

Approved: October 19, 2021

## **MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **MINUTES**

**September 14, 2021**

**7:00 PM**

#### **OPENING STATEMENT**

Mayor Innella called the Montague Township Committee meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., following the Board of Health Meeting, 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 at the Board of Health Meeting prior to the Township Committee Meeting.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Present were: Ms. Crawford, Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone, Mayor Innella  
Also present was Deputy Clerk Dana Klinger and Municipal Attorney Rob Rossmeissl

Absent: None

#### **PROCLAMATION**- Childhood Cancer Awareness Month - September

Mayor Innella read a Proclamation recognizing and declaring the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in the Township of Montague.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept this proclamation. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

#### **MINUTES**

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 24, 2021 and the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of August 24, 2021. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **VOUCHERS**

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

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

2021-16 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY FOR THE YEAR 2021"

Attorney Rossmeissl expanded upon this Ordinance saying, this Ordinance was necessary to amend simply to add the position of the Community Center Caretaker. There are no other changes to the Salary Ordinance.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve this Ordinance. Mr. Merusi seconded. Mr. Merusi made a motion to open to public for discussion regarding Ordinance 2021-16. Ms. Crawford 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. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Deputy Clerk Klinger then called the roll, and the motion to approve Ordinance 2021-16 carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

#### **RESOLUTIONS**

2021-86 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING OLD MINE COMMONS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION TO UTILIZE THE MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY CENTER FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOLDING THEIR SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING ON OCTOBER 2, 2021.

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-86. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with Ms. Crawford abstaining, and Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone and Mayor Innella all voting yes.

2021-87        AUTHORIZE REFUND OF TAXES; BL 48.01, LT 20.02, FOR A 100%  
                  DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-87. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2021-88        RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF  
                  SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING A \$13,000  
                  INCREASE IN THE FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR THE MONTAGUE  
                  TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE SCOTT  
                  AIR-PAKS, AT A TOTAL COST NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000, 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

Ms. Crawford made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-88. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Sussex County Board of Commissioners – Certificate of Recognition Honorable Mention Municipal Bulletin Board Display at the 2021 Sussex County Farm and Horseshow. Mayor Innella and the Committee commended Township Historian, Maureen Kaman for her time and effort that she put into the Municipal Bulletin Board Display once again this year.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mayor Innella amended the Meeting Agenda to included under New Business Montague Garden Club and Grit Hauling Quotes

Seal Coating – Municipal Parking Lot Quotes – Mayor Innella commented that the Township has received three quotes for Sealcoating, Crack filling and Line Striping of the Municipal Building Back Parking Lot with the Driveway Roadway and a Septate Quote for the Front Parking Lot. After review of the quotes and some discussion between the Committee, Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the quote received from Eclipse Asphalt, subject to certification of funds by the Township CFO. This approval is to include the Estimate #3059 in full for sweeping, crack filling, sealcoating, and line striping for the Back-Parking Lot with the Driveway Roadway and just the crack filling from Estimate #3058 for the Front Parking and the cost is to not exceed \$9,000. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Volunteer Dinner – Ms. Crawford announced that the Volunteer Dinner is scheduled for Friday, October 22, 2021 at the High Point Country Club beginning with a cash bar at 5:30 PM and Dinner to begin at 6:00 PM. This will be buffet style, which with gratuity comes to about \$30 per person. The Volunteer of the Year Award will also be presented at the Dinner.

Water Treatment Equipment Proposals – Mayor Innella explained that there are issues with the water being very hard both at the Municipal Building and at the New Firehouse/Community Center. Mayor Innella reached out to various companies for proposals on installing some Water Treatment Equipment at these locations and only two companies responded. The first was from RA Data and the second was received from Smith Plumbing and Heating. RA Data was insistent that a commercial water softener would be needed in the Community Center since it has a two-inch pipe, but the line coming in from the well is only a one-inch pipe, which only pumps maybe 15-16 gallons a minute, so to put in a commercial unit seems excessive especially since the cost is substantially higher. RA Data came in at \$2,495 for the Town Hall Water Softener and \$12,500 for the Community Center/Firehouse Water Softener for a total of \$14,995 for both units and installation. The quotes that Smith Plumbing submitted came in at \$3,595 for the Town Hall Water Softener and \$4,150 for the Community Center/Firehouse Water Softener for a total of \$7,745 for both units and installation. Attorney Rossmeissl explained that the Township could use monies from the American Rescue Plan to fund this project because it is for a water infrastructure project. Ms. Crawford made a motion to approve the two quotes received by Smith Plumbing and Heating for installation of a Water Softener at the Montague Township Municipal Building and at the Community Center to include an in-line sediment filter at the Community Center. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with Ms. Crawford, Ms. Martin, Mr.

Merusi, and Mayor Innella all voting yes and Mr. Zitone abstaining.

Fire Department Barbeque Pit – Mayor Innella commented that the Montague Fire Department has been working on the Barbeque Pit, but there really hasn't been a set budget. The funds are coming from the revenues from the sale of the old Firehouse. Ms. Crawford has provided the Mayor and Committee with a listing of the current expenditures that have been charged against the proceeds received from the sale of the old Firehouse. The Deputy Clerk will go through the figures and compare the current Resolutions and tighten up some of these expenditures, this way the Township can then have the remaining funds transferred to the Township.

Fire Department Funding – There have been a few times where the Fire Department has come before the Committee asking for funding for items and equipment that has been decertified and then there seems to be a scramble to find the funds. The Committee would like to continue to build into the budget, funds for any future equipment purchases similar to what they currently do for the DPW Equipment and Vehicles. The Committee would like the Fire Department to come up with a five-year plan, so they can budget for these items.

Electrical Proposals for Sign Board – Mayor Innella commented that the Township has recently had a LED Sign Board installed at the Municipal Building that would require a new electrical line ran to it. The Township received two quotes, one being from EM Electric which totaled \$5,160. The second quote received was from CRL Electric which totaled \$1,990. Mr. Merusi then made a motion to award the electrical wiring of the Sign Board to CRL Electric. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Garden Club – Ms. Martin is a member of the Montague Township Garden Club and they have asked that the Township budget some funds for the Club to purchase flowers to do plantings in the “Welcome to Montague” signs for next year.

Grit Hauling – Mayor Innella stated that the DPW Foreman was able to find a price on Road Grit this year that is five dollars less per ton than what the Township paid last year. With that being said they will need a company to haul the grit from the quarry to the DPW yard, since the DPW trucks only can haul a small amount. The DPW foreman was able to obtain three quotes for grit hauling. The first was received from North Church Sand and Gravel which was \$162.50 per load (25-ton load), the second was from Zitone Construction which was \$160 per load (25-ton load), and the last was received from Adamskey Trucking for \$237.50 per load (25-ton load). Mr. Merusi made a motion to accept the quote for Grit Hauling received from Zitone Construction. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with Ms. Crawford, Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, and Mayor Innella all voting yes and Mr. Zitone abstaining.

Mayor Innella amended the meeting Agenda to include under New Business - Zoning Fees.

Zoning Fees – Attorney Rossmeissl commented that the Township Committee had expressed their interest in amending the Zoning violation fees. The current Zoning violation fee is set at \$500, but notably the current fee schedule reads that the fee shall not exceed \$500 per violation, per day. Attorney Rossmeissl added that in general the other Zoning fees are relatively low, so this may be something that the Committee may want to take a look at, as well as, possibly retooling the Zoning Violation fees.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

DPW Equipment – Chipper Quotes – The DPW Foreman received a few quotes for the purchase of a new wood chipper. After a brief review, the Committee had a few questions regarding the quotes that they would like clarification on. This item will be tabled until the next meeting.

Community Center Caretaker Position – Ms. Martin commented that after the interview process was completed for the position of Community Center Caretaker it is her recommendation that the Township consider hiring Mark Lewandowski. The responsibilities of this position will include: showing the space to potential renters, going over the rules and regulations of the building with the renters, and cleaning the building in between rentals. Ms. Martin added that an item the Committee may want to consider for the Community Center is the addition of blinds for the windows. There currently are no blinds and it makes viewing a projection or slide show difficult. Ms. Crawford also added that there needs to be bumper guards installed in front of the Community Center. Ms. Martin then made a motion to hire Mark Lewandowski for the position of Community Center Caretaker on an as needed basis at a rate of \$17 per hour. Ms. Crawford

seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Land Sale Auction – Attorney Rossmeissl mentioned at the last meeting there was discussion regarding the various Municipal owned properties. These properties are lands that the Township has taken ownership of over the years through tax foreclosures. There are numerous lots, which most of them are very low value, so it doesn't always make financial sense to do a land sale auction on each and every one of these. Attorney Rossmeissl has been working with the Tax Assessor, Jason Laliker on which might be the twenty-five highest valued properties. These properties would be the ones that the Township would try to sell at auction, which if all of the properties sold the Township would be adding about \$750,000 in assessed value back to the tax rolls and \$22,000 a year in revenue which would be split up through local taxes, school taxes and county taxes. Attorney Rossmeissl expects about 20-hours of work to complete the land auction. Mr. Zitone asked if there are lots that are neighboring and would it be possible for the lots to be combined and then sold as one single larger lot. Attorney Rossmeissl replied saying it would absolutely be possible. Attorney Rossmeissl will discuss with the Tax Assessor where some efficiency might be able to be found. Ms. Crawford made a motion to have Attorney Rossmeissl proceed with the Land Sale Auction. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

### **REPORTS**

Construction Department – August 2021 – There were 18 permits issued for the month of August 2021 for a total collected of \$3,491.

Tax Collector – August 2021 - Current taxes collected for 2021 for the month of August 2021 totaled \$2,204,504.77. Prior year's taxes collected \$16,027.19. Prepaid Taxes collected totaled \$12,365.08. Interest collected for the month of August totaled \$7,404.42. \$130 was collected in Tax Sale Costs for a total collected for the month of August of \$2,240,431.46.

Municipal Updates – Deputy Clerk Dana Klinger announced to all in attendance that beginning on Monday, September 27, 2021 paving of New Mashipacong Road will commence. Residents should expect delays. The road will remain open for local thru traffic only. Paving will be from River Road to about Cole Haven Terrace. The work is expected to be completed in one week. If any residents would like millings, they can contact Cory Flynn with Schifano Construction at 908-239-0628. Ms. Klinger also announced that the Township Committee will only be holding one meeting for the month of October, which will be held on October 19, 2021 at 7:00 pm at the Municipal Building.

### **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.

Joe Krumpfer – Deckertown Turnpike – Mr. Krumpfer asked if the Township has conducted a market analysis of the market value of the proposed lots for the Land Sale Auction. Attorney Rossmeissl responded, saying no this has not been done yet. Mr. Krumpfer then asked if any of the GP7 lots will be included with the auction. Attorney Rossmeissl replied saying they will not be included. Attorney Rossmeissl further added, that the Township is not in possession of any of those lots, they simply hold tax sale certificates for these lots, they would all have to go through the foreclosure process before they would be eligible for land auction. Mr. Krumpfer asked if the Township has considered consolidating the GP7 lots into one parcel. Attorney Rossmeissl commented saying, considering the amount of tax sale certificate held on these lots the foreclosure process would be a very onerous foreclosure process and then only after this process would the Township be able to combine all of the GP7 lots into one single lot, if they wanted to do so. Mr. Zitone added that most of the GP7 lots aren't even on an improved road. Mr. Krumpfer added that, that is why he would like to see those lots sold to a developer. Attorney Rossmeissl added, that without the promise of a developer being interested in the properties it would be difficult for the Township Committee to want to proceed with this very arduous and costly process. Mr. Krumpfer then stated if the Township, the County and the School Board were to agree to write off or accept a lower amount on the back taxes of these properties then they would have some value and could be sold, but currently the delinquent taxes alone far exceed the market value. Mr. Zitone added that most of those lots are only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> acre lots. Mr. Krumpfer would like to see all of the zoning be changed to R4 for those lots as a part of the Master Plan and then combine all of the lots and possibly sell the land to a developer, but the only way any of that will happen, in Mr. Krumpfer's opinion is to get some sort of concession on the taxes. Mr.

Krumpfer said if the Committee would be in support of a concession, then he could approach the School and County requesting the same. Mayor Innella asked Attorney Rossmeissl if a concession would be allowed. Attorney Rossmeissl said he doesn't think there could be a tax abatement, but there could possibly be a pilot program of some sort, but in Attorney Rossmeissl's experience he has not been a part of or heard of all three entities agreeing to something like this. Mr. Krumpfer commented that he would be willing to do the leg work, if the Committee would say they are in support of it and then he could go to the School Board and hopefully get their support and then with the Township and School Boards support ask for the County. Attorney Rossmeissl replied saying there really isn't any formal action for the Committee to take on this request, if the individual members would like to express their support they could do so, but there is no formal action at tonight's meeting regarding their support. Attorney Rossmeissl added that the Township does have the power to allow redemption at the price that the tax sale certificate originally sold for before interest accrued, but only certain parties can redeem. The Township is looking to creatively work on this, but there are forty-five separate lots. Each lot will require a separate title search at a cost of \$500 each, plus the hours to do the foreclosures. This process will be very costly to the Township, so if there were a promise of a large payoff when ultimately the land was sold on the other side by a developer, then it would make more sense for the Committee to do that. Mayor Innella added that the Township would be the ones having to lay out all the money and all the work to begin this process, but when it all comes down to it the Township only gets 12-14% back through taxes. Mr. Krumpfer expressed his understanding in this matter and added that the bigger thing for the HPCC is that these properties are putting them over 10% delinquency. Therefore, they cannot get capital improvement loans, there is a bridge that needs to be replaced that they cannot get a loan for. People cannot get FHA Mortgages in the community because of the delinquency rate, at this point it is pretty detrimental to the community, so if there is anything that can be done with the lots they would be happy, even if the Township wanted to donate them to the State.

Mr. Krumpfer also discussed the idea of appointing an investigative Committee for short-term rentals. Mayor Innella added that there will be some movement on the short-term rentals, but they still have to work out some kinks. Mayor Innella will forward the information that has already been received to the other members of the Committee and they will be discussing short-term rentals at the next Township Committee Meeting.

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

#### **ADJOURN**

Mr. Zitone made a motion to adjourn at 8:27 pm. Ms. Martin seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**DANA KLINGER, RMC**  
**DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK**