

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
Wednesday, April 13, 2011, 7 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 by Mayor Mach. Those present were Mayor Mach, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lascari, Mr. Seal and Clerk Pizzaia.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was conducted.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Mach 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.

**CLOSED SESSION – Professional Services Contract/Water Operator**

Mr. Seal made a motion to enter into Closed Session, which was seconded by Mr. Lance, with all members voting in favor.

WHEREAS, the Blairstown Township Committee needs to discuss matters relating to the issue as listed above; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee believes it to be in the best interest of the public to discuss this matter in Closed Session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Blairstown, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that it shall meet in Closed Session to discuss only the subject mentioned above, the results of which may be made public immediately thereafter or at a later date.

Dated: April 13, 2011

Attest:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk

## **RESULTS OF CLOSED SESSION**

Mr. Lance explained that the Committee interviewed a licensed water operator for the Water Company. He is Sean Casey from Stillwater, NJ. He has a great deal of experience in the area and is highly recommended. Mr. Lance made a motion to hire Mr. Casey with a start date of May 1, 2011 with a salary of \$18,000 per year. Mr. Lance said that he may have to start sooner, and if so, his salary will be prorated. Mr. Seal seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:                    AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach

## **NORTH WARREN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 2011-12 BUDGET PRESENTATION** by Brian Fogelson, Superintendent, North Warren Regional High School

Dr. Fogelson spoke about the final budget of the North Warren Regional High School. He said that the high school has been recognized as one of the top ten improved high schools in the State of New Jersey, an accomplishment that he is particularly proud of.

Dr. Fogelson spoke about the budget goals for the school, which include increasing academic achievement, keeping class sizes at current levels, and cost containment through reduced energy usage and further savings in transportation costs.

The 2011-12 budget includes capital projects, which include a continuation of roof repairs with a solar project. Phase 1 of the placement of security cameras is currently in progress. Also built into the budget is a continuation of the funding of the long-range facilities plan.

There are no increases in the spending lines of the proposed budget, with the exception of salaries rolled over from existing agreements, special education tuition and utility increases.

Christina Sharkey, Business Administrator, summarized the 2011-2012 projected revenues and proposed expenditures. Total expenditures in the 2011-12 budget are \$16,598,697, which a decrease of \$21,688 from last year's budget.

Dr. Fogelson spoke about the total budget and tax levy by year. Over the past four years, the tax levy increases presented by the North Warren Regional Board of Education were 0%, 2%, 2.87% and -1.46%. Most of the residents in Blairstown should see a decrease in taxes based on the school portion.

The School Election is April 27<sup>th</sup> from 2pm to 9pm. Dr. Fogelson urged everyone to come out and vote.

Mayor Mach thanked Dr. Fogelson and Ms. Sharkey for making the presentation on the proposed school budget.

**BLAIRSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2011-12 BUDGET PRESENTATION** by Mark Saalfield, Superintendent

Mr. Saalfield presented the Blirstown Elementary School budget. The maximum tax levy is \$6,396,534, which is Blirstown and Hardwick combined, and this is \$158,534 below Cap. The tax decrease with the proposed tax levy for Blirstown residents will be approximately \$40.00.

Mr. Saalfield outlined budget highlights, which include the fact that Blirstown Elementary is ranked No. 2 in the State of New Jersey with the lowest administrative costs of all K-6 districts, at 41.5% below the state average. This proposed budget will finance a much needed PF-2 reading program, the restoration of a full time librarian, an upgrade of the computer system and a new student information system.

The school has realized annual cost savings by utilizing shared services with surrounding municipalities and by creating and maintaining in-district programs for children with disabilities rather than sending them out of district. The school system will continue to look for additional ways to save money by sharing services and creating partnerships.

Mr. Saalfield acknowledged the importance of the PTG organization, which assists the school through their volunteer efforts.

Mr. Saalfield outlined the consequences of a failed budget vote, which would include further reduction in hours for the librarian, elimination of pre-first classroom aides, reduction of the physical education staff, and the cancellation of all non-instructional projects.

The school is also working on energy efficiency measures to cut down on expenses. These include electrical upgrades and the installation of external door seals and light switch sensors.

Mayor Mach thanked Mr. Saalfield for presenting the 2011-12 budget to the Committee and the audience.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers/3 minutes each**

Andrew Lagomarsino, Artist View Lane, spoke about snow plowing on his private road. He questioned why the township did not hire and pay the plowing company that plows his road. Mayor Mach said that, as explained many times before, the township is not obligated to plow Artist View Lane because the road does not meet township standards. Mayor Mach further stated that Mr. Lagomarsino really has a problem with his homeowners association and not with the township. He suggested that Mr. Lagomarsino speak with the association about the amount of money they spend on snow plowing.

Mike Sullivan, Chief of Blirstown Hose Company No. 1, spoke about the circus they will be sponsoring on June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Profits will be split 50/50 between the fire company and the ambulance squad. Chief Sullivan said that the location will be Sycamore Park and that he has met with the various sports organizations who play at the park and that a particular area has been agreed upon. Chief Sullivan is looking for approval from the Committee to hold this event.

Mr. Seal questioned whether the area in question was in the safety zone of the Blairstown Airport. Ted Rodman, Municipal Engineer, will be asked to make a drawing and get permission from the State to locate the circus at this particular area.

Mr. Lascari made a motion to approve the date and location of the circus, contingent upon approval from the State with regard to the safety zone, with proper submission of proof of insurance. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:                    AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach

Pete McKenna, Mohican Road, asked how much money Ray Davis, former Committeeman, has paid back to the township to date. Mr. Lance believes that it is about \$1,400. Mr. McKenna would like a lien put on his house to recoup this money. Mr. Benbrook explained that he looked into this and that it would not be cost effective due to the fact that the house is in both Mr. Davis' and his wife's names.

## **MINUTES**

March 9, 2011 – Regular Meeting and Closed Session (Mr. Seal absent)

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular and closed session meetings of March 9, 2011. The motion was seconded by Mayor Mach.

Roll call vote:                    AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Mach  
   ABSTAIN – Seal

## **SKATE PARK COMMITTEE**

Karen Paladini, Terri Miller, and Russ and Cody Hoagland appeared before the Committee for permission to locate a skate park at Footbridge Park. Mayor Mach said that this location is a problem because a portion of the land being requested is owned by either the City of Newark or the State of New Jersey. Ms. Paladini said that she contacted Newark and was told that the property is owned by the state. Mayor Mach said that the township cannot give permission to build on property owned by the State. Mr. Benbrook told the Skate Park Committee that if they wish to pursue this property, the first thing they need to do is contact the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Lance gave them a contact name and number.

Mr. Seal brought up that skate boarders have been recently responsible for graffiti and damage to Footbridge Park. He said that it took only three days for the responsible parties to destroy the basketball court made by a scout for an Eagle Scout project. Mayor Mach said that the skate park committee stated that they would self-police the area and that this is not a very good indication of the job they will do.

The Skate Board Committee asked for a commitment of approval from the township in the event they get permission from the state to build the skate park at that location. Mr. Benbrook suggested a straw poll to indicate whether the Township Committee would be in favor of allowing the location of the skate park at Footbridge Park in the event State permission is obtained.

Mayor Mach called for a straw poll. A yes vote will indicate support for the Skate Board Committee to build a skate park at Footbridge Park in the event that permission is granted to use the land by the State of New Jersey.

Roll call vote:            AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari  
                                  NAY – Seal, Mach

### **DOG PARK COMMITTEE**

Rebecca Seaman and Jenny Harrington were present to discuss a location for a dog park. Ms. Seaman said that they had been at a previous meeting. At that meeting, the dog park committee was asked to look at a section of Vail Park for the location of the dog park. The Dog Park Committee looked at the location, but they feel that the area in question is not large enough. Mr. Lance said that Jones Farm is not possible because of environmental restrictions placed on the land by the State.

Ms. Seaman asked if a piece of land approximately one acre in size would be available behind the Municipal Building. It was the consensus of opinion that this would be possible. It is also possible that a smaller piece of land could be available at Sycamore Park. Mayor Mach asked Mr. Seal to work with the Dog Park Committee along with Mr. Rodman to determine a suitable location.

The Dog Park Committee members prefer to be located behind the Municipal Building. Mayor Mach will act as liaison between the Dog Park Committee and Mr. Rodman to make discuss this matter.

### **Public Comment on the Consent Agenda Items Only**

There were no comments or questions on the Consent Agenda.

### **CONSENT AGENDA INCLUDING RESOLUTIONS**

- 1 – R.2011-048**      Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2011-049**      2010 Tonnage Grant Application
- 3 – R.2011-050**      Reappointment of Municipal Clerk
- 4 – R.2011-051**      Reappointment of Registrar of Vital Statistics
- 5 – R.2011-052**      Award of Contract for Refuse Collection
- 6 – R.2011-053**      Establishment of Dedicated Trust by Rider for the Blairstown Environmental Commission
- 7 – Approval of Blue Light Permit Applications** for Daniel Anderson and Christopher Trigg of Blairstown Ambulance Corps

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

Roll call vote:            AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach

### **INTRODUCTION OF 2011 BUDGET**

- R.2011-054**      Petitioning Director of Local Government Services to Allow Delayed Introduction of 2011 Budget
- R.2011-055**      Special Items of Revenue
- R.2011-056**      Introduction of 2011 Budget

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve R.2011-054, R.2011-055 and R.2011-056, which was seconded by Mayor Mach. Mr. Lance said that there is no more surplus left and next year's budget will be very difficult. He told Chief Sullivan that \$30,000 has been allotted in the fire department budget, but any unforeseen equipment repairs will be covered by the township. Mayor Mach added that this year's budget is \$1,150,000 less than the 2005 budget.

Roll call vote:                    AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach

#### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Clerk – March Report  
Finance – March Finance and Fuel Reports  
Police Department – March Report  
Tax Collector – March Report  
Municipal Court of North Warren – February, 2011

Mr. Anderson made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mayor Mach. All members voted in favor.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- 1 – Route 94 traffic concerns – Electrical review at NJ DOT  
Mr. Lascari reported that the work has begun for the installation of the left hand turn signal. The work should be completed before school graduation.
- 2 – JCP&L billing – Mr. Lascari has compiled list of poles  
Mr. Lascari will give the list of poles to the Assistant Treasurer so that lights can be turned off.
- 3 – Main Street concerns – road striping; feral cats; sidewalks
- 4 – Review of Noise Control Ordinance – draft “Peace and Good Order” Ordinance  
Mr. Lascari would like to discuss this at the next meeting. If there is enough support from the Committee, Mr. Lascari will present a draft ordinance. Beth Arena said that Mr. Gara, Police Director, has experience drafting this type of ordinance. Mr. Lascari will contact him regarding this matter.
- 5 – Cedar Lake Horse Farm – RFP results under review
- 6 – Service Electric Cable TV – extension of cable service
- 7 – Hazardous Obstructions at Blainstown Airport  
Mr. Benbrook said that the township is still waiting for the aerial photographs that are to be supplied by the State.
- 8 – Snow Removal on Main Street – Mayor Mach to draft amended ordinance  
Mayor Mach will have this by the next meeting or two.

**COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE** for information and possible action

- 1 – from Robert Van Wettering, Blairstown Rotary Club, requesting financial contribution and police assistance for July Fourth Fireworks Celebration  
The township has provided for the monetary assistance in the budget. Mr. Anderson said that the township could accommodate the Rotary Club with the police assistance. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize police department overtime to allow police department assistance during the fireworks event on the Fourth of July. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:                    AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach

- 2 – from Lt. E. Scott Danielson, Warren County Department of Public Safety regarding updating of CAD GeoBase and Street Locator databases  
This communication is for informational purposes only and does not require any action on the part of the Committee.

- 3 – from Susan E. Payne, Executive Dir., State Agriculture Development Committee, re: 2011 Municipal Planning Incentive Grant, SADC Final Approval  
This is formal notice that the township has been approved for the grant. No formal action is required.

- 4 – from Jennifer Gruener, Assistant Supervisor, Warren County Mosquito Control Commission, requesting permission to perform maintenance on an existing swale system of the Paulins Kill River

Mayor Mach asked Mr. Benbrook to review the contract before it is signed. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the agreement, which was seconded by Mr. Lascari. All members voted in favor.

- 5 – from Jessica Griglak, NJ Trout in the Classroom Program Coordinator, Dept. of Environmental Protection, requesting application signature to release trout in Paulins Kill River  
Mayor Mach explained that this is a school program where the students raise trout eggs and later release them into the Paulins Kill. This year, the State is requiring the affected municipalities to sign off on the application. Mr. Lascari made a motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the application, which was seconded by Mayor Mach. All members voted in favor.

- 6 – from NJ Governor Chris Christie requesting support of proposed pension reform  
Mayor Mach explained that Governor Christie is asking the municipalities to urge the legislature to pass his pension and benefits reform. Mayor Mach is requesting permission to sign the form in support of the governor's plan. Mr. Lance feels that the pension problem was caused by the State by not funding their portion and that he would not sign this. Mr. Anderson is in favor of signing this. After a discussion, the Committee was in agreement to authorize the Mayor the sign the form for submission to the Governor.

- 7 – from Debra Waldron, Zoning Board Chair, regarding Zoning Board reappointment  
Mr. Lance said that his submission for appointment to the Zoning Board is in the audience tonight. Mr. Lascari asked if a resume was made available. Mayor Mach would also like to see a resume, so this item will be held over to the May meeting.

**GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (See attached sheet)**

There were no comments or questions on the General Correspondence list from the public.

**FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY**

MR. ANDERSON

Mr. Benbrook said that he has prepared a draft ordinance abolishing the Historic Preservation Commission and establishing the Historic Preservation Committee. The Committee agreed to have this ordinance introduced at the May meeting. Mayor Mach asked if the provision to allow one member of the Committee to be a non-resident could be included in the ordinance. Mr. Benbrook will make this change and any other changes the Committee would like.

**FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK**

The clean-up flyers went out in today's issue of The Press. Residents can come to the Municipal Building to pick up their vouchers beginning April 20<sup>th</sup>. As a reminder, clean-up days are April 28, 29, 30 and September 29, 30, October 1.

**FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

Mr. Anderson summarized the March monthly report for the Police Department.

Mr. Anderson is in contact with Anita Ardia who keeps him informed on issues involving the community's senior citizens.

**COMMITTEEMAN LANCE**

Mr. Lance said that over the past two years, the budget has been cut approximately \$792,000. The Water Department should have a \$45,000 revenue between personnel changes and the water rate increase. This year, the township is subsidizing the department by \$33,000. We may be able to eliminate all subsidizing next year due to the increased revenue.

The Blairstown Theater will be reopening on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The new owner is Mark Clifford, who ran the Skylands Music Festival last year.

**COMMITTEEMAN LASCARI**

Our current webmaster has been on a leave of absence from Lopatcong and our website has not been updated for a while. Mr. Lascari has been in contact with Lou from Nisivocchia and Company and he will make updates until Mr. Decker is back from his leave.

Mr. Lascari mentioned that the Police Department has received their new vehicle. Mr. Anderson added that this vehicle is now in service.

The Memorial Day Parade will be held on Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>. The Earth Day Event is on April 30<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9 am at Footbridge Park.

#### COMMITTEEMAN SEAL

Mr. Seal spoke about residents on Walnut Valley Road who would like to be reimbursed for damage done to their mailbox during the recent snowstorms. Mr. Seal would like the Clerk to correspond with the residents informing them that the township is only liable for damages when a township vehicle physically hits the mailbox, which in this instance was not the case. A copy of the resolution stating township policy will be included with this correspondence. Mayor Mach suggested that the Committee consider placing a cap on the amount of money the township will reimburse.

In response to a question from Mr. Lascari, Mr. Seal said that the Department of Public Works will soon begin patching potholes in the township roads.

#### MAYOR MACH

Mayor Mach said that Blairstown Township has been redistricted to Congressional District 24. This will take place in January of 2012.

At their last meeting, the Planning Board approved a lot line adjustment for a property on Polkville Road.

There was a recent meeting of mayors from surrounding townships. A topic of discussion was ways to bring about shared services between the municipalities.

The Shade Tree Committee will be distributing evergreen seedlings to sixth graders. Each student gets a tree to take home and plant.

The township is in receipt of a communication from NJ League of Municipalities asking for support on municipal priority funding. The communication addresses reduced property tax relief to the residents and dwindling energy tax to the municipalities. The league recently passed a resolution calling for an end to these practices and is now asking for support from the New Jersey municipalities. Mayor Mach would like approval from the Committee to sign a form giving support to the NJLM resolution. These will be forwarded to Governor Christie. Mr. Lance made a motion authorizing Mayor Mach to sign this form, which was seconded by Mr. Lance, with all members voting in favor.

Mayor Mach announced that financial assistance is available from the Warren County Housing Rehabilitation Program for qualified owner occupied one to four family houses. Copies of the notice will be available in the outer foyer of the Municipal Building.

JCP&L has hired Jaflo, Inc. to clear trees from the power lines. Mayor Mach would like Mr. Benbrook to send a letter to Jaflo indicating the township would not like tree branches and brush left lying on the ground.

#### FROM THE PUBLIC

Beth Arena, High Street, asked about the Council on Local Mandates suit pending regarding State Police coverage. She would like to know if the legal fees on this litigation are included in the township attorney's retainer with the township. Mr. Benbrook said that it is not. Ms. Arena asked what his fees to date total, to which Mr. Benbrook responded that he was not sure.

Rosalie Murray, Cobblewood Road, stated that he is in agreement with Mr. Lance regarding the pension issue and Governor Christie's position. Mrs. Murray also is not in favor of the NWRHS position that school budgets will not have to be voted on by the public if the budgets stay within the 2% cap.

**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 10:50 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk