

Approved: January 26, 2021

## **MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **MINUTES**

**January 12, 2021**  
**(Via GoToMeeting and In-Person)**

**7:00 PM**

#### **OPENING STATEMENT**

Mayor Innella called the Montague Township Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. announcing that adequate notice had been provided to the New Jersey Herald and the Sunday New Jersey Herald for publication in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda of the meeting according to the Open Public Meetings Act.

#### **FLAG SALUTE**

The Pledge of Allegiance commenced.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Present were: Ms. Crawford (attending by phone), Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone, Mayor Innella.  
Also present was Clerk DeFabiis

Absent: None

Mayor Innella added one amendment to the agenda, under Old Business, Personnel Manual (George Zitone).

#### **MINUTES**

Regular Committee Meeting of December 29, 2020  
Annual Reorganization Meeting of January 5, 2021

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the minutes from the Regular Committee Meeting of December 29, 2020 and the Annual Reorganization Meeting of January 5, 2021. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **VOUCHERS**

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve payment of the vouchers. Ms. Martin seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **ORDINANCES** (First Reading)

(None)

#### **ORDINANCES** (Second Reading)

(None)

#### **RESOLUTIONS**

2021-10 AUTHORIZATION TO CANCEL TOWNSHIP TAX SALE CERTIFICATE  
(BLOCK 4.06 LOT 4)

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-10. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-11 OUTSIDE LIEN REDEMPTIONS  
(BLOCK 39 LOT 24.02, BLOCK 39 LOT 24.02 B01, BLOCK 44 LOT 3,  
BLOCK 18.52 LOT 4)

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-11. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Montague Grange – Mayor Innella informed those in attendance that the Montague Grange is requesting that the Township add the Montague Grange building to the list of buildings that are maintained by the Township for snow removal and lawn mowing, and to provide help with the insurance payment they must carry on the property

The Township already plows, mowing is done every couple weeks, and they were asked to hold to last year's pricing on the insurance.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Guardrails on County Road (Mayor)

A letter will be written to the County asking when they can fix the damaged guard rails on County roads in town.

Old Mine Road – Mayor Innella would like a letter written to the National Park Service because the road is a disaster. Some potholes are 50 to 100 feet long making it hard to walk safely or ride a bike. He stated that from the Sandyston border down the road is perfect.

Animal Control Contract - Mayor Innella informed those in attendance that Wantage Township did not renew the agreement for animal control. He stated that there are three possible options. One person, who has the credentials, was contacted and would do it for \$13,000 but has an issue with Tuesdays and Fridays where he cannot be here until 4:00 pm or after. This person also lives fifty minutes away. He went on to say that Kountry Kennels would board animals if needed for \$2000 for the year, but if there are any veterinary bills, the Township would have to pay for them. Vernon was contacted, and they are interested in a Shared Service Agreement. He stated that if they can come in around \$15,000, the Township would be better off going with them. No action was taken on this matter.

Burned Out Buildings – Ms. Martin stated that there has been an issue with burned out buildings going on now for ten years. There is about \$183,000 of income from the fees collected on vacant and abandoned properties. The owner of the property is responsible to pay these fees, and on some of the properties, the owners have left town. Unless the property is a health hazard, the Town cannot go on the property. There is also an account with \$18,000 to \$20,000 in it for the purpose of taking down these types of buildings. Ms. Yarosz would need to be contacted for details on this account. The Township wants to pay to tear down the burned out buildings or be able to put fencing around them. The State has not really said what the Township can do with the money in the account. It was supposed to be put there for maintenance on the property. As a first step, the Township attorney will need to determine who owns the properties.

Solar

The Township attorney has read the background document, but needs the contract forwarded to him. If what is in the discussion, is in the contract, it looks like a good deal for the Township to save money and for GeoScape to make money by putting power back into the grid. The Township would want to make sure there is a provision to buy the panels for \$1 after twenty years or have GeoScape remove the panels in case they are more degraded at that point. The attorney would like them to be obliged contractually to do it, but to demand it might hurt the financial feasibility of the project for them to the point of not being interested. GeoScape will be contacted to see if they have done anything similar with other municipalities. At the next meeting, the Township will be advised of what needs to be done or any issues to be addressed.

Municipal Building Closing - Mayor Innella stated that there was discussion on whether to keep Town Hall open to the public due to the rising COVID numbers. For right now, will work on keeping people from going into the back offices. With the limited number of employees in town hall and the DPW, one or two people coming down with COVID would be trouble. There is no word from the State on when municipal employees can get the vaccine.

School Election – Mayor Innella informed those in attendance that at the last meeting there was discussion about moving the school board elections from November to April. The Township had gotten a letter from Lafayette Township requesting support for this. The Montague school district passed a Resolution at their reorganization meeting to move it back to this April. Those papers need to be filed by the January 25<sup>th</sup>. The school was put on notice, and hopefully there will not be resistance to it. The Township is not part of Lafayette's school district

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regionalization, so there is no impact for the Town to send a letter to be part of their resolution to move school board elections.

**Short Term Rental (Air BNB)**

The Committee wants to prohibit air BNB's in the township. An Ordinance needs to be drawn up basically stating the Township is going to make unlawful the compensated use or occupancy of "dwelling units", which is residences, for any length of time shorter than a given number of days, such as 60. This would mean the same individual for the same amount of time. The option should be kept open for someone to rent their house to a friend and carve-outs should be made for house guests and housekeeping staff. Land Use and Code Enforcement want to have something on the books, and the attorney will take a look at Montague's code to make the Ordinance clear.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Personnel Manual** – There was a brief discussion regarding the Personnel Manual. Members of the Committee will go through the whole personnel manual, but currently the issue of vacation time needs to be addressed. It needs to be decided if paid time off will be on an anniversary date or calendar date after the first year. There is currently no notice being given when employees take time off. It is difficult to keep track of days off. The manual should state that vacation should be scheduled a particular number of days in advance with a supervisor's approval. There was a problem during December with employees trying to use their days before losing them. Currently days cannot be carried over. The Committee will be given copies of the current vacation policy in the manual to comment on, and it will be discussed further.

**Tax Collector – December 2020**

Prepaid taxes collected for 2021 were \$49,436.88. Current taxes collected for 2020 in the month of December were \$105,291.70. Interest collected for the month of December was \$2731.23. Outside Lien Redemptions for the month of December 2020 were \$10,777.00. Total taxes collected for the month of December 2020 were \$168,236.81. Year-to-Date taxes collected for 2020 were \$10,438,284.28.

**Construction Department – December 2020**

There were 22 permits issued. No Certificates of Occupancy were issued. There were 21 Certificates of Approval. There were no Certificates of Continued Occupancy issued. Total collected for the month of December 2020 was \$9,228.00.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to three minutes per person)**

Mr. Merusi made a motion to open to public participation. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote. There was no public participation at town hall, and no participation from the public who called in to the meeting by phone. A motion was made by Mr. Zitone to close to public participation. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

**ADJOURN**

Mr. Merusi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 pm. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**EILEEN DEFABIIS, RMC  
MUNICIPAL CLERK**