electric Cable TV regarding the draft ordinance.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The free rabies clinic will be held on December 6th from 9am to 12pm. It will be held at the DPW Garage at 25 Lambert Road.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBER ANDERSON

Mr. Anderson summarized the Police Report for the month of October.

With regard to the container used by the sports organizations on the Walnut Valley field, Mr. Anderson reported that the Recreation Director is in the process of obtaining the proper permits to allow its use.

Mr. Anderson said that the formula used to reimburse private homeowners associations for snow plowing has been reviewed. Mr. Anderson said that the formula has been revised to include the cost of salt, which will result in an approximate 26% increase in monies refunded to the associations. A letter will be sent to the homeowners associations with notification of the change.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to amend the personnel policy to state that part-time employees who work 31 hours or more per week will be eligible to receive insurance coverage. This will allow the special police officers to work more hours per week without being eligible to receive health insurance coverage. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

Mr. Anderson proposed that the police department change over to the use of e-tickets beginning on January 1, 2015. Mr. Anderson said that the start-up cost is \$2,433.33 each year for the first three years plus \$0.28 per ticket. Mr. Gara explained the basics and said that e-tickets help to provide statistics to the department. Mr. Anderson made a motion to authorize the Mayor to sign an agreement for the use of e-tickets in the Blirstown Police Department commencing on January 1, 2015. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

Mr. Anderson reported that Brandon Sebastian has been interviewed to fill the position of a part-time special police officer, to be placed in the North Warren Regional High School. Mr. Anderson made a motion to hire Mr. Sebastian for this position, subject to successful results of background checks. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

Mr. Anderson reported that police contract negotiations are ongoing. The next meeting will take place on November 26th.

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery said that a new business was approved for location on Main Street by Land Use Board at their October meeting.

The Environmental Commission is working on the Jones Farm project with the State. They are also looking at solar savings in the municipality. There will be a roadside clean-up on November 16th on Route 94.

The Senior Citizens Advisory Committee recently held the sign-up for their Christmas Party scheduled for December 6th at noon. The Party will be at the Lions Club in Knowlton.

With regard to the Water Department, Mr. Avery would like to develop a procedure to address water users' concerns or problems with their water bills. Mr. Avery and Mr. Lance will work on this.

Mr. Avery reported that he and Nick Mohr will be addressing the problem of improving the sound system in the meeting room.

Mr. Avery said that the Economic Development group has been successful in cleaning up the small parcel of land next to the old bank building on Main Street. Mr. Benbrook was asked to look into a possible lease agreement with the owner of this property. They are also looking into improving the appearance of the wall in front of Nature's Harvest and the Blairstown Theatre. Mayor Shoemaker stated that someone offered to pay for the repairs to the wall if the township would be willing to replace the hand railing. Mrs. Price asked if making these repairs would increase the township's liability. Mr. Benbrook said that these are more than likely within the County's existing right-of-way, and if the County is consenting to our making the improvements, then they are responsible for anything within their right-of-way.

Mr. Avery reported that a donor has offered to provide WiFi to the downtown/village area of the township, if the township would pay for the four connections that would be required. Mr. Avery is unsure of the cost to the township. Mr. Avery will attempt to get more information by the December meeting.

Mr. Avery is taking suggestions for the new website to forward to our webmaster. There was a discussion on various items being requested by the Committee members.

The Givens Belet building is now being used by volunteer organizations for meetings. The floors will be sanded and finished in the very near future and there are plans to paint the walls.

The ordinance review committee is moving forward.

COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance reported that the Historic Preservation Committee conducted a walking tour of Main Street. The weather was bad but there was a huge turnout. The group is planning more tours in the future.

Budget requests will be sent out by the CFO by the end of the month, with an emphasis of no requests for spending increases. In January, the Committee can discuss the scheduling of budget meetings. Mrs. Price would like to have at least one workshop meeting with all members present to discuss the budget. Mr. Avery suggested the possibility of having several workshop meetings throughout the year.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PRICE

Regarding COAH, the status of the Memorandum of Understanding that was sent to the Housing and Finance Mortgage Agency is that it has been approved by the Department of Human Services and is now in the Deputy/Acting Attorney General's Office. It goes back to the HMFA for signature. At that point, we will receive the executed MOU. The township needs to indicate that we want the Arc of Warren County to be our developer.

Mrs. Price said that in speaking with Darlene Green, LUB Planner, she feels that it is necessary to make an adequate budget appropriation in next year's budget to cover administrative costs associated with COAH. Mrs. Price will be meeting with Theresa Tamburro, Municipal Housing Liaison, to review the reports submitted to the State to ensure that the State numbers vs. our internal numbers reconcile.

Mrs. Price would like to analyze the recreation programs files in order to obtain financial information that may lead to savings for the township. There was a question on whether confidential information was listed on the documents in question. After discussion, Mr. Benbrook said that any sensitive information, such as medical information, could be redacted.

There was a discussion on whether the Committee would be in favor of cutting programs if an analysis proved savings could be made. It was decided to complete the evaluation and make decisions based on the results.

Mrs. Price reported that the proposals on the sewer project will be coming in shortly.

With regard to the Water Department, Mrs. Price said that the water users expressed an interest in being charged by usage and she feels that this avenue should be explored. She also feels that the water budget should have a small amount of surplus and be able to cover its expenses. She would like to revisit the water ordinance and explore the methods of billing users. After discussion, Mr. Anderson made a motion to wait one year before considering a change in the water ordinance. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Lance, Shoemaker
 NAY – Avery, Price

Mrs. Price spoke in favor of putting out a RFP for the sale of the Water Department. She believes that the water and sewer issues should be looked at as a coordinated effort.

PROCLAMATION – November is National American Indian Heritage Month
Mayor Shoemaker read the proclamation in full.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker reported that he met with Lt. Losey and James Frick regarding the vacation of Park Street by the County and turning it over to Blair Academy. The major concern is signage. Blair Academy will be constructing signs on both ends indicating that Park Street is a private road and that it is not a through street.

Mayor Shoemaker said that a shared services agreement was sent to Knowlton Township for the services of a Zoning Official. Knowlton wanted changes made to the agreement, one of them being that they wanted the agreement to terminate on December 31, 2014, not December 31, 2015. Mayor Shoemaker said that this agreement appears to be off the table.

Halloween Parade was a huge success. The Rotary changed the route this year and Mayor Shoemaker felt more people were in attendance this year.

Carl Stoddart, DPW Foreman, would like permission to hire a part-time snow plow driver for the winter season. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to hire a part-time snow plow driver at \$18.00 per hour. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

Mayor Shoemaker announced that the Reorganization Meeting will be held on January 5, 2015 at 6pm.

Mrs. Price inquired about signage at Frog Pond Road. Mayor Shoemaker responded that speed limit and children at play signs have been ordered.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Rodman reported that the DEP conducted its stormwater audit and the township is compliant.

Mr. Rodman and the Environmental Commission are looking into solar panels to be placed behind the Municipal Building.

The repaving of Sandhill Road is being postponed because of the weather. It will be completed early next year. Mr. Rodman is asking for an incident modification to be signed by the clerk, which allows the project postponement and is required by the State. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize the clerk to sign the incident modification form, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Avery, Lance, Price, Shoemaker

Mrs. Price asked Mr. Rodman to modify the RFP for the sale of the Water Department.

FROM THE PUBLIC

David Fine, Carhart Street, spoke about the property next to the old bank building on Main Street. He suggested making the area into a small park.

Mr. Fine asked questions about the website. Mr. Avery said that he is the liaison and is working towards having the new website operating in a couple of months. Mr. Fine is in favor of making the meetings accessible to the public.

Mr. Fine asked where the township's funding came from in the absence of a municipal tax. Mr. Lance said that it came from the energy tax, which amounts to approximately \$3.1 million.

Mr. Fine is in favor of having all departments audited. Mr. Lance said that the municipality is required to be audited on a yearly basis.

Mr. Fine questioned why his water bill has doubled in the last three years. Mr. Lance said that the rates did not increase for years and that Mr. Fine is probably using more water.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, spoke in favor of the Recreation Department. She said that this department makes people happy and there will be ill will if services are diminished.

Regarding the Water Department, Mrs. Murray said that she is not in favor of the sale of the utility. She said that multi-national corporations are buying smaller companies and she feels that this scenario would be disastrous for Blairstown. Mayor Shoemaker reminded the audience that the Committee did not have the authority to sell the Water Department, and that a sale would have to go before the public to vote as a referendum question.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:35pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk