

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING  
Wednesday, January 8, 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 by Mayor Shoemaker. Those present were Mr. Anderson, Mr. Avery, Mr. Lance, Mrs. Price and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzia and Attorney Robert Benbrook.

**FLAG SALUTE**

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.

**MINUTES**

December 4, 2013 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the December 4<sup>th</sup> minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

January 4, 2014 – Reorganization Minutes

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the January 4<sup>th</sup> minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- 1 – R.2014 – 019            Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2014 – 020            Authorization to Transfer Funds
- 3 – R.2014 – 021            Approval of Temporary Budget for 2014
- 4 – R.2014 – 022            Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2011-09

Mrs. Price asked to have R.2014-019 removed from the Consent Agenda as she would like time to become familiar with the vouchers before voting on them. Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve Items 2, 3 and 4. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve R.2014-019 and Mr. Anderson seconded the motion.

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

#### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Clerk – December Report  
Finance – December Finance and Fuel Reports  
Fire Department – December Report  
Police Department – December Report  
Tax Collector – December Report  
Municipal Court of North Warren – November Report  
Warren County Health Department – December 5, 2013

Mr. Lance commented on the 2013 budget. \$4.1 million in revenue was anticipated in 2013. The actual amount brought in was \$4.3 million. Our spending was less than the amount budgeted, so there is approximately \$470,000 more than was anticipated at this time. This amount will go into surplus for this year.

Mrs. Price said that she would abstain on the reports due to being unfamiliar with them.

Mr. Lance made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker.

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

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT** – up to 5 speakers, 3 minutes each

Darren Occhiuzzo, Chief of Blairstown Hose Company No. 1, spoke about the company's request for the purchase of a 1980 Mack fire truck. If purchased, this vehicle will replace two currently used vehicles, a pumper and a utility truck. The purchase price for the 1980 Mack fire truck is \$10,000. Ladder and pump testing has been completed and the fire company's mechanic has recommended this purchase.

Chief Occhiuzzo said that the truck has been well maintained. Any repairs that might possibly be needed total approximately \$1,500. This estimate was supplied by the Budd Lake Fire Company, who is selling the truck through Mt. Olive Township. In answer to Mr. Lance's question, Chief Occhiuzzo said that the testing performed on the vehicle adheres to NFPA standards.

Chief Occhiuzzo said that this truck would add versatility to the current apparatus pool and would afford their membership the opportunity for additional and specialized training.

Mrs. Price asked about the list of repair recommendations for the apparatus and if he knew the date of the inspection. Chief Occhiuzzo said that the list was current, probably done last week.

Mr. Lance asked if the 1980 Mack truck would be able to do everything the two vehicles being retired were able to do. Chief Occhiuzzo said that it could.

Mrs. Price remarked that from the materials presented to her, she felt that the fire company put a great deal of thought into this purchase and that she appreciated their service.

Mr. Lance read by title, "An Ordinance to Provide for the Purchase of a 1980 Mack Ladder Truck for the Township of Blairstown and to Provide for the Funding Thereof." Mr. Lance made a motion to introduce this ordinance in order to fund the purchase of the ladder truck. \$5,000 of the purchase price will be taken from Capital Improvement, and \$5,000 will be taken from the reserve fire equipment fund. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

**FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER**

Mayor Shoemaker reported that Laura Craig, Associate Director of the River Restoration Program, has informed him that grants have become available for the removal of dams from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Hurricane Sandy/Coastal Resiliency competitive grants program. The deadline for application is January 31, 2014. There is no matching requirement for this dam. Mayor Shoemaker asked the Committee if they are in favor of pursuing this grant. Mr. Lance asked if the township had a total money amount for removal. Mr. Rodman said that it is difficult to have a total because it depends on what is found.

Mr. Rodman said that Laura Craig indicated that it would be possible to have a grant application ready before the January 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Mayor Shoemaker felt that since the money is available, the township should at least try. Mr. Rodman said that Joel McGreen, Open Space Chair, has experience with grants and should be asked to assist in the preparation of the grant application.

Mrs. Price said that she is not convinced that the removal of this dam is the best course of action and she would like to continue to gather information on the subject. Both Mr. Anderson and Mr. Lance were in agreement that the Committee had discussed this matter over the past several years and they feel that dam removal is the best course of action due to recurring costs for repairs.

Mrs. Price asked if, in fact, the township were successful in obtaining grant monies for this purpose, the Committee would be obligated to accept the monies. Mr. Benbrook said that the Committee would not be obligated to accept the grant monies.

With regard to costs involved in the grant preparation, Mr. Benbrook said that \$7,000 has already been appropriated to perform a sediment analysis. After discussion, Mr. Lance made a motion to apply for the grant to remove the Paulina Dam, and to reallocate the \$7,000 appropriated for the sediment analysis towards fees associated with the grant application for funds to remove the Paulina Dam. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Shoemaker reported that the township was not award money on its grant application on the Kostenbader property because the property did not have direct access to the trails behind the parcel of land. Mr. Rodman said that there is a possibility that grant monies may become available this summer to purchase this property. In response to Mr. Benbrook's question, Mr. Rodman said that he believes that there is a Letter of No Further Action for the tanks on this property.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- 1 – Service Electric Cable TV – SECTV is preparing draft ordinance for franchise renewal

There is nothing to report on this item.

#### **COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE** for information and possible action

- 1 – from James Frick, Blair Academy to Steve Marvin, Warren County Administrator, re: Park Street in Blairstown Township

Mayor Shoemaker reported that this letter requests the Township Committee to respond in writing if in fact they are in support of the plan to vacate Park Street. The Committee was in agreement to send a letter of support.

#### **GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE**

Mayor Shoemaker commented on the advisory from the NJLM regarding the Affordable Care Act and the uncertainty of whether part-time employees will become part of the formula for counting the total amount of employees for municipalities. The Committee will watch for developments on this front.

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

Mr. Benbrook had nothing to report.

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

The Clerk had nothing to report.

#### **FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

##### **COMMITTEE MEMBER ANDERSON**

Mr. Anderson summarized the year-end statistics for 2013. He said that the Police Department has been doing a fine job.

Mr. Anderson reported on a situation with the police department that was discovered by the township's labor attorney. He discovered that the police officers have been overpaid on overtime since 2003. It also came to light that some of the officers were aware of this. The matter was taken to the prosecutor's office, who advised that it should be dealt with in house. Mr. Anderson said that this matter has been resolved with a verbal agreement that the four (4) officers involved who are still employed by the township will pay back two (2) years of the overpayments. This will be approximately \$16,000 in repayment back to the township. Mr. Anderson wanted it known that all of the police officers were very cooperative in this matter.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery reported that the Environmental Commission will reorganize in February. The Senior Citizens Advisory Committee held a very successful Christmas party, with approximately 120 attendees. They thanked the Committee members who attended and for their support.

The Walnut Valley field is ready and waiting for the spring for planting of grass.

The Givens Belet building is progressing well and should be completed in the spring.

Mr. Avery will have another Saturday open door session on January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Avery would like to move forward on collecting water fees from those units who have multiple users on one meter. Mr. Avery said that the ordinance needs to be amended to clarify that each user will be billed. Mr. Lance made a motion to change the ordinance to read that each water user shall be billed for water use. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Benbrook will prepare the ordinance amendment for the February meeting.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance said that the first budget meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Lance and Mr. Anderson will attend the first meeting.

The agreement with the licensed water operator is due for renewal. Mr. Lance will forward the agreement to Mr. Benbrook in order to draft a 2014 agreement.

The Historic Preservation Committee is in the process of installing banners on Main Street in connection with Blairstown's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. January 24<sup>th</sup> is the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the naming of Blairstown. The Historic Preservation Committee plan on having events for the Fourth of July Celebration.

#### COMMITTEE MEMBER PRICE

Mrs. Price plans on attending the next meeting of the Blairstown Elementary School Board of Education. She will be attending the Land Use Board meeting on January 20<sup>th</sup> to learn more about COAH.

She also will be getting involved in her other responsibilities, which include Service Electric Cable TV and the Open Space Committee.

#### MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker reported that Darlene Green, Planner for the Land Use Board, will be attending their January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting to give an update on COAH.

Mayor Shoemaker discussed the hiring of a Department of Public Works employee to replace the recently retired employee. The candidate for this position is currently working with the DPW as a

seasonal employee. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to hire John Zukoski as a driver/laborer with the Department of Public Works, a permanent full-time employee with a starting rate of \$18.50 per hour. This appointment will be effective on January 13, 2014. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

There was a discussion on the possibility of combining the Open Space Committee and the Recreation Committee into one joint committee. The liaisons to these committees will discuss this with the chairs for input.

#### FROM THE PUBLIC

Sharon Cooper, Blirstown's Risk Management Consultant, spoke to the Committee about the assessment received from Statewide Insurance Fund for the year 2014. She also spoke to the Committee about the possibility of raising the deductible for coverage on employee related issues and wrongful acts. Mrs. Cooper said that raising this deductible will cause a savings of approximately \$5,000.

#### 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, with all members in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk