

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 7:15 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 and Mr. Seal. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia and Township Attorney Robert Benbrook.

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 – Personnel

Mr. Lascari made a motion to enter into Closed Session, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson, with all members 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 such matters 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 matter mentioned above, the results of which may be made public immediately thereafter or at a later date.

Dated: April 14, 2010

Attest:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC

Municipal Clerk

RESULTS OF CLOSED SESSION

Mr. Seal made a motion to come out of closed session, which was seconded by Mr. Lance, with all members in favor.

Mayor Mach explained that the purpose of the Closed Session was to speak with a member of the Construction Department. There are no results to report from the Closed Session.

MINUTES

March 10, 2010 – Regular Meeting and Closed Session

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Regular and Closed Session minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

NORTH WARREN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 2010-11 BUDGET PRESENTATION by Brian Fogelson, Superintendent, North Warren Regional High School

Dr. Fogelson introduced Paul Chipko, member of the Board of Education, who began the presentation. Mr. Chipko spoke about the recent achievements of students, advanced placement courses, and colleges attended by graduates.

Dr. Fogelson spoke about efforts to contain costs by reducing energy usage, seeking less expensive health benefits providers and delivering quality special education programs more cost efficiently. Dr. Fogelson outlined the budget goals for the 2010-2011 school year, which included expanded technology and improving faculty skills. The school is also facing necessary capital projects, such as roof repairs as well as preventative maintenance.

The total anticipated 2010-2011 budget is \$16,235,194, which is \$1.2 million less than the 2009-2010 budget. This is a 2.87% tax levy increase, and a 4 cent increase from 2009-2010 for Blairstown residents.

Dr. Fogelson concluded by asking everyone to vote on April 20th. He answered questions from the Committee and the audience. Mayor Mach thanked Dr. Fogelson for appearing tonight to present the proposed North Warren Regional High School budget.

BLAIRSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 2010-11 BUDGET PRESENTATION by Mark Saalfield, Superintendent and Molly Petty, School Business Administrator

Mayor Mach introduced Mr. Saalfield, Superintendent of Blairstown Elementary School, who made the presentation on the 2010-11 budget. Mr. Saalfield introduced Molly Petty, Blairstown Elementary School Business Administrator.

Mr. Saalfeld spoke about the tax levy, which is \$6,242,100 for Blairstown combined with Hardwick. He also summarized revenue sources and appropriations. Although the proposed budget is \$61,840 less than the 2009-2010 school year, serious cuts needed to be made due to the loss of 24% of State aid. There have been staff and program reductions, reduction in instructional materials, and the elimination of several administrative and faculty workshops and professional development programs. In addition, all non-essential maintenance projects have been placed on hold.

Mr. Saalfied and Molly Petty answered questions from the audience. Mayor Mach thanked Mr. Saalfeld for presenting the proposed Blairstown Elementary School Budget.

PROCLAMATION OF APRIL AS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Mayor Mach asked Arline Castellucci to come forward to accept the Proclamation. Mayor Mach read the proclamation in full, which proclaimed April as "Autism Awareness Month." Mrs. Castellucci thanked Mayor Mach and the Committee for the proclamation.

ORDINANCE 2010-01 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING CHAPTER 87, CONSTRUCTION CODE, OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, AND TRANSFERRING JURISDICTION FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE UNIFORM CONSTRUCTION CODE TO THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS – Second Reading, Adoption

Public Hearing

Mayor Mach opened the hearing on Ordinance 2010-01 to the public.

Ralph Costanza asked why the township was willing to give up its jurisdiction to the State. Mr. Anderson said that this matter has been looked at for two years and that by giving up jurisdiction to the State, the township will be saving money. Mr. Lance added that the township is not giving up any rights. The State will be enforcing the same code that the township code enforcement officers have been enforcing.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, asked if Carl Dieffenbach was given an opportunity to speak to the Committee as he had requested. Mayor Mach replied that Mr. Dieffenbach spoke with the Committee during a brief Closed Session before this regular meeting.

Tony Bergamo, Hope Road, asked if these cuts were being made in an effort to avoid instituting a municipal tax. Mayor Mach said that it certainly is a major force behind going to the Department of Community Affairs. Mr. Bergamo said that he understands that the Committee is doing their best to avoid a tax, but if the tax is only held off this year and has to be instituted next year, he is not sure it is worth sacrificing the Construction Department.

Carl Cummins, Land Use Chairman, Liberty Township, asked if the Committee has explored the possibility of a shared services agreement with other municipalities. Mr. Anderson said that Blairstown recently met with Hardwick and Frelinghuysen and the interest level was not there. Mr. Cummins said that the DCA will not give the residents the same service that they have received with the township employees.

Thomas Campbell, Four Corners Road, asked why the Construction Department was not given the same opportunity to come up with money saving options that the rest of the employees were given. Mayor Mach and Mr. Anderson both explained that the Construction Department has been given two years to approach the Committee with such plans.

Ralph Price, Blairstown Construction Official, said that 12% of the department's revenue is given to the township for office space. When the DCA comes in, the township will be paying all expenses for the state to run the department, including lighting, office space, telephones and copy machine.

George Kays spoke against disbanding the Construction Department. He said that he has years of experience dealing with the State and he feels that the Committee is making a mistake abolishing the township department.

John Haney, resident and contractor, spoke in favor of keeping the township Construction Department. He said that the residents are not going to get the same level of service from the DCA that they get from Ralph Price and the other inspectors.

As there were no further questions or comments from the audience, Mayor Mach closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Lance made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2010-01, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

Public Comment on the Consent Agenda Items Only

There were no questions or comments from the public on the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA INCLUDING RESOLUTIONS

- 1 – R.2010-053** Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2010-054** Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2002-05
- 3 – R.2010-055** Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2007-01
- 4 – R.2010-056** Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2009-04

- 5 – R.2010-057** Authorization to Release Certain Escrows
- 6 – R.2010-058** Appointment of Robert DePuy as Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator
- 7 – R.2010-059** Approval of Multi-Jurisdictional Flood Mitigation Plan
- 8 – R.2010-060** Acceptance of Somerset County Co-op Bid for Rock Salt Sodium Chloride
- 9 – R.2010-061** Endorsing the Submission of Tonnage Grant Application
- 10 – Application for Blue Light Permit – Dennis L. Ball, Blairstown Hose Company No. 1**

Mr. Seal made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Lascari.

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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Clerk – March Report
- Finance – March Report
- Public Works Department –March Fuel Report
- Tax Collector – March Report

Mr. Lascari made a motion to accept the Department reports, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1 – Rte. 94 traffic concerns:
 - a. left hand turn signal at Lambert Rd. – State approval received (letter under Committee Correspondence)

Mr. Lascari read the letter from the State, which approved the township's request for a left hand turn signal at Lambert Road.

- b. engine braking – sample ordinance from Hope Township

This will be looked into in the near future.

- 2 – JCP&L billing – Mr. Lascari has completed input of data; to go to Environmental Commission for input
Mr. Lascari is working on this.

- 3 – Main Street concerns – road striping; feral cats

Nothing new to report.

4 – Review of Noise Control Ordinance – model ordinance received from county

Mr. Lascari will have input on this for the May meeting.

5 – Cedar Lake Horse Farm – one (1) proposal received; proposal rejected – will be rebid

Mayor Mach said there was to be a rebid in April. He will contact the state for more information.

6 – Repairs to Givens Belet building – to be addressed during budget preparation

The repairs to Givens Belet have been moved to the Open Space Fund during a budget work session. This will be removed from the Unfinished Business list.

7 – Service Electric Cable TV – extension of cable service

Mr. Lascari has been speaking with Mayor Durling of Frelinghuysen to change our renewal dates to coincide with each other to give the townships more leverage in negotiations.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

1 – from Robert Van Wetting, Secretary of Blairstown Rotary Club, requesting contribution towards July 4th fireworks

This has been approved and is included in the budget.

2 – from Barbara Emery, CFO, re: Farming Property between Recycling Center and Sycamore Park

The CFO sent letters regarding interest in farming this property. The only party interested is Mike Sullivan for \$10.00 an acre. After discussion, the Committee agreed that this piece of property should not be farmed, and the Committee was in agreement to offer the Sand Hill property instead. Mr. Lascari made a motion to offer the 12 acre parcel of land on Sand Hill for \$10.00 an acre, contingent upon proper insurance documentation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

3 – from James J. Williams, Operations Manager, Pollution Control Financing Authority of Warren County, re: Free Tire Recycling Event

Mayor Mach asked Mr. Seal to arrange to have any tires at the DPW transported to the recycling center for this free tire recycling event.

4 – from Janen and Richard Ardia, Ridge Lane, re: Ridge Lane and Conrad Court; memorandum from Committeeman Seal responding to concerns

Mayor Mach read this letter, as requested by Janen and Richard Ardia. Mayor Mach also read Mr. Seal's response. Mr. Seal explained that the conditions as described in the Ardia's letter were not found on recent inspection, and that there are several roads within the township that are higher on the list for repairs. The Clerk will send a letter in response, enclosing Mr. Seal's memorandum.

5 – from William G. Dressel, Jr., Executive Director, NJLM, re: 2010 Census lags behind in New Jersey

Mayor Mach explained that this is a communication from NJLM urging citizens to complete their census forms and mail them in.

6 – from Mark Tozzi, Department of Transportation, regarding left turn signal at Route 94 and Lambert Road

This communication was discussed earlier in the meeting.

7 – from Rich Motyka, Tax Assessor, re: Tax Appeals

Mayor Mach read the memorandum, which indicates that many tax appeals have been filed and it is possible that many will be granted a reduction in their tax assessments. The Assessor would like the Committee to be aware of this and to budget accordingly.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (See attached sheet)

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

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook has several litigation matters to discuss, which he will explain in a written communication to the Committee. He had nothing further to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The Clerk reminded everyone to vote at the School Election on April 20th, 2pm to 9pm.

Mayor Mach asked about the arrangements for the town-wide cleanup. The Clerk responded that the spring clean-up will take place on May 20, 21 and 22 and the fall clean-up has been set for September 23, 24 and 25. Each resident will get two vouchers which can be used on any of these days.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEEMAN ANDERSON

The Police Report was not received for the month of March because of the Police Director's absence due to recent illness and deaths in his family. Police personnel were present at the earlier budget meeting to voice their concerns. Mr. Anderson has been in contact with the State Police to let them know that the township may possibly be asking for an additional four (4) hours coverage a day due to our budget constraints. This is not definite at this time but Mr. Anderson wanted the State Police to know what may come to be as a courtesy.

The Environmental Commission met last week. They had a speaker who spoke about the transmission line issue, and how many residences will be affected by the lines.

Roger Gutzwiller has agreed to work with the Committee on the issue of solar energy. Mr. Anderson said that there is an opportunity to generate a great deal of revenue from this type of project, which the Committee is hoping will help with our shrinking surplus.

COMMITTEEMAN LANCE

Mr. Lance reported that the budget preparation has been an ongoing process. The cuts from Trenton have made it more difficult. Our surplus as of Dec 31, 2009 is approx. \$1.7 million. If we keep spending down the balance at \$1.2 million, we will be facing a municipal tax in the very near future. In an attempt to avoid this, the budget committee has made extreme cuts amounting to \$375,000. The cuts made to this point will result in a zero tax rate this year, but more cuts need to be made to decrease the rate by which the fund balance is being spent.

The Committee conducted a budget meeting earlier today, at which time township employees were apprised of the situation. At that meeting, Mr. Lascari introduced a voluntary severance package to reduce the number of employees. Also suggested at this meeting was a reduction in the work week by one day with a 20% pay cut. Mr. Lance said that nothing has been decided and these are different scenarios being explored at this point. Mr. Lance also said that Mr. Benbrook has agreed to a 5% cut in pay for the year 2010.

Mr. Lance announced that there was a problem today on the Main Street/Bridge Street project. During the course of the construction, the workers

bumped into a water service line. They need to change the depth of the line, which will be paid for by the County.

With regard to a concern about an intoxication problem at the Skylands Music Festival, Mr. Lance recently checked with the deputy station commander at the Hope Barracks, who said that this problem decreased after the festival became a paid event. Mr. Lance was told to keep the police presence visible, which will keep this problem to a minimum.

There was a discussion by the Committee on the Skylands Music Festival and exactly what the township's role in the event is. The Clerk was asked to send a letter to Mark Clifford, directing him to submit a detailed written proposal stating what he is going to do and what he expects the township to do. This should include a timetable of events leading up to and during the event.

COMMITTEEMAN LASCARI

Mr. Lascari spoke about an agreement signed between the township and Paetec, which was supposed to greatly reduce the municipality's telephone bills. This agreement was signed about a year ago, and there appears to be no activity working towards a delivery on this agreement. Mr. Lascari made a motion to void this agreement, subject to review and approval of Mr. Benbrook. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

The Ambulance Corps members are selling tickets for event at Warren County Fairgrounds to be held on June 5th.

Mr. Lascari said that at a previous meeting, it was decided that the Recycling Center will be closing on June 30th. Mr. Lascari asked if there will be signs indicating this. Mr. Seal said that the Department of Public Works is working on this.

Mr. Lascari outlined the severance package that was presented to the employees at the earlier meeting. This program is completed voluntary and is based on the amount of years worked for the township.

Added to the severance package was an option to work a reduced workweek with a corresponding decrease in pay.

COMMITTEEMAN SEAL

Mr. Seal said that he has received complaints about people not cleaning up after their dogs at Sycamore Park. He asked the Committee if they are in favor of posting signs stating that people must pick up after their dogs. The Committee was in favor of posting the signs.

Mr. Seal said that during the snow season a snow plow hit a railroad tie retaining wall on Walnut Valley Road. A police report was taken and pictures were taken. A copy of the police report is needed for insurance purposes and the homeowner is waiting to receive this report.

Mr. Seal said that there is \$10,000 in last year's budget to put fencing around several areas of the Water Department. Mr. DePuy suggested putting fencing around one well and having a tree removed. Mr. Lance said that due to budget restraints, he feels that the DPW should go ahead with the tree removal, but should wait on the fencing.

MAYOR MACH

Mayor Mach said that at the first budget meeting on March 31st, the Committee agreed to have the Local Welfare Department transferred to the County. Mayor Mach read a resolution to officially transfer duties from the township to the county effective July 6, 2010. Mayor Mach made a motion to approve this resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Lascari.

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

Mayor Mach said that the new Director of the Department of Community Affairs stated that there will be some news regarding COAH within the next 30 to 45 days.

Mr. Lance said that he spoke to the Zoning Officer and told him that there will be no funding for the position of 9-1-1 coordinator. He will be paid for this position up to June 30, 2010.

FROM THE PUBLIC

Mayor Mach opened the meeting to the public. Kevin Doell, Environmental Commission, and Kimberly Harrington, Blairstown Elementary school teacher, asked for funding for a school garden program at the elementary school. The money would go towards a flower and vegetable garden which would be an educational program for the students. It would include a science area and a reading ring. They have already received approximately \$5,000 in donations from the public. They need another \$5,000 to begin this project.

The Committee discussed whether the Toll Brothers money from the Scenic Hills development could be used for this project. Mayor Mach asked them to submit a plan detailing what the project entails. Mr. Lance made a motion to approve \$5,000 towards this project conditional upon receipt of this plan. Mayor Mach seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Lance, Mach

ABSTAIN – Anderson, Lascari, Seal

Mr. Benbrook stated that it is his understanding that this motion passes, since the majority of the Committee able to vote on it have voted in the affirmative.

Helen Parisi, Route 94, had a complaint about a marching band that practiced from 8:30am to 8:30pm at the Fountain Mall field near her home. This is scheduled to take place for seven weekends. She went to the Police Department to sign a complaint and was treated unprofessionally by the police officers. She also said that this field is not zoned for this type of activity. Mr. Lascari suggested that Mrs. Parisi speak to David Diehl, Zoning Official. Mrs. Parisi has spoken to Mr. Diehl. The Committee will contact Mr. Diehl to make sure that this is being pursued.

As there were no further questions or comments from the public, Mr. Lascari made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mayor Mach. The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk