

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING  
Wednesday, December 10, 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. Avery, Mr. Lance, Mrs. Price and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia and Attorney Robert Benbrook. Mr. Anderson was absent.

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

Peter McKenna, Mohican Road, said that he has been a Blairstown resident for 40 years and has attended a great deal of the meetings. He is tired of hearing people who have only attended a handful of meetings ridicule the Committee and the Township Engineer. He thanked the Committee for their hard work and for everything the members do for the township.

**MINUTES**

November 12, 2014 – Regular Meeting Minutes

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

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

**REPORT** by Sharon Cooper, Risk Management Consultant

Sharon Cooper, Risk Management Consultant, said that Blairstown Township is in its third year of a three-year commitment with Statewide Insurance Company for the township's insurance coverage. She solicited quotations from three companies: Statewide, PAIC, and NJ Intergovernmental Insurance Fund. Only Statewide and PAIC responded with quotations.

Mrs. Cooper distributed a summary of the quotations from Statewide and PAIC and highlighted the differences between the two coverages. Mrs. Cooper said that both of these companies are good insurance funds.

Mrs. Price asked Mrs. Cooper if she has an opinion on NJ Intergovernmental Insurance Fund. Mrs. Cooper responded that NJ Intergovernmental operates in municipalities more east of this area and has training farther away than the other two funds. Both Statewide and PAIC operate in Warren and Sussex Counties and have training in this area.

Mrs. Cooper recommended that the Committee stay with Statewide for another three year period.

Mrs. Price objected to being presented with this information tonight for the first time and having to make a decision without being able to digest the information. She is uncomfortable with voting on this tonight and is requesting a special meeting in order to make a decision by the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to hold a Special Meeting on December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2pm in order to have more time to review the materials presented tonight.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- 1 – R.2014 – 137 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2014 – 138 Authorization to Transfer Funds
- 3 – R.2014 – 139 Authorization to Enter into Agreement with Nisivoccia Consulting LLC for Website Maintenance
- 4 – R.2014 – 140 Resolution to Supplement State Health Benefits Program Resolution Addendum
- 5 – Application for Blue Light Permit – Christopher Rossmell, Blairstown Hose Company No. 1

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

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

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

- Clerk – November Report
- Finance – November Finance and Fuel Reports
- Fire Department – November Report
- Police Department – November Report
- Tax Collector – November Report
- Municipal Court of North Warren – October Report
- Warren County Health Department – November 10, 2014

Mrs. Price made a motion to approve the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE** for information and possible action

- 1 – from Joe DiGrazia, President of Blairstown Ambulance Corps, re: Municipal Sign Update Request

Mayor Shoemaker explained that the purpose of Mr. DiGrazia’s correspondence is to obtain approval from the Township Committee to alter the signage in front of the Municipal

Building to reflect the address of the new ambulance building in the back. Mr. DiGrazia's request was approved as submitted. The Ambulance Corps will pay for the signage change.

2 – from David K. Dech, Planning Director, Warren County Planning Department, re: Highlands Regional Master Plan Comments

Mayor Shoemaker explained that Mr. Dech is requesting municipal participation in a County meeting regarding the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The meeting will be held mid-January, 2015. Mayor Shoemaker said that he will get back to Mr. Dech letting him know that someone from the Land Use Board would be attending this meeting.

3 – from Teresa Kaminski, Warren County Department of Land Preservation, requesting resolution of support for the farmland application of the Estate of Mary Kinney

Mr. Lance said that there would be no cost to Blairstown to preserve this parcel and this is stated in the resolution. Mayor Shoemaker asked for a motion to approve the resolution in support of the farmland application. Mr. Lance made this motion, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

4 – from Andrew R. Smith, resigning from the Land Use Board effective January 1, 2015

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to accept Mr. Smith's resignation, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

#### **GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

There were no comments on the General Correspondence list.

#### **FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY**

Mr. Benbrook said that there was a foreclosure litigation case filed that dealt with a loan from COAH/Small Cities funds. Mr. Benbrook said that he is checking with the COAH Municipal Housing Liaison but is certain the township has no liability in this matter.

#### **FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK**

The Clerk had nothing to report.

#### **FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER**

Mr. Rodman reported that the traffic pattern on Route 94 regarding the culvert replacement and road superstructure will change approximately December 19<sup>th</sup>.

With regard to Sandhill Road, the contract work awarded for the pavement recycling has been postponed due to the weather. The paving portion was to be performed through the Morris County cooperative by Schifano. However, the low bidder for 2015 is Tilcon. Mr. Rodman asked the Committee

to approve a resolution awarding this bid to Tilcon at the price of \$166,150 for the paving portion of the overlay. E.J. Breneman, L.P. has agreed to honor the 2014 price on the recycling portion.

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to approve the resolution awarding the paving of Sandhill Road to Tilcon at a price of \$166,150, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

**FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

Robert Gara, Police Director, spoke for Mr. Anderson on behalf of the Police Department. He asked everyone to be diligent in safety and security in light of recent burglaries. He warned the audience to be aware of strange vehicles in their neighborhood.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY**

Mr. Avery said that the Ordinance Review Committee is moving along and will have a portion of their review available in the next month or two.

The Environmental Commission conducted a clean-up along Route 94 recently. The group covered about two miles of Route 94 on both sides. Mr. Avery is looking into a State sponsored Adopt-a-Mile program in which some of the local organizations may be interested.

With regard to the website, Mr. Avery reported that a trial version should be available in a week or so. The revised website will include a community calendar.

The Seniors' Christmas Party was a huge success and the seniors expressed their gratitude to the Committee for their support.

Mr. Avery is looking into adding Wi-Fi to the Municipal Building. He said that it will cost \$40.00 per month per connection. Mrs. Price said that she would like more details before agreeing to spend money on this. She would also like to know how this would benefit the township. Mr. Avery explained that this is a part of the economic development plan to bring more people and businesses into town.

Mayor Shoemaker asked Mr. Avery to prepare an outline of his plans for Wi-Fi and to perhaps find examples of other communities that have done this. Mrs. Price would also like a projection of potential costs five or 10 years from now.

There was a discussion on whether the Economic Committee should be set up as a formal committee within the municipal government. Mr. Lance said that an enabling ordinance would need to be adopted. This will be discussed further at future meetings.

**COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE**

Mr. Lance said that budget requests went out to department heads and are due back to the CFO by January 5<sup>th</sup>. Budget meetings will be set up at that time.

Mr. Lance reported that a chemical injector is needed for the water department. He is asking the DPW Foreman to get an estimate for this item, which will be paid from the Water Department budget.

Mr. Lance summarized the November Police Department report in Mr. Anderson's absence.

The Historic Preservation Committee will be placing a sign at the old fire house on Carhart Street.

With regard to North Warren Regional High School, Mr. Lance said that various publications are ranking the high school very favorably.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBER PRICE

Mrs. Price reported that she met with the Municipal Housing Liaison and received printouts of all reports from 2001 to the current report. She will be reviewing this information with the CFO to make sure the reports on file with the State match our reports.

The MOU sent to the NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Administration needed to be amended. It was corrected and sent to the State for approval.

Mrs. Price indicated that she might want to attend Land Use Board meetings as a resident of the township. She is concerned because this will make three members of the Committee at the Land Use Board. There was a discussion of Mrs. Price's attendance as an observer and as a participant. Mrs. Price would like the Committee to notice the Land Use Board meetings so she is free to attend meetings as she pleases. Mr. Benbrook commented that this is an unusual request. He believes that to notice the meetings would lead the public to believe that the meetings are joint meetings between the Committee and the Land Use Board, which they would not be. He is of the opinion that she is prohibited from attending the Land Use Board meetings as a participant by her official capacity as Committee member. Mr. Benbrook agreed that at the very least, she is allowed to go to the meetings strictly as an observer.

Mrs. Price reported that the membership of the committee looking into the feasibility of sewers in the downtown area has grown. She hopes to have a meeting sometime in January to discuss the proposals received regarding the sewer project.

Mrs. Price clarified the e-ticket contract discussed at the November meeting. She wanted it clear that the contract calls for \$2,433.33 each year for three years, not a total of \$2,433.33 for three years.

Mrs. Price said that she would like input into the professional services agreements that will be voted on at the Reorganization Meeting in January. After discussion, it was agreed that the topic of professional services agreements will be discussed at the December 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Meeting.

Mrs. Price read her report on her analysis of the programs offered by the Recreation Department. Mrs. Price outlined the Recreation Director's current responsibilities, duties and salary breakdown, gave an analysis of program participants, and suggested ways to curtail the expenses incurred by the Recreation Department.

#### MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker suggested limiting the public portion at the end of the meeting. He recommended limiting the public to five minutes per participant. The Committee could decide on extending the time limit if warranted. He also suggested having a time at which the meeting would end, possibly 10:15 pm. Mr. Lance spoke in favor of this and said time limits have been tested in court.

There was a discussion on various ways to improve the meetings, including allowing the public to comment on the resolutions being presented for approval. Mr. Lance asked if the Committee members were in favor of putting time limits on themselves. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Mayor Shoemaker reported that the BPU's pilot program on vegetation management included Blirstown. This program will be expanded on a larger scale.

The DPW installed a catch basin on Vail Street which solved a problem with water accumulation on the road.

The new snowflake decorations have been installed on Main Street. Mayor Shoemaker suggested purchasing an outside artificial tree to be placed in the triangle in front of the building, as the currently decorated tree has grown too large to be decorated effectively. Another option is to decorate one of the smaller trees in front of the building closer to the road.

Mayor Shoemaker asked about our status with the Knowlton Court. Mr. Benbrook said that he has received a letter stating that we are now officially approved as a shared court located in Knowlton.

#### FROM THE PUBLIC

Carol Cook, Four Corners Road, said that she is in favor of setting an ending time for the Committee meetings.

Robert Halberstadt, Main Street, said that in Newton Township, the public is allowed to speak before the meeting. He also suggested putting lights on the front of the building instead of lighting a tree.

Sylvia Zika, Four Corners Road, spoke about the Wi-Fi project being presented by Mr. Avery. Mrs. Zika spoke to businesses along the area in question and found that some businesses, the Blirstown Diner specifically, do not want free Wi-Fi available to their customers. She also questioned why the donor of the Wi-Fi equipment wants to remain anonymous. She questioned how this service will benefit the community.

Mrs. Zika also objected to the fact that the Committee does not solicit proposals for professional services. She spoke in objection to limiting the amount of time the public can speak at the Committee meetings.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, spoke in favor of the Recreation Director and feels that her salary is not out of the ordinary compared to other municipalities when all of the hours she puts in are considered. Mrs. Murray also spoke against limiting the amount of time the public is allowed to speak and in favor of allowing the public to comment on agenda items before voting.

David Fine, Carhart Street, asked Mr. Benbrook if there had been a referendum to establish a police department in Blirstown. Mr. Benbrook said that the referendum was to abolish the department and that the majority of those who voted were in favor of disbanding the police department. Mr. Fine asked why the department was not disbanded if that were the wishes of the voters. Mr. Benbrook said that the Committee members at that time, none of which remain on the present Committee, chose not to do so. Mr. Benbrook said that the Committee could do this because it was a non-binding referendum. In response to Mr. Fine's questioning of Mr. Benbrook as to his participation in that decision, Mr. Benbrook stated that he does not get involved in political decisions of the Committee, as it is not his function as Municipal Attorney and it would not be proper.

Mr. Fine asked about the wells at the Water Department. Mr. Lance said that one well was a low producing well. Mr. Fine said that this disturbs him as a Water Department user and asked what the plan was to remedy this. Mr. Lance said he hopes to have the Paulina Dam removed and to site the second well at that location.

Mr. Fine asked when the debt on the Water Department would be paid off. Mrs. Price responded that it would be paid off in 2018. Mr. Fine asked about the possible sale of the Water Department. Mrs. Price indicated that although some people have concerns about the possible sale of the Water Department, she is in favor of it because the township does not have the expertise to run a water company at a professional level. Mr. Fine voiced his objections to the sale of the Water Department.

Sylvia Zika, Four Corners Road, spoke about the State of NJ's "Best Practices" checklist that stated that soliciting quotations for professional services is recommended. She again objected to professionals being appointed without obtaining quotations.

#### ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Avery. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk