

Approved: January 25, 2022

## MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

### MINUTES

January 11, 2022

7:00 PM

#### OPENING STATEMENT

Deputy Mayor Zitone 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. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, Mr. Merusi and Deputy Mayor Zitone  
Also present was Municipal Clerk Eileen DeFabiis and Municipal Attorney Rob Rossmeissl

Excused: Mayor Innella

#### PROCLAMATION – Recognizing School Choice Week

Deputy Mayor Zitone read a proclamation recognizing January 23 – January 29, 2022 as School Choice Week in the Township of Montague.

#### VOUCHERS

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the vouchers. Mr. Krumpfer seconded. The motion then carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

MINUTES Mr. Merusi made a motion to table the Regular Session and Executive Session Meeting Minutes of December 28, 2021. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the Reorganization Meeting Minutes of January 4, 2022. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

#### ORDINANCES (First Reading)

None

#### ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

None

#### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

All items listed within an asterisk (\*) are considered to be routine and non-controversial by the Township Committee and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Committee member so requests, in which case the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.

Mr. LeDonne made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote for all Consent Agenda items.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

##### RESOLUTIONS

2022-011\* OUTSIDE LIEN REDEMPTION (BL 47, LT 9.10)

2022-012\* AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 2021-125 “OUTSIDE LIEN REDEMPTION”

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Joint Inter-Municipal Court (Frankford, Lafayette, Sandyston, Montague, Walpack and Blirstown) – Regarding Agreement Update to Salaries. Deputy Mayor Zitone gave a brief history of the Agreement. The Township of Montague was paying just about \$71,000 annually for the Joint Inter-Municipal Court back in 2020, last year Blirstown was added to the Agreement and the annual costs decreased to \$54,000 per year. Mayor Zitone further added in the updated Agreement they are asking for salary increases for the court staff of 3.75%, which would be an additional cost of \$1,200, a typical 2% increase, would be \$600. Mr. Krumpfer stated that the labor market is so tough at this time, so if they lose staff it is very difficult to find quality replacements if any, and he feels the Committee should be cognizant of that fact when voting on any type of salary increase. Attorney Rossmeissl added that his firm also represents Andover and Hardyston Township and for this area, Frankford Court Shared Court System might be one of the best options out there. Mr. Merusi made a motion to table this item until the first scheduled Township Budget Meeting, on January 20, 2022. Mr. Krumpfer seconded and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Short-Term Rental Form - Deputy Mayor Zitone commented that Attorney Rossmeissl has drafted a Short-Term Rental Application Form. Attorney Rossmeissl added that he drafted this application based off the Short-Term Rental Ordinance. In his opinion, it covers most of the important information. Deputy Mayor Zitone would like to see the addition of a check-off box for whether or not it is a first-time application or if it is a renewal, which will help the administration not to have to look up each application received. Clerk DeFabiis asked for clarification on which department would be responsible for these applications. Attorney Rossmeissl replied that the application and fees will be submitted through the Clerk's Office, but the idea is for it to then be delegated to a specific employee and then they would become well versed on these. Mr. Krumpfer added that he would like to see an approval date line for the administration to use to help keep track of the approvals/denials.

Walking Path – Mr. Krumpfer explained that it is his understanding that past Committeewoman Gene Crawford had been working on getting a Walking Path put in at the Township Building. Mr. Krumpfer further added that he thinks that a Walking Path would make a great addition for the residents of Montague and he would be happy to take on the responsibility of trying to get one put in. Mr. Merusi agreed and volunteered to assist in any way he could. Mr. Krumpfer added that the DPW could more than likely clear and cut in the path with their equipment. Deputy Mayor Zitone added that the Township Committee has discussed a plan for the Municipal Grounds for some time which would eventually include a playground, a walking path, and a pavilion. They started with the Firehouse/Community Center, so hopefully they can make the others happen as this was the original intent. Mr. Krumpfer asked if there is any reason that the Township would not be able to do so. Deputy Mayor Zitone stated that the biggest issue is that in order to do any of these projects, the Municipal Engineer would have to be involved, as well as the Insurance Agent. Mr. Krumpfer asked if there is a line item within the budget for these costs and if he would be able to contact the Engineer in order to initiate the process. Deputy Mayor Zitone responded saying there is a line item within the budget for engineering costs. Typically, requests are done in house, but they would be able to possibly setup an appointment with the Engineer for some time in the spring for Mr. Krumpfer and one other Committee Member to meet with the Engineer to go over a plan and move forward. Mr. LeDonne added that the Montague Seniors are big advocates of getting this type of project done. The Municipal Clerk will reach out to the Township Engineer expressing the Township's interest in putting in a walking path at the Municipal Building grounds.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Abandoned Roads – Deputy Mayor Zitone stated that he has discussed this item a few times now in the past couple of years. There is a section of road on Reinhardt Road and Hidden Glen that Deputy Mayor Zitone would like to see abandoned by the Township. The section on Reinhardt Road would be from the last house on Reinhardt Road where the pavement ends and becomes just a dirt trail, all the way up to where the next home is on the upper end. There is a section of road in between these two points that has never been maintained and is just a dirt road, but it is actually a township road. By abandoning the road, that section would become a private road and therefore the Township would not be responsible for maintenance or snow plowing. Attorney Rossmeissl added that when this item was last discussed he did take a look at this and the one thing to know is whether or not the road has been dedicated and accepted by the township.

Approved: January 25, 2022

Deputy Mayor Zitone added that it is his understanding that yes, those reads were dedicated and accepted by the town. Attorney Rossmeissl then explained that they would need to reach out to a title search company showing when it was accepted and a certification from the Township Engineer giving the exact parameters that the Township wants to abandon. If there are any property owners within those sections then the Township must give notification, but they do not have any say in it, it would then become private. Deputy Mayor Zitone asked if the other Committee members are in favor of moving forward with this. Mr. LeDonne replied saying it seems that it would be simpler and less controversial to at least start with Reinhardt Road considering the amount of property owners on Hidden Glen. Deputy Mayor Zitone added that the only problem with Hidden Glen is if someone came in and put a house way at the top of Hidden Glen, then the Township would be responsible for plowing, paving and maintain that road. Right now, there are no homes built on it so it would be a lot easier trying to abandon the road now. The other Committee members agreed to pursue abandoning the roads that were mentioned.

### **REPORTS**

Construction Department – December 2021 – There were 13 permits issued for the month of December 2021 for a total collected of \$3,810.

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

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

Ralph Cashell – Minisink Drive – Mr. Cashell expressed concern with the banking services within the town. The Bank was closed for quite a few days before the holiday weekend and at least one day after the holiday weekend. There was a sign posted that if any banking in person was needed then they would have to go to the Augusta branch, which is about 17-miles away. In addition, during that same time they let the ATM run out of cash so you could not even access funds that way. Mr. Cashell recommended that the Township write a letter to provident Bank expressing concern and copy both Congressman Gottheimer and Senator Oroho on the letter since the banks are regulated both by the State and federally. Mr. Cashell added that he has written to customer service and has gotten no response. He is hoping that if the Township sends something, especially with the inclusion of the Congressman and the Senator, they would stand a better chance to hear a response. Clerk DeFabiis added that she did find out that they were closed because of Covid. Mr. Cashell replied that he does have sympathy about that, but the ATM should have been refilled often, especially during the closure. Deputy Mayor Zitone offered to go to the branch directly and discuss these concerns and to see what they are going to do about it. Mr., Krumpfer suggested to ask them for a plan-B for the next time something like this happens. Mr. Cashell added that they are the only bank in town so when they shut down the only thing they can offer is to drive 17-miles down the road, and you would think that, even with Covid, they would be able to get some temporary staff to come fill-in. Deputy Mayor Zitone stated that they will first go and speak directly with the bank and if they don't get much of a response the Township will send a letter.

Mayor Richard Innella – Clove Road – Mr. Innella commented that he did join in remotely to listen in to the meeting, but did not participate in tonight's meeting.

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

### **ADJOURN**

Mr. Merusi made a motion to adjourn at 7:42 PM. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**EILEEN DEFABIIS, RMC  
MUNICIPAL CLERK**