

Approved: May 25, 2021

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

MAY 11, 2021
(Via GoToMeeting)
7:00 PM

OPENING STATEMENT

Mayor Innella called the Montague Township Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. announcing that adequate notice has 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, Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone, Mayor Innella
Also present was Clerk DeFabiis, Attorney Rossmeissl and CFO Sharon Yarosz. Municipal Accountant Heidi Wohlleb attended by phone

Absent: None

VOUCHERS

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

MINUTES

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 27, 2021. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (First Reading)

2021-09 ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AMENDING CHAPTER 76, ZONING, OF THE TOWNSHIP CODE TO PROHIBIT THE OPERATION OF ANY CLASS OF CANNABIS BUSINESS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP'S GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES.

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Ordinance 2021-09 upon introduction. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

2021-08 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR THE RESURFACING OF NEW MASHIPACONG ROAD – SECTION I & II AND APPROPRIATING \$60,000.00 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND – IMPROVEMENTS TO ROADS IN THE GENERAL CAPITAL FUND FOR SUCH PURPOSE AND \$341,200.00 FROM A GRANT AWARDED BY THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR SUCH PURPOSE.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Ordinance 2021-08. Mr. Merusi seconded. Ms. Crawford made a motion to open to the public for discussion regarding Ordinance 2021-08. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

With no comments from the public, Mr. Zitone made a motion to close to the public, Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Clerk DeFabiis called the roll, and the motion to approve Ordinance 2021-08 carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

RESOLUTIONS

2021-35 DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA SPECIAL USE PERMIT

Ms. Crawford made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-35. Mr. Merusi seconded. Ms. Crawford and the other Committee members discussed some new additions to this year's contract. Clerk DeFabiis will be forwarding a copy of the contract to the Montague DPW. Clerk DeFabiis then called the roll, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-36 2021 LOCAL MUNICIPAL BUDGET READ BY TITLE ONLY

Clerk DeFabiis read the Resolution, in full, to all in attendance and certified that a copy of the budget was available for public inspection. Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-36. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote. Clerk DeFabiis also added that the CFO had received approval from the State to allow the Township to go forward with the adoption of the 2021 Local Municipal Budget.

2021-37 ADOPTION OF THE 2021 LOCAL MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Mayor Innella stated that the amount of appropriations and authorization for municipal purposes totals \$1,486,026.00. The total budget for the year is 2,768,128.70, which is an increase of \$20,000 over last year or 1.36%. The average home in Montague that is assessed at \$153,952 would see a rate increase of \$8.61.

Municipal Account Heidi Wohlleb commented that with the adopted budget the Township will be maintaining the services that the residents are used to, providing approximately \$300,000.00 in Capital Funds, and they are starting to aggressively pay down notes on the Community Center/Firehouse using a reasonable amount of surplus while coming in with a minimal amount of a tax increase.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-37 adopting the 2021 Local Municipal Budget. Ms. Crawford seconded. Ms. Crawford made a motion to open to public for discussion regarding Resolution 2021-37. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

With no comments from the public, Ms. Martin made a motion to close to the public. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Clerk DeFabiis called the roll, and the motion to approve the adoption of the 2021 Local Municipal Budget carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-38 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MONTAGUE REPUBLICAN CLUB TO UTILIZE THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY CENTER FOR ITS 'MEET THE CANDIDATES' EVENT ON SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2021

Attorney Rossmeissl commented that this Resolution is necessary to host the event, that was previously scheduled to take place, since the Township Committee has not yet introduced or adopted a fee schedule for the rental of the Township Community Center. Attorney Rossmeissl has reached out to the County Democratic Committee, since there is no local club, and offered them the same courtesy.

Ms. Crawford made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-38. Ms. Martin seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-39 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY CERTIFYING THE 2021/2022 SCHOOL TAXES TO THE SUSSEX COUNTY BOARD OF TAXATION.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-39. Mr. Merusi seconded. Mayor Innella stated that the Township Committee chose to make a \$100,000 budget cut to the Fund Balance in the School Budget. Clerk DeFabiis then called the roll, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sussex County Tax Administrator – Mayor Innella acknowledge receipt of Final Equalization Table for the County of Sussex for the Year 2021.

Elks USA and American Legion Riders – “The Moving Wall” event September 9 thru 13, 2021
The Sussex County Elks Lodge and the American Legion Riders is reaching out to the community to help assist with the fundraising effort for “The Moving Wall”, which is a half-size replica of the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, visits the county in its thirty-year history traveling the country. Mayor Innella asked if there was any way that the Township could donate to this effort. Ms. Martin cautioned that if the Township donates to one organization then they could be responsible to donate to others that ask as well. She continued saying the past practice has been to get the information out to the residents and allow them to donate directly. Mr. Merusi made a motion to donate \$500 to “The Moving Wall” event. Ms. Crawford seconded. CFO Sharon Yarosz was then asked whether a donation of this kind could bring up issues in the future. Ms. Yarosz commented that the Township can do so, so the decision is really theirs. Clerk DeFabiis then called the roll, and the motion to donate \$500.00 to “The Moving Wall” event carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Mayor Innella amended the meeting Agenda to include under New Business – Sussex County Department of Health (Ms. Martin) and Cell Phone.

NEW BUSINESS

Municibid – Mr. Zitone stated that it looks like Hampton Township is going to accept the Township of Montague’s offer for the purchase of their Grader, so he is looking for approval to list the Township of Montague’s current Grader, the old Roller, and the Fire Department Brush Truck for sale on Municibid. He also expressed interest in a used Sweeper that is listed on Municibid for sale. The starting bid is \$5,000.00 for a 2004 Sweeper which the DPW has looked at. Mr. Zitone made a motion to approving spending/bidding no more than \$12,000.00 on the 2004 Sweeper that is listed on the Municibid website. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Summer Hours – Mr. Zitone informed the Committee that the DPW would like to have Summer hours again this year, and the Municipal Building if they want to. The DPW and Municipal Building will be on Summer Hours for the months of June, July, and August. The DPW building will be open from 6:00 am to 2:30pm and the Municipal Building will be 7:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Cleaning Service – Mr. Zitone stated that he feels we should get quotes for a cleaning service for the Montague Township Municipal Building to be cleaned once a week and the Community Center to be cleaned twice per month. Mayor Innella asked to include a price for cleaning after special events at the Community Center.

Zoning Officer – Mayor Innella explained that he has talked with the Zoning Officer and his mentor Kevin Kervatt. Mr. Kervatt commented that it is apparent that there has not been much done with the Housing part of the job. For the Zoning Officer, George Hutnick, to get this in order as well as many of the other items with Zoning, Housing and Code Enforcement he will need more time in the office. Ms. Martin asked if it would be possible to ask the Building Official if the Construction Department Secretary would also be able to assist Mr. Hutnick in some of the administrative tasks to alleviate some of the time-consuming items such as letters of violation. Mr. Merusi made a motion to hire Mr. Hutnick for one extra day. Ms. Martin seconded, and the motion carried with Ms. Crawford, Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi and Mayor Innella all voting yes and Mr. Zitone voting no.

Sussex County Department of Health – Ms. Martin informed those in attendance that a phone call was received from the Sussex County Department of Health and they indicated that Montague Township had a low vaccination rate for the Covid-19 vaccine. They are willing to setup a popup site in Montague since transportation to the current vaccination site can be challenging for some of the residents. The County Health Department said they would need at least 20 people to register first before they could set anything up. The Committee would like to move forward with getting this popup site in Montague for the residents.

Cell Phone – Mayor Innella explained that that the Fire Marshall Matt Kansky is requesting a Township issued cell phone to use to answer residents’ questions, schedule inspections, etcetera since he currently is using his personal cell phone and no longer wants to do so. The Committee agreed with a unanimous voice vote to allow the Finance Clerk to go forward in ordering a cell phone for Mr. Kansky.

OLD BUSINESS

Mitchell Humphrey & Co. Software – A quote was received from Mitchell Humphrey to purchase a Zoning and Code Enforcement program for the Zoning/Housing/Code Enforcement Officer. Ms. Martin asked for permission to contact the sales representative regarding some of the fees as well as how the data will be populated into the program. The Committee agreed.

Draft Ordinance – Community Center Fee Schedule – Attorney Rossmeissl told the committee that this draft ordinance is for their review and comments. He did a few questions regarding the separation of events and meetings, for instance, if the Boy Scouts hold a meeting at the Community Center, would the Committee want to have a charge? The Committee clarified that in these instances for the local non-profit groups to conduct their meetings at the Community Center they do not wish to have a fee charged. Ms. Crawford also added that she felt that the Community Center fees for all the categories were a little high. Some suggestions were then made to lower the fees. This fee schedule will be introduced at the next meeting.

Generator– Mayor Innella informed those in attendance commented that the Fire Department had sold their old building and proceeds from selling the building is to be donated to the Township to defray some of the building costs, and other costs for required items in the new Firehouse/Community Center. Under Mayor Innella’s direction, the Fire Department has been holding on to these monies because they are trying to figure out the best way to pay for the Generator at the New Firehouse/Community Center as well as purchasing a few new Scott Air-Packs for the Fire Department. The Fire Department would like to move forward with getting a Generator installed as this is of the utmost importance. It takes about five minutes to manually open the garage doors if there is a power outage and the Fire Department must go on an emergency call. If the Fire Department pays for this work, then they would not need to pay prevailing wage like the Township would so there would be a significant cost savings. Mayor Innella commented that the Township has also been waiting for the guidance from the Federal Government on how the funds can be sent as a part of the American Rescue Plan which they were hoping to use part of the \$358,000.00 that is set to be sent to Montague for purchase and installation of the Generator for the New Firehouse/Community Center. Attorney Rossmeissl explained that the guidance has come out and the language is still the same regarding infrastructure, but the definitions are much broader than once thought and will be much more lenient.

Scott Air-Packs – Mayor Innella stated that the Fire Department’s current Scott Air-Packs are decertified so they are currently leasing some. They have been able to secure a bank loan for the purchase of new Air-Packs for the Fire Department, but they would need an upfront payment of \$27,000.00 so they are asking if they can use part of the monies from the proceeds of the sale of the old Firehouse building to purchase these Air-Packs. Per the agreement between the Township and the Fire Department, this is exactly what the money was to be allocated towards in the first place. Mr. Merusi made a motion to authorize the Fire Department to take \$27,000.00 from the proceeds of the sale of the Firehouse as a down payment for the loan on the purchase of Scott Air-Packs. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Burned Out Buildings – Attorney Rossmeissl informed the Committee that 174 River Road is the next property that they would like to send a notice to have demolition begin. There is a certain process that must be followed by the Building Official and the Township which unfortunately can be time consuming before a lien can be placed on the property.

REPORTS

Construction Permit Activity Report – April 2021 - There were 12 permits issued for the month of April 2021 for a total collected of \$2,023.

Tax Collector – April 2021 - Current taxes collected for 2021 for the month of April totaled \$853,735.63. Prior year’s taxes collected \$16,532.49. Interest collected for the month of April totaled \$2,546.42 for a total collected for the month of April of \$872,814.54.

Recreation Report – Ms. Martin announced that the Grange will be holding a play on Saturday, May 29, 2021 at 3:00 pm at the Minisink Church Pavilion. There will also be a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Montague Township Firehouse/Community Center on Saturday, June 26, 2021 at 3:00 pm. The Miss Montague Pageant will then follow at 4:00 pm ending with the Fireworks display at dark. Ms. Crawford added that the Town-wide Cleanup day will be held on May 14th

from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm with Paper Shredding available that day only, and on May 15th from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to three minutes per person)

Mr. Zitone made a motion to open to the public. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Jody Case-Kennedy – Ms. Kennedy thanked the Committee for allowing the Montague Republican Club to use the Community Center for the ‘Meet the Candidates’ day on May 23rd from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. Ms. Case-Kennedy was pleased to hear that the Committee is considering raising the cost of the Landlord Registration Fees. She is concerned with the way some of these rental units are kept.

Darren Ponce – Mr. Ponce asked if the Committee ever got confirmation on how many “free” tires would be allowed at the Town-wide Cleanup Day. Mr. Zitone replied that it will be 4 free tires allowed and anything after that requires a fee.

Ms. Martin made a motion to close to the public. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURN

Ms. Crawford made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**DANA KLINGER, RMC
DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK**