

Approved: April 26, 2022

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

April 12, 2022

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

Absent: None

PRESENTATION

Montague Township Board of Education (School Budget Discussion) Mayor Innella introduced Principal/Acting Superintendent John Nittolo and Business Administrator/School Board Secretary Carl Morelli of the Montague School.

The School Board representatives presented the Committee with their budget presentation for the 2022/2023 School Year, which includes all the details of the school's revenues, expenses, State Aid/State Aid Cuts, and most importantly the school is proposing a zero percent tax increase. Mr. Morelli stated that they have received some questions on how it is possible for the school to keep the taxes flat especially with the State Aid being cut by almost twenty percent. Mr. Morelli added that he is new to the district, just starting in February of this year, and the first task he had was to look at every budget line item and actually compare what was budgeted and what was spent. In doing this, Mr. Morelli found where money has been spent in the past and where it may be utilized more efficiently. Mr. Morelli went on to say that having the residents vote on the School Budget was a new process for him; it was his understanding that last year the budget was not approved, and then was kicked back and forth and scrutinized and cuts had to be made from the Township Committee. Mr. Morelli's goal for this year was to not have the same thing happen again with the budget because when you start going back and forth you are only looking at dollars, you then miss looking at it on an educational side. Behind every dollar that is in the budget is a student, a teacher, or a program, so his philosophy is that from any decisions that are made, if the end result is not for the benefit of a student then they have made the wrong decision. Mr. Morelli further added that the school is on an upswing stating that there are many positive things that are happening and will be happening, and the school is pointed in the right direction. The budget was put together in a way that would continue to keep the school in the right direction moving forward. Many improvements need to be done in the school, from basic things like toilets that need to be replaced to some esthetic items like ceiling tile replacement, to a library that has not been used since 2018, lights are being replaced, and a new roof is going on the building. Mr. Morelli said these kids deserve a place that looks good and makes you feel good when you walk in. Many of these improvements were approved in the past year or two, such as the air conditioning and the roof. Mr. Morelli encouraged anyone with questions or concerns to reach out to him directly. Mr. Zitone asked if the improvements such as the roof and the air conditioning, were those all included in the budget? Mr. Morelli replied that those capital projects were approved in the past few years; therefore, that money has already been set aside but has not been spent yet. Mr. Nittolo added that over the last four or five years the district had plowed about 2.3 million dollars into their Capital Reserve so each year they were rolling about \$500,000 to \$700,000 out of the General Fund and into the Capital Reserve for improvement projects. Mr. Nittolo added that it is great to have this type of money in the Reserves, but it is not great to have this type of money in the Reserves at the expense of the children and their education. The thought was that the HVAC project was going to cost about \$1.5 million in total.

Unfortunately, the lowest bid that was received was about \$2.3 million for the whole project, but the roof project was meant to come from the Reserve as well, so if you break apart the HVAC units into different areas, the School would have been able to re-do maybe one area for a cost of \$1.5 million and still do the roof project. The school is now looking into other ways to complete the HVAC. In building up the Capital Reserves so quickly, that lead to many of the previously mentioned neglected areas within the school. Mr. Nittolo added that when he took over as Superintendent of the school, the County Superintendent toured the school and she stated that the building was one of the most depressing buildings she has ever been in. They have really been listening to the public in their concerns. This year they have hired a Librarian and they are looking into getting a kitchen for the cafeteria. Right now, they have to drive to High Point and pick up the food for the children each day. They really want what is best for the students, the staff, and the community of Montague to make the building and opportunities as attractive as possible. Mr. Nittolo wants this district to be one of the best in the State and County. Mr. Nittolo added that the preschool program is bursting which is a great sign that young families are moving into the town. Mr. Nittolo wrote a grant for the program and they now receive the eighth largest grant in the State, which is about three quarters of a million dollars each year.

Mayor Innella informed those in attendance that he asked for this presentation tonight to make the voters of Montague aware that just like the Township faces budget constraints so does the school, in fact the school has lost about \$275,000 in State Aid or about twenty percent. Mr. Morelli added that most people do not realize that about eighty-five percent of the budget is mandated by the State that they have no control over. The State issues them numbers, such as Charter School numbers that they have to set aside about another \$120,000 for the potential of students to go to Charter schools. The Mayor and Committee then thanked both Mr. Morelli and Mr. Nittolo for their time tonight.

VOUCHERS Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the vouchers. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote. Mayor Innella added that this bills list totals \$1,233,000.00 and \$1.1 million of that is payable to the County or the School.

MINUTES Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the Regular Session and Executive Session Meeting Minutes of March 22, 2022. Mr. Zitone seconded, and the motion carried with Mr. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, and Mr. Zitone all voting yes, and with Mayor Innella abstaining due to his absence from the March 22, 2022 Regular Meeting and Executive Session.

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the Budget Meeting Minutes of March 31, 2022. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (First Reading)

2022-04 CALENDAR YEAR 2022 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14)

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-04 upon introduction. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-05 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF ROAD EQUIPMENT. THE TOTAL COST OF THE EQUIPMENT NOT TO EXCEED \$15,000, APPROPRIATING A SUM OF \$15,000 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND FOR THE PURCHASE OF ROAD EQUIPMENT

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-05 upon introduction. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-06 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 36 OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, IN ORDER TO RELIEVE THE UNDUE FIRE CODE FEE BURDEN ON CERTAIN RENTAL PROPERTIES IN THE TOWNSHIP

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-06 upon introduction. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-07 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, RELEASING, EXTINGUISHING, AND VACATING THE RIGHTS OF THE PUBLIC TO A PORTION OF A PAPER STREET KNOWN AS REINHART ROAD IN THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-07 upon introduction. Mr. Krumpfer seconded. Attorney Rossmeissl explained that this Ordinance is a simple cost saving measure. The Township went back and forth with the Engineers on this; the Township is vacating a portion of Reinhardt Road, meaning it will not have its obligations for the upkeep of this portion of the road. The portion that is being vacated is in-between any active residences on Reinhardt Road and therefore it will not be affecting anyone who lives along Reinhardt Road. Clerk DeFabiis then called the roll and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

None

RESOLUTIONS

2022-042 SELF-EXAMINATION OF BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-042. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-043 INTRODUCTION OF LOCAL MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Mayor Innella commented that the Municipal Budget for Calendar Year 2022 will be \$3,004,651.69, the Local Tax Levy will be \$1,513,947.28, and the increase on the average home of \$155,126 will see a \$9.47 increase or 1.63 percent increase. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-043 upon introduction. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-048 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT AWARDED BY RESOLUTION 2019-99

Attorney Rossmeissl explained that this Resolution is a change order to the Resolution that authorized the contract to build the New Firehouse/Community Center. As the Community Center was hosting Community Events in the past, as of recent, it has not. The State Department of Community Affairs suspended the Certificate of Occupancy until the Township can rectify a few deficiencies. One of those items included the installation of a slop sink and a few others. This is a change order amending the original contract, permitting the installation of a slop sink for \$5,080. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-048. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with Mr. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, Mr. Merusi and Mayor Innella all voting yes and Mr. Zitone abstaining.

2022-049 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT AWARDED BY RESOLUTION 2021-17

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-049. Mr. LeDonne seconded. Attorney Rossmeissl stated that last year's Township Committee approved a contract with NJR or GeoScape to install solar panels. The program allows for solar panels to be installed on a municipal property, and then the Municipality will buy its energy from that particular company which gets credits from the State, in-turn, which also sells excess energy back into the grid. The original agreement had been a twenty-year agreement whereby GeoScape was going to install a system of solar panels on the New Firehouse/Community Center that would have produced 100KW of power. This amount of energy would have been sufficient to power both the Municipal Building and the Community Center, and the savings to the Township by buying this cheaper energy would have been roughly \$20,000 per year. GeoScape then began to look at this further and realized that the current transformer that they were planning to loop into for their system could not handle a system of 100KW, and to replace that transformer the cost would have been between \$15,000 and \$20,000. Therefore, GeoScape proposed downsizing the system from 100KW to 60KW which would power roughly just the Community Center, and the savings to the Township would now be about \$13,000 per year. Mayor Innella clarified that the Township has not fronted one penny for the system, and where the Township benefits is that the Township currently pays sixteen cents a kilowatt and will now be paying six cents per kilowatt. Clerk DeFabiis then called the roll and the motion then carried with Mr. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, Mr. Merusi and Mayor Innella all voting yes and Mr. Zitone voting no.

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. Zitone asked that Resolution 2022-041 be removed from the Consent Agenda.

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

CONSENT AGENDA	
<u>RESOLUTIONS</u>	
2022-040*	A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAUGE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY IN SUPPORT OF AMENDING TITLE 35 OF THE NEW JERSEY REVISED STATUTES TO PERMIT THE PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES BY GOVERNMENT ENTITIES ON OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITES INSTEAD OF IN NEWSPAPERS
2022-044*	RESOLUTION AMENDING THE FUNDING APPROPRIATION OF THE SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE AND THE TOWNSHIP OF SANDYSTON
2022-045*	RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CLERK TO APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION FROM THE REQUIREMENT TO APPOINT A PRINCIPAL PUBLIC WORKS MANAGER
2022-046*	AUTHORIZATION TO CANCEL TOWNSHIP TAX SALE CERTIFICATES (BL 19.03/LT 26 AND BL19.07/ LT 2)
2022-047*	RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE ASSIGNMENT OF TAX SALE CERTIFICATES #2016-031, AND #2019-003
2022-050*	SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH THE SUSSEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES FOR PROVIDING HEPATITIS B VACCINATIONS TO THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE FOR YEAR 2022

(Removed from Consent Agenda)

RESOLUTIONS

2022-041 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE OPPOSING A PROPOSAL BY THE NEW JERSEY AND PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTERS OF THE SIERRA CLUB TO CHANGE THE DESIGNATION OF THE DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA TO THE DELAWARE RIVER NATIONAL PARK AND LENAPE PRESERVE UNTIL A FORMAL PLAN IS PRESENTED FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-041. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

Montague Volunteer Fire Department – Red Light/Siren Permit Approval for Ryan Riegel and David Coss. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve these requests. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Montague Volunteer Fire Department – Blue Light Permit Approval for William McCullough Jr; John Conroy; William Dickson; Richard Nemeth; Matthew Brown; Alan Berkenbush; Joshua Moran; Diavante Corum; Mark Lewandowski; and James Raperto. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve these requests. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Seasonal Roadside Mower (Zitone) – Mr. Zitone explained that for the past few years they have hired a part-time employee to do the roadside mowing of the Municipal Right-Of-Ways. The schedule is typically three days per week for the months of May through October. The employee that they have been using was getting \$18 per hour and he would like to get \$20 per hour this year to offset the fuel costs for travel. Mr. Zitone stated that they have never had a problem with him; he does a good job and is good with the equipment. Mr. Zitone made a motion to raise the hourly rate for the part-time seasonal roadside mower from May through October to \$20 per hour. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Firewall Update – Municipal Building – Mayor Innella explained that the Township received correspondence from the Insurance Company warning the Township of Cyber Security Threats. Clerk DeFabiis forwarded this to the Township’s IT Company and they replied saying that the Township’s Firewall could use updating and a proposal was received for \$1,350. Mr. Zitone made a motion to approve the quote received from Municipal Software Inc. for the purchase and installation of a new SonicWALL Firewall. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Foreclosures – Attorney Rossmeissl provided the Committee with an updated and finalized listing of parcels for the Township to auction. Mr. Krumpfer stated that the final list has 22 transactions and 68 parcels. Attorney Rossmeissl said that the Township is on track to get this auction started, but first any parcels that are going to be sold in “clusters” they must perform a deed of consolidation and record the deed so that it essentially becomes one lot for the Township to auction. The time frame on this should be about two to three weeks, and then at the next Township Committee Meeting they can pass the resolution authorizing the Auction. Attorney Rossmeissl feels that the Auction can take place either the last Meeting in May or the first Meeting in June, but is leaning more realistically toward the first meeting in June. Once the Township Committee passes the resolution authorizing the sale, public notice would need to be published once a week for two consecutive weeks and then the final publication has to take place no later than 7 days prior to the date of the auction. The Committee and Attorney Rossmeissl then discussed the costs associated with the deed consolidation. Attorney Rossmeissl also added that the Committee would have 30 days after the Auction, on a sale-by-sale basis, to reject or accept the sale. Attorney Rossmeissl will prepare the two resolutions required for the next meeting for approval.

Joint Inter-Municipal Court – Mayor Innella commented that at the last meeting there was discussion of the Assistant Prosecutor for the Joint Inter-Municipal Court getting a raise of \$1,000. The Township of Blairstown is going to take on all of the cost increases from changes in the Assistant Prosecutor’s salary. The regular Prosecutor also left it up to the members of the Joint Inter-Municipal Court as to what they think his raise should be which seemed a bit indecisive, so they came up with a 2 percent increase. The Prosecutor then wrote a letter in which you could tell he was not pleased with what the Inter-Municipal Court was offering as an increase. After some back and forth, the members of the Inter-Municipal Court and the Prosecutor agreed to a \$3,000 increase. Mr. Merusi made a motion to agree to increase the Joint Inter-Municipal Court Prosecutor’s salary by an increase of \$3,000, with \$1,000 coming from Montague Township. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

REPORTS

Construction Department – March 2022 – There were 21 permits issued for the month of March 2022, 1 Certificate of Occupancy, and 19 Certificates of Approvals for a total collected of \$4,828.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to three minutes per person)

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

Mark Walsh – New Myrtle Drive - Mr. Walsh thanked the members of the Committee for passing the Resolution in opposition of the proposal to change the designation of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area to the Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve. Mr. Walsh also asked for clarification on whether or not New Myrtle Drive is a private road or a

Approved: April 26, 2022

Township road. The Township Committee will have to look at this once again, but it has always been such a grey area since the documentation is contradictory. Mr. Walsh expressed some concerns he has regarding the road, especially when a heavy storm comes through. Mayor Innella stated that he actually spoke with the DPW this morning to make sure that they get over to New Myrtle to take a look.

Aaron Stark – Branchville – Mr. Stark also expressed his gratitude to the Committee for passing Resolution 2022-041. Mr. Stark stated that he has not had the opportunity to thoroughly read the Resolution yet, but he hopes that the Committee will or has clarified that changing this designation to a National Park will not change or increase funding. In Mr. Stark's experience, he has seen where supporters of the designation change try to use this as an enticement. Mr. Stark also urged the Committee to send a copy of the Resolution, not only to the other communities in the area and State Representatives, but also to every member of the House Committee on National Resources. Clerk DeFabiis added that the Resolution was acquired from Sandyston Township and includes a long listing of the various members and representatives that the Resolution will be forwarded to.

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

ADJOURN

Mr. Merusi made a motion to adjourn at 8:22 PM. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**EILEEN DEFABIIS, RMC
MUNICIPAL CLERK**