

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, May 13, 2015, 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, Mrs. Price and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia and Attorney Robert Benbrook. Mr. Lance arrived at 8:26 pm.

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

Carol Cook, Four Corners Road, said that May is Older Americans Month. Because of budgetary cuts at nursing homes, she recommends bringing fruit to the elderly, after checking on any dietary restrictions.

MINUTES

April 8, 2015 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the April 8th regular minutes, which was seconded by Mrs. Price.

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

April 8, 2015 – Closed Session Minutes

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the April 8th closed session minutes, which was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker.

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

ORDINANCE 2015 – 01 BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$43,500 FOR ACQUISITION OF A SPORT UTILITY VEHICLE IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN, IN THE COUNTY OF WARREN, NEW JERSEY AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$41,325 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE TOWNSHIP FOR FINANCING PART OF THE APPROPRIATION Introduction, First Reading

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2015 -01 on introduction, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1 – R.2015 – 056 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2015 – 057 Credit Adjustment to 2015 Water Account
- 3 – R.2015 – 058 Credit Adjustment to 2015 Water Account
- 4 – R.2015 – 059 Authorization to Enter into Interlocal Agreement with the Township of Knowlton for Chief Financial Officer Services
- 5 – R.2015 – 060 Fixing the Salaries and Wages of Officials, Appointees and Employees
- 6 – R.2015 – 061 Amendment of Capital Budget
- 7 – R.2015 – 062 Award of Contract for Road Resurfacing of Sand Hill Road

Mrs. Price requested to have R.2015-056, R.2015-060 and R.2015-062 removed from the Consent Agenda. Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve R.2015-056, which was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker. Mrs. Price stated that since she had no input on the development on the budget, she finds it difficult to authorize the bills.

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

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve R.2015-060, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson. Mrs. Price said that she will be voting no on this resolution for the same reason she gave for not approving R.2015-056.

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

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve R.2015-062, which was seconded by Mr. Avery. Mrs. Price is concerned that R.2015-062, which authorizes a different vendor for this work than was originally authorized, does not detail the specifications of the work to be completed, such as the new agreement to resurface the entire 1.2 miles of Sand Hill Road with 2” of material. Mrs. Price also suggested authorizing a change order in the event materials to complete the entire road run short. After discussion, Mr. Benbrook said that he will amend the resolution to state that any additional materials will be billed at the original, agreed upon cost, and also to authorize the Mayor to execute a change order for the additional cost. Mr. Benbrook also said that the written contract will contain

all specifications being discussed. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Avery amended their motions to reflect the changes.

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

PROCLAMATION – May 2015 Proclaimed as OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Mayor Shoemaker read the proclamation in full, proclaiming May 2015 as Older Americans Month.

PRESENTATION – Blairstown Enhancement Committee

Mayor Shoemaker asked Mr. Avery to introduce the Blairstown Enhancement Committee members, who have been working together since October of 2014. Mr. Avery said that the members have done quite a lot since that time, and he was pleased to see all those in attendance tonight to listen to the Enhancement Committee's presentation.

Mr. Avery turned the presentation over to John Kennedy, President of the Blairstown Enhancement Committee. Mr. Kennedy explained that the group was formed because there were people who agreed that Blairstown was a great place to live, but that improvements could be made to help Blairstown achieve its full potential. He said that there are many talented individuals living in Blairstown who are willing to put in a great amount of hours and effort to improve the township.

The Committee identified the township's strengths and weaknesses in order to prepare a "to do" list for the betterment of the community. The overall goals of the Committee are to make Blairstown a preferred place to live, work and visit. They also hope to increase opportunities for the youth of Blairstown. All of the proposed enhancements will have the effect of improving the quality of life for the residents.

Mr. Kennedy outlined the Committee's strategy for making changes, such as organizing events.

Robert Merrifield spoke about the many outdoor activities Blairstown has to offer. He said that the upcoming event, Tour de Blairstown, will showcase the township's beautiful scenery on the bike tour. This will be the Committee's first major fundraiser.

Laura Corio spoke about the many businesses in town and the surrounding areas that could benefit by joint publicity. The brochure that was distributed tonight highlights these businesses and the Blairstown Enhancement Committee hopes to draw people to the township through this brochure.

Ron Shone said that he has owned a business in the township for a very short time, but was advised to locate here because of the great location, a strong labor force, and great shopping dynamics. The BEC hopes to capitalize on these attributes to strengthen the township's economy.

Bruce Leal thanked Mayor Shoemaker and Mr. Avery for allowing the BEC to work together for the betterment of Blairstown. He also asked the Committee to continue their efforts on the sewer study for the downtown area. He encouraged anyone in the audience who would like to work towards the goals outlined tonight to join the BEC.

Mayor Shoemaker and Mr. Avery thanked the BEC for the informative presentation and also thanked the members for their time and hard work.

Mayor Shoemaker said that he has been working with the Warren County Economic Development Committee and he would like the BEC to make the same presentation to them at a future meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Clerk – April Report
Finance – April Finance and Fuel Reports
Fire Department – April Report
Police Department – April Report
Tax Collector – April Report
Warren County Health Department – April 9, 2015

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

1 – from Corey Tierney, Warren County Dept. of Land Preservation, re: Paulina Dam – Grant Agreement Expiration

Mayor Shoemaker explained that the Warren County Dept. of Land Preservation requested a letter from the township stating that the Committee wishes to extend the grant agreement for another 12 months. Mr. Anderson made a motion to authorize the Mayor to submit this letter, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

There were no comments on the General Correspondence List.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook reported that all outstanding tax appeals for 2014 have been resolved.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The town-wide cleanup has been scheduled for September 25th and 26th.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Rodman reported that a representative of the NJ DEP will be in his office on May 19th to review his files for any pertinent information on the Paulina Dam. The State has hired an engineering firm to make a proposal at their expense for the dam removal.

The Sand Hill Road resurfacing project will begin next week. The paving will take place the following week. All property owners affected by the road repairs have been notified by the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Rodman stated that Blair Academy will be coming to the Land Use Board for the placement of a solar field on their property. There is an old cattle tunnel running underneath Route 94 that Blair Academy would like to use for the running of electrical conduit. The NJ DEP is requiring written confirmation that the township does not object to this use. As the Committee indicated that there are no objections to this, Mr. Rodman will prepare this letter to the NJ DEP.

Mayor Shoemaker explained the structural problems at the filtration building of the Water Department. In addition, the State is requiring the township to have a backup well for the water department. Mayor Shoemaker explained that an option would be to test the well on the Municipal Building property that originally was drilled for a geothermal heating system. If, in fact, the water does not need to be filtered, then the well could be used as a backup well. Mr. Rodman said that testing needs to be performed before any decisions can be made. He received an estimate of \$6,500 to have three (3) wells tested. These wells include the well originally drilled for geothermal, the new well for the ambulance squad building, and the Water Department well.

Mr. Avery made a motion to spend up to \$6,500 to test the three (3) wells, to be paid from the water budget. Mr. Lance seconded the motion.

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

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE MEMBER ANDERSON

Mr. Anderson summarized the Police Department report for the month of April.

Mr. Anderson read a letter from Robert Gara, Police Director, recommending the promotion of Officer Scott Johnson to Corporal. Mr. Anderson said that Officer Johnson has been an asset to the force and the township. Mr. Anderson made a motion to promote Scott Johnson to the rank of Corporal, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

Mr. Anderson reported that with the resignation of Edward White, the Police Department is down one officer at the North Warren Regional High School. Mr. Anderson made a motion to make part-time Officer Brandon Sabastian a full-time officer effective June 1st, who will split his time between the Police Department and the high school. Mayor Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

The Environmental Commission did not meet during May. The Chairman is still working on the Jones Farm mowing.

The Seniors Committee is taking a trip on June 18th. Their trip to the Brownstone had 50 participants.

With regard to COAH, the Declaratory Judgment is in the process of being filed. The group home being planned with Arc is in the works.

Theresa Tamburro, Municipal Housing Liaison, has requested that Christine Rolef be appointed as Deputy Municipal Housing Liaison. Mr. Avery made a motion to make this appointment, which was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker.

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

With regard to the Land Use Board, both Dollar General and Dunkin Donuts were deemed complete.

The plans for the Fourth of July celebration are continuing. There will be an antique tractor show and exhibits. Vendors are welcome to make application to participate in the event.

COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance said that the Police Department is requesting the lease of a new copier. Mr. Lance made a motion to authorize the lease of a copy machine with a 5 yr. lease agreement with Stewart Business Systems. He said that there will be an approximate savings of \$500 per year. Mrs. Price seconded the motion.

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

The Historic Preservation Committee will attend the Warren County Preservation Day on May 31st in Rutherford Hall, Allamuchy Township. The Committee is looking for new membership.

Mr. Lance spoke about the additional quotes for a planner that Mrs. Price agreed to solicit at the April meeting. Mrs. Price said that after spending several hours on this, and after speaking with Land Use Board members and our Township attorney, she decided that it was not a good idea to pursue this. She added that her decision was made after conferring with the Mayor. Mr. Lance objected to the amount of time Mrs. Price said she spent on this before deciding to abandon the project, as Mr. Lance had researched several planners and forwarded contact information to Mrs. Price.

Mr. Lance stated that he feels these quotes are important since he objects to being forced to use the current planner hired by the Land Use Board. Mr. Benbrook said that he will review the agreement signed between the Land Use Board and Maser and will report to the Township Committee at the June meeting.

COMMITTEE MEMBER PRICE

Mrs. Price spoke about a request from the Environmental Commission Chair for the Township Committee to take action in support of having the hay cut at the Jones Farm property. Mrs. Price read a communication from Harry Price, Environmental Commission Chair, outlining his efforts to get the State DEP to agree to the cutting of the hay at the Jones Farm property. Mr. Price has been contacted by a farmer who would like to cut and keep the hay. Mr. Price has been informed by the State that an addendum to the agreement between the township and the State is required to allow the cutting of the hay.

Mrs. Price recommended that the Committee pass a resolution requesting an addendum to the Management Plan to cut the hay until such time the township chooses to use the property for passive or active recreation. She is also requesting that this be sent to the Freeholders and Senator for their assistance.

Mr. Lance is of the opinion that the real problem at this site is the barns and not the hay. He believes the Township should look into the cost to raze the barns.

There was a discussion on whether or not to pursue the addendum. Mr. Benbrook is of the opinion that since the Township is responsible for maintenance on this property, an addendum or any type of permission from the State is not required. He said that simply cutting the hay and having it removed falls under the heading of maintenance. Mr. Benbrook also said that fertilizing or planting would not be allowed since that would not be maintenance and would be considered a commercial endeavor. Mr. Benbrook said that the Township should also receive a certificate of insurance from the farmer.

Mrs. Price requested that the farmer be given a three (3) year agreement to cut the hay. Mr. Benbrook objected to this because it could be construed as rehabilitating the land for commercial purposes.

Harry Price, Environmental Commission Chair, stated that in his talks with the NJ DEP, the State would only agree to cutting of the hay. Mr. Price said that it will take three years to get a yield from the property. Mr. Price would like the Township to approve the resolution as described by Mrs. Price.

After discussion, Mr. Benbrook said that this should be advertised to solicit proposals. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to authorize Mr. Benbrook to prepare an RFP for the cutting of the hay at the Jones Farm property, which was seconded by Mrs. Price.

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

Mrs. Price said that the sewer feasibility study is progressing by Van Cleef. The ad hoc committee is continuing their meetings and Mrs. Price will keep the Committee apprised of any progress.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker reported that our two (2) year contract with EMEX, the company that performs energy auctions, will expire in September. The EMEX representative has contacted Mayor Shoemaker regarding a new agreement. Mayor Shoemaker asked for Committee approval to pursue the reverse action procedure to guarantee the best energy rate for the Township. Mr. Lance made this motion, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson. This motion will authorize the Mayor to participate in the August auction on energy rates.

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

Mayor Shoemaker outlined township roads which are in dire need of repair. The list includes the eastern portion of Gwinnup Road, a section of Heller Hill Road, and the Lambert Road/Route 94

intersection. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to authorize these repairs, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

The Warren County Office of Emergency Management sent a letter to Blairstown stating that there is one (1) property in the Township that is eligible for purchase and demolition with FEMA grant monies. For a property to be eligible, it must have sustained severe, repetitive flood damage. Warren County is asking for a letter from the Township requesting participation in the program. The Township only needs to maintain the land in perpetuity. Mr. Lance made a motion to participate in the FEMA program, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson.

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

The JCP&L vegetative management program has continued to remove hazardous trees from private properties. JCP&L has presented the Township with two (2) vouchers for free trees to be planted at a location as directed by the Township.

FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or comments from the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Anderson. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk