

Approved: July 27, 2021

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

July 13, 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 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: Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone, Mayor Innella
Also present was Deputy Clerk Dana Klinger and Municipal Attorney Rob Rossmeissl

Excused: Ms. Crawford and Ms. Martin

VOUCHERS

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

MINUTES

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

2021-14 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE MITCHELL HUMPHREY SYSTEM FOR ZONING AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE MANAGER. THE TOTAL COST OF THE EQUIPMENT IS \$15,000, APPROPRIATING A SUM OF \$15,000 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve this Ordinance. Mr. Merusi seconded. Mr. Zitone made a motion to open to public for discussion regarding Ordinance 2021-14. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

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

Deputy Clerk Klinger then called the roll, and the motion to approve Ordinance 2021-14 carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

RESOLUTIONS

2021-60 RESOLUTION APPROVING SOCIAL AFFAIRS PERMIT TO THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-60. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-61 APPROVAL TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION AND EXECUTE A GRANT CONTRACT WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE NEW MASHIPACONG ROAD – SECTION III PROJECT

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-61. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-62 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE CHAIRS, TABLES, AND RELATED ACCESSORIES, AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$10,970.48 WITH THE FUNDS TO COME INITIALLY FROM A \$1,500 DONATION BY THE SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB OF MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP, INC., AND THE BALANCE TO COME FROM THE NET PROCEEDS OF THE SALE OF THE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT BLOCK 18.42, LOT 5; 274 CLOVE ROAD IN THE TOWNSHIP

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-62. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-63 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE AND HAVE INSTALLED A 80kw SINGLE PHASE 120/240 VOLT GENERAC DIESEL GENERATOR AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$51,860, WITH THE FUNDS TO COME FROM THE NET PROCEEDS OF THE SALE OF THE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT BLOCK 18.42, LOT 5; 274 CLOVE ROAD IN THE TOWNSHIP

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-63. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-64 AUTHORIZE TAX TITLE LIEN REDEMPTION (BL 18.56, LT 7, CO1)

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-64. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-65 AUTHORIZING ELECTRONIC TAX SALES

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-65. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-66 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE AND HAVE INSTALLED MOLDED PLASTIC LETTERING FOR THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY CENTER AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$3,800 WITH THE FUNDS TO COME FROM THE NET PROCEEDS OF THE SALE OF THE REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT BLOCK 18.42, LOT 5; 274 CLOVE ROAD IN THE TOWNSHIP

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-66. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

NJ State Firemen's Association – Municipal Approval of William Dickson – Mr. Zitone made a motion to grant Municipal Approval of William Dickson for the NJ State Firemen's Association. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Old Mine Road Commons Homeowners Association – Request for Various Road Signs/Patrols – Old Mine Road Commons Homeowners Association President, Steven Guida, was in attendance at the meeting therefore the Committee moved this discussion to public comment.

Kat Curreri – Requesting Use of Community Center for Fitness Class – Ms. Curreri is a local Montague Resident and would like to hold a Fitness Class at the Community Center a few times per week. The Committee was in favor of granting Ms. Curreri use of the facility on a trial basis to see how it goes. Mr. Merusi suggested charging \$1 per participant so this way Ms. Curreri isn't branded to a fee with the township if there is a class that has less attendees. Mr. Zitone suggested just having Ms. Curreri make a donation to the township at the end of each month. Mayor Innella added that it may be easier just to access some sort of fee like Mr. Merusi had suggested. The Committee agreed to move forward with allowing Ms. Curreri to use the Community Center to hold a fitness class. A resolution will be drafted and formally adopted at a Committee Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Abandon Roads – Mr. Zitone commented that at the end of last year the Committee discussed abandoning a section of Reinhardt Road from the last house on Reinhardt Road, which is 52 Reinhardt Road, from there up to where Robert Wright’s property is in that section. The other area they would be interested in abandoning would be after the last house on Hidden Hollow. Attorney Rossmeissl explained that abandoning any roads, or section of, must be done by Ordinance and must also go through the Land Use Board. Mr. Zitone further added that there is a lot of roadway that the Township maintains in those two areas and there are no houses or people living on those sections and abandoning these would just turn them into private roads. The Committee agreed that they would like to abandon the section on Reinhardt Road first.

Unfit Structures – Mr. Merusi along with the Township Attorney and Construction Official have been working on getting some of the burned-out buildings in the Township demolished. Mr. Huber, the Construction Official, gave Mr. Merusi a copy of the Town of Newton’s Unfit Structures Ordinance. Mr. Huber feels that if Montague adopted a similar Ordinance then he would have a little more teeth to enforce. Attorney Rossmeissl added that though he feels that it is a good idea and is something that the Township should consider adopting because it basically codifies that the Township can put a lien on any property if they deem it unfit for any reason, but it does not give the Township any rights that they don’t already have.

OLD BUSINESS

Burned-Out Buildings –Attorney Rossmeissl explained that the property located at 172 River Road, that the Township was going to go after next for demolition of the burned-out building, hasn’t paid their taxes in over 9 years. The Construction Official Bob Huber suggested having the property go through tax foreclosure first and then taking ownership and then demolishing. Attorney Rossmeissl feels that this would not be the best approach. If the Township waits and does not foreclose they would then access a lien now and ultimately it would not be a cost to the Township, assuming of course that the Township can get whoever owns the property now (the bank) to pay the lien. Mr. Zitone commented that when it comes to some of these properties you really have to weigh out whether or not it is really worth it. By the time you go through all the legal costs, the foreclosure costs, the costs to tear the structure down and so on, you might have spent over \$50,000 but are only going to get back \$20,000. Attorney Rossmeissl agreed that you certainly have to weigh the pros and cons. The Committee then discussed which properties would make the most sense to go after, which ones will they get response from and which ones are the biggest issues.

Cleaning Service – Deputy Clerk Klinger explained that Chelbus Cleaning was awarded the contract for Cleaning Services for the Montague Municipal Building and the Community Center. Chelbus Cleaning then contacted the Township, saying that they are having a difficult time in finding someone to cover this area. They asked if the Township would be so inclined to wait until they can get someone, or they would certainly understand if the Township could not do so and had to go in another direction. Mr. Zitone commented that the next lowest bidder was VanGuard Services which was \$165 per month more than the quote from Chelbus. The Committee agreed to give Chelbus until the end of the month and then revisit this issue if need be.

REPORTS

Construction Department – June 2021 – There were 29 permits issued for the month of June 2021 for a total collected of \$17,574.

Tax Collector – June 2021 - Current taxes collected for 2021 for the month of June 2021 totaled \$97,434.93. Prior year’s taxes collected \$5,902.54. Interest collected for the month of June totaled \$3,322.63 and \$2,588.17 in Tax Title Liens for a total collected for the month of June of \$113,124.47.

Municipal Updates – Sign Board – Mayor Innella thanked the Fire Official, Matthew Kansky for his time and efforts in getting a new LED Electrical Sign Board for the Municipal Building and Fire Department purchased. This Sign Board was also paid for from the violations that Mr. Kansky collects for Fire Safety.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to three minutes per person)

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

Steven Guida – Minisink Drive - Old Mine Road Commons Homeowners Association – Request for Various Road Signs/Patrols (*moved from Correspondence*) – Mr. Guida explained that as of late there has been an increase in speeding along Minisink Drive. This road has many curves and bends making it dangerous to go at higher speeds. Currently there are no signs posted for speed limits. The Old Mine Road Commons Homeowners Association is hoping the Township can consider placing speed limit signs on the road to hopefully deter some of the speeding. Mayor Innella explained that as much as they would like to just put a sign up they have to first have the Township Engineer come out and a speed study has to be accessed. Mr. Guida also discussed some concerns with heavy truck traffic and speeding on River Road as well. Since River Road is a County road Mr. Guida has been in contact with the County Department of Engineering for some additional signage i.e.: deer crossing and No Engine Brake. He is hoping that maybe with the additional Sheriff's Patrols in town they could spend some time on River Road as well to slow some of these drivers down. The Committee will look into some of these issues to see what they can do.

Kathy Roll – Reinhardt Road – Ms. Roll asked how many years can go by with someone not paying taxes before the Township will do something. Attorney Rossmeissl replied saying that this is done by State Statute and it basically comes down to the discretion of the Township to decide to put the property up for tax sale. Mayor Innella added that in the years well before this Committee the Township neglected to do any tax foreclosures and now this Committee is doing their best to play catch up, but it is a very timely and pricey process. In fact, even at the current rate it is still going to take about 7-years to catch up. Ms. Roll then discussed issues that have been ongoing for years with a neighboring property.

There being no further comment from the public, Mr. Merusi made a motion to close to the public. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURN

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

Respectfully submitted:

**DANA KLINGER, RMC
DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK**