

Approved: July 26, 2022

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

JULY 12, 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 Robert Rossmeissl.

Excused: Mayor Innella

Deputy Mayor Zitone amended the meeting Agenda to include under “Old Business – High Point Community Corp. Grant Application”.

VOUCHERS

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve the vouchers. Mr. Krumpfer 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 14, 2022. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (First Reading)

2022-13 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AMENDING THE TOWNSHIP CODE TO REPEAL AND REPLACE CHAPTER 53C VACANT AND ABANDONED PROPERTIES

Attorney Rossmeissl stated that this ordinance is being repealed and replaced, sort of, by obligation. The Statute that had enabled the old Vacant and Abandoned Property Ordinance was rescinded and replaced. Therefore, the Township is comporting with the Statute by making these updates. There are a few upsides to the new Statute; if the Committee decides to pass this Ordinance, the new code will put a lot more pressure on Mortgage Companies/Banks that have mortgages on abandoned properties. This will make the foreclosure process more favorable to the bank and mortgage companies. The penalty can be up to \$2,000 per year if the property just sits. The Ordinance would also allow the Zoning Officer to qualify properties as Vacant and Abandoned more easily. Once these properties are deemed Vacant and Abandoned they would then have to apply for Township Registry for Vacant and Abandoned Properties. The way the Statute reads currently, if they do not comply with the Township Code concerning exterior of buildings and premises, for any properties that have an improvement on them the fine that can accumulate is up to \$1,000 per day. The one thing that is important to note is the change in the fee schedule. After some discussion the Committee decided to keep the fees as they had them previously. Mr. LeDonne made a motion to approve this Ordinance upon introduction. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

None

RESOLUTIONS

2022-082 RESOLUTION APPROVING SOCIAL AFFAIRS PERMIT TO TAMERLAINE FARM ANIMAL SANCTUARY INC.

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-082. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-083 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FIREFIGHTER GRANT (ARPPFG)

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-083. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-084 AUTHORIZATION TO EXECUTE STATEMENT OF CONSENT FOR TREATMENT WORKS APPROVAL APPLICATION

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-084. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2022-085 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP ZONING OFFICER TO EXTEND FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED NINETY DAYS THE PERMIT ISSUED PURSUANT TO TOWNSHIP RESOLUTION 2022-039

Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2022-085. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

NJ Division of Local Government Services – Additional Municipal Relief Fund Aid – Deputy Mayor Zitone announced that the Township will be receiving additional Municipal Relief Fund Aid in the amount of \$13,225. Since the 2022 budget has already been passed, the money will go into Reserves and it will be used in the 2023 budget next year.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Walking Path Update – Mr. Krumpfer met with Tom Knutelsky, Montague Township Planner/Engineer, and they walked the Municipal property and came up with a proposed layout for a walking path. The members of the Committee then reviewed the proposed layout design of the walking path. Mr. Krumpfer added that the pathway would be about 2,008 linear feet. The DPW Foreman will be going out this upcoming Friday to trim back the path so they can get a better look at where it really is. Once the path is trimmed back a surveyor will come out, this way the Township has the actual plan and design. The Planner/Engineer will also be reaching out to Tennessee Gas to let them know the plans since the proposed walking path will cross over the Pipeline.

American Rescue Plan Spending – At the last meeting the Committee determined that the top two items that they would like to address with the American Rescue Plan Act Funds included the Sprinkler System in the Community Center and a donation to Blue Ridge Rescue Squad towards the purchase of a new ambulance so Blue Ridge can move into “soft billing”. Attorney Rossmeissl commented that the Township Committee has not yet come up with a solid number on what they felt comfortable giving as a donation to the Blue Ridge Rescue Squad from the American Rescue Plan funds towards a purchase of a new ambulance. Attorney Rossmeissl then discussed the sprinkler system at the Community Center saying, if you add everything up that was received thus far as budgetary items only, the project looks like it will come in around \$150,000. Attorney Rossmeissl remarked that a formal Request for Proposal would need to go out because it is well over the bid threshold. After some lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed to have Attorney Rossmeissl draft the RFP for the Sprinkler System at the Community Center. Mr. Merusi made a motion approving putting out a Request for Proposal for the installation of a Sprinkler System at the Montague Township Community Center. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote. Deputy Mayor Zitone stated that these bids need to be apples to apples, with no exclusions. He also added that this is months out before a solid price is even received for this work.

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Deputy Mayor Zitones then asked if the Committee they would like to move forward on spending money towards the ambulance. The Committee has been discussing anywhere between donating \$50,000 all the way up to \$100,000. Deputy Mayor Zitone stated that he would be comfortable with \$75,000; Mr. LeDonne would like to donate \$50,000 towards the ambulance. Mr. Krumpfer said he would like to go up to \$100,000, but cut the regular budget donation for next year completely. Mr. Merusi said that they are still going to want some sort of financial support from the Township even with that type of donation. Mr. Merusi also stated he would be comfortable going up to \$75,000. Mr. Krumpfer then said he would be okay with going to the \$75,000 with the American Rescue Plan Act Funds, and then next year cutting the budget donation down to \$25,000, and the other members of the Committee agreed to this as well. Mr. Merusi then made a motion to donate \$75,000 from the Township's American Rescue Plan Act to the Blue Ridge Rescue Squad towards the purchase of a new ambulance. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

High Point Community Corp. Grant Application – Attorney Rossmeissl explained that last year's Township Committee approved a Resolution to allow the Township to co-sign with the High Point Community Corporation to replace the Holiday Pond Dam, which is in rough shape. This is a State program that loans money for that purpose to high-risk dams. In instances where the application is being made by a private community the municipality is required to co-sign on the loan. Since the initial application had been made with the State of New Jersey their application has been approved, and there is no action at this time, this is just an update. Once the actual loan agreement is drafted the Township will decide if they would like to move forward in co-signing this loan application. If they do decide to co-sign, an Ordinance must be passed that will allow for the Township to place a special assessment on all of the High Point Community Corp. properties in case the HPCC was to ever default on the loan payment. The Township credit rating will not be impacted by this in any way, and the assessment would then be passed along to those residents within the High Point Community.

REPORTS

Tax Collector's Report – June 2022 – Tax Searches: \$10; (2021) Prior Year Taxes Collected: \$18,722.42; (2022) Current Year Taxes Collected \$84,699.42; Interest Collected \$3,948.42 for a total collected of \$107,380.26 for the month of June 2022.

Construction Report – June 2022 – 26 Permits were issued for the Month of June 2022 and 3 Permit Updates, for a total collected in fees of \$11,495.

Fire Department – Mr. LeDonne mentioned that the Montague Township Volunteer Fire Department took part in the Port Jervis Inspection Day Parade. They took home two trophies, one for Best Appearing Apparatus under 10-years old and another for Second Best Appearing Company with less than 25 Firefighters. The Committee offered their sincerest congratulations to those who participated and to the Montague Volunteer Fire Department.

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.

Sandra Kohler – 40 River Road – Ms. Kohler asked if since the last meeting any further consideration has been given to amending the Short-Term Rental Ordinance. Ms. Kohler stated that in 5 days, 62 vehicles have gone down the shared right-of-way that a particular Airbnb is using for their renters although they have a separate dedicated entrance. Of the 62 vehicles, only eight of those vehicles are from the property owners of the other three properties that use/have access to the shared right-of-way. Attorney Rossmeissl asked Ms. Kohler if she received his email on July 5th. Attorney Rossmeissl stated that within that email he provided Ms. Kohler with portions of the Code that the Township Committee can address. Ms. Kohler stated that unfortunately the meeting on Thursday for the Land Use Board has been cancelled and she was going to bring up the Zoning issue to the Land Use Board on that night. Mr. Krumpfer suggested having the Township send a letter stating that a complaint has been received and according to the Ordinance, if you receive a complaint then the rights/license could be revoked. Attorney Rossmeissl stated that they could write up a simple Ordinance stating that if a Short-Term Rental has two driveways and one of them is a shared driveway or a shared right-of-way or easement then the single, unshared driveway must be used. The Committee would like to see a letter drafted to the property owner and if there is no response to this, they would then consider drafting an amendment to the Ordinance.

Edward Zalenski – Shore Drive – Mr. Zalenski asked for an update on the letter that was supposed to be mailed out to all of the successful bidders of the Land Sale Auction that was held on June 14, 2022. Attorney Rossmeissl stated that this letter went out last week and should be received any day now, and if for some reason it does not, Attorney Rossmeissl asked that he contact the Township. Mr. Zalenski also asked about the Master Plan review that is going on in the Township and asked if there is any way that the public can get involved or if there is any sort of presentation. Mr. Zalenski further added there seems to be some things in the Country Club that are being pushed to get passed and he is not in favor of it. Deputy Mayor Zitone asked Mr. Zalenski if he attends the Land Use Board Meetings. Mr. Zalenski replied, yes, but they have only had one meeting all year. Mr. LeDonne stated that as it stands there is a brief draft of the Master Plan update. It has not even gotten to the point of being presented to the Land Use Board, and is still being drafted by the sub-committee. Eventually, it will come before the Land Use Board and will be public. Mr. Zalenski stated that he also took a look at the new Township website and it looks pretty good.

Jody Case-Kennedy – Shore Drive – Ms. Case-Kennedy gave a positive review of Vernon Animal Control whom the Township has a Shared Service with for Animal Control Services. Ms. Case-Kennedy went on to say that she has had to use them on several occasions when a stray cat has showed up at her property, and Siggy with the Animal Control who is the Trap, Neuter/Spay person, has been wonderful and has been in the community doing trapping and getting these animals spayed/neutered and in some cases returned.

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 8:00 PM. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted:

**EILEEN DEFABIIS, RMC
MUNICIPAL CLERK**