

Approved: January 24, 2023

MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

JANUARY 10, 2023

7:00 PM

OPENING STATEMENT

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. Innella, Mr. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, Mr. Merusi, and Mayor Zitone
Also present were Deputy Municipal Clerk Dana Klinger and Municipal Attorney Robert Rossmeissl

Absent: None

Mayor Zitone amended the meeting agenda to include “New Business – Architect Proposal for Sprinkler System” and “Old Business – Burned Out Building and Walking Path”.

MINUTES

Mr. Krumpfer made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 27, 2022, and the Annual Reorganization Meeting Minutes of January 03, 2023. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

VOUCHERS

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

ORDINANCES (First Reading)

None

ORDINANCES (Second Reading)

None

RESOLUTIONS

2023-011 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE APPOINTING A
SUB-RECORDS CUSTODIAN IN THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE

Mr. Krumpfer made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-011. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2023-012 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MONTAGUE, COUNTY OF
SUSSEX, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF
FUNDS TO THE BLUE RIDGE RESCUE SQUAD FROM THE FUNDS
ALLOCATED TO THE TOWNSHIP IN CONNECTION WITH THE
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

Mayor Zitone stated that the Township Committee voted and approved donating \$50,000 to the Blue Ridge Rescue Squad for the Squad to be able to purchase a new Ambulance. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-012. Attorney Rossmeissl briefly added that an estimate was also provided to the Township, which included two components, the Ambulance Box and the chassis. The Ambulance Box will total about \$175,000 with the chassis they expect the total cost to be about \$250,000. There are four and a half towns that Blue Ridge Rescue Squad services and the Township of Montague will be contributing about a fifth of the total cost with the \$50,000 donation. Mr. Innella further added that after speaking with Blue Ridge Rescue Squad he can confirm that Sandyston Township is making a donation of \$50,000 as well and Frankford Township is donating \$100,000. They also do not expect to have the truck until the year 2024. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2023-013 CANCELLATION OF TAX OVERPAYMENTS OR DELINQUENT AMOUNTS LESS THAN \$10.00

Mr. Innella made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-013. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

2023-014 AUTHORIZE EXECUTION OF A SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH SUSSEX COUNTY MUNICIPAL UTILITIES AUTHORITY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE PROVISION OF CERTIFIED RECYCLING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO CERTIFY AND SUBMIT THE 2022 RECYCLING TONNAGE GRANT REPORT TO NJDEP

Mr. Krumpfer asked if the County also prepares the report. Deputy Clerk Klinger clarified that she prepares and submits the report to the Sussex County MUA and then they have a certified representative who submits and certifies to the NJDEP. Mr. Merusi made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-014. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

NJ Department of Community Affairs – Award of Grant Funding – American Rescue Plan Firefighter Grant – The Fire Department has applied for a grant and was successfully awarded a grant amount of \$49,000 from the NJDCA through the American Rescue Plan Firefighter Grant. These funds will be used to purchase turn-out gear and PPE.

Nisivoccia, LLP – Proposed Engagement Letter for the 2022 Audit and 2023 Budget – The Committee reviewed the proposed terms.

NEW BUSINESS

Architect Proposal for Sprinkler System – Attorney Rossmeissl stated that they had put out a request for proposals for a Sprinkler System at the Montague Community Center, which would upgrade the center to a category where the Township could hold banquets and other events of this kind. The Township unfortunately did not receive any bids from this first RFP. The Township has since gone back to the Architect, Charles Schaffer Associates, who has provided the Township with a proposal for about \$23,000 to complete and prepare the bid specs for the new RFP, they will also include the water tank for the sprinkler system and then separately the sprinkler system itself. Attorney Rossmeissl added if the Architect, Charles Schaffer is working on this they will be sure to make sure everything comports with the DCA requirements. Mayor Zitone also asked Attorney Rossmeissl to ask the DCA where in the State Law/Code is the requirement for a sprinkler system, which is in the International Builders Code, so more than likely this is enshrined in the NJ Statutes and/or the NJ Administrative Code. Until Attorney Rossmeissl finds a definitive answer on the code, this proposal will just be for the Committee’s consideration and will be readdressed at the next Committee meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Vacant Properties – Mayor Zitone stated that there has been much discussion in the past regarding the numerous vacant properties owned by GP7. Mayor Zitone said he couldn’t understand why if one person/company owns all those lots why would the Township have to go through the foreclosure process on every single lot. Why couldn’t the Township cluster them into one and foreclose at one time on all? Attorney Rossmeissl replied saying that a deed of consolidation could be done, but the only way to do so is to have GP7 deed the lots to itself to combine the lots. Attorney Rossmeissl further added that at the beginning of this, he did reach out to GP7 by email and regular mail and there was no response. Mayor Zitone asked if there was someone at the State that they could reach out to saying the Township has all of these properties owned by the same company and they are not paying taxes or dues and they are just ignoring any attempt to contact them. The Township cannot afford to foreclose on every single property. Attorney Rossmeissl will take a look at this one more time and speak with his contact at the State to see if there are any options. There are well over 100 properties closer to 300 and the bottom line is the Township cannot afford to foreclose on every one the expense is just too substantial.

Burned-Out Buildings – Mr. Merusi explained that several properties around town have burned-out buildings on them. It was his understanding when the Township Committee approached this issue the Construction Official did not have the scheduled time to go out and inspect and write up each. The Township has a new agreement in which the Construction Official has an additional

4 hours per week, so is it possible to take a look at these once again? Attorney Rossmeissl gave a few updates on a few of the properties in question.

Walking Path – Mr. Krumpfer stated that he was told by the Montague Senior Citizens Club President, Toni-Lu Martin that the seniors were not in favor of the walking path. They were under the impression that it was going to raise their taxes, but in his opinion, this is more the feeling of the Seniors President rather than a correct representation of the Seniors Group. Mr. Merusi stated that the Township would like to provide the citizens of Montague with a place where they can come and park their car and safely get some exercise and enjoy outdoor recreation. The Committee intends to get this project done without raising taxes. Mr. LeDonne stated that any maintenance would be done by the Department of Public Works and the hope is to get Grant Funding to complete the project. The committee then discussed the idea of phasing out the project. Deputy Clerk Klinger will check with the Grant Writers to see if they know of any upcoming Grant Funding that might be available for this project. She will also check in with the Engineer to see what else would still need to be done for the project to begin.

REPORTS

Construction Department – December 2022 - There were 18 permits issued for the month of December 2022 for a total collected of \$7,728.

Tax Collector – December 2022 – (2022) Current Year Taxes Collected \$110,083; Interest Collected \$3,973; Prepaid (2023) Taxes \$57,316 for a total collected of \$171,373 for the month of December 2022.

Tax Collector – Year-End Report 2022 – Mayor Zitone announced that the average 2022 Collection Rate for Taxes in Montague Township was 95.5%.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (limited to three minutes per person)

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

Ed Zelinsky – Shore Drive – Mr. Zelinsky spoke regarding the GP7 lots, saying most of these lots are within the High Point Country Club, but there is a good handful that is right on Clove Road. Mr. Zelinsky further added that the Township owns a lot somewhere in between these lots. Mr. Zelinsky suggested that these lots might be preferable and that the best lots that GP7 owns the higher taxes than the ones in the County Club. Therefore, it might be a good option to consider foreclosing on just the Clove Road GP7 lots and this might push GP7 into making some sort of move. Mr. Zelinsky further added that they are still in business because every once in a while they sell lots in the Country Club.

Jack DeGroot – Route 519, Wantage NJ – Mr. DeGroot spoke to the Township Committee and all in attendance of his appreciation for the County of Sussex, the people, the landscape, and the values. Mr. DeGroot gave some background history on accomplishments and involvement within the Community in Sussex County. As a local farmer, Mr. DeGroot has heard from the patrons of his farm stand not only their joys of living in the County of Sussex but their concerns. Mr. DeGroot then announced his campaign for Sussex County Commissioner and asked for the honor of having the Township of Montague's support. Mr. DeGroot stated that his goal is to protect the future and preserve Sussex County for what it is and to represent the hardworking people that no matter the economic conditions and challenges that they face always know how to make ends meet. Mr. DeGroot then thanked the Mayor and Committee for their time.

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

ADJOURN

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

Respectfully submitted:

**DANA KLINGER, RMC
DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK**