

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
COMMITTEE WORKSHOP MEETING  
Wednesday, March 27, 2019, 7:30pm  
Executive Session begins at 7:00pm**

**MINUTES**

Regular meeting begins at 7:30 pm or immediately following Closed Session, whichever comes last.

**OPENING; ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lance. Those present were Mr. Moorhead, Mr. Sikkes, Mrs. VanValkenburg, Mrs. Waldron and Mayor Lance. Also present were Township Clerk, Linda Leidner.

The **FLAG SALUTE** was conducted

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Lance read the following statement: Notice of this meeting has been sent to two newspapers of general circulation in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. This agenda is subject to change by order of the Blairstown Township Committee before and/or during this scheduled meeting.

Motion for Resolution No. 2019 – 050 - AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION – Contract Negotiations made by Mrs. Waldron, seconded by Mrs. VanValkenburg.

Roll Call Vote: Aye – Moorhead, Sikkes, Van Valkenburg, Waldron, Lance  
All ayes – Motion carried.

Executive Session began at 7:02 p.m.

Motion to close executive session made by Mrs. Waldron, seconded by Mr. Moorhead.

Roll Call Vote: Aye – Moorhead, Sikkes, Van Valkenburg, Waldron, Lance  
All ayes – Motion carried.

Regular Meeting re-opened at 7:36 p.m.

Mayor Lance explained the purpose of the Executive Session was contract negotiations. The Blairstown Township Committee is calling for a joint meeting with surrounding Municipalities who are sending students to the North Warren Regional School District for the purposes of possible consolidation. The meeting will be open to the public. It will be advertised as a special meeting where action may be taken.

This meeting is to authorize a feasibility study for a possible consolidation which the public will approve via referendum. It is not likely the referendum will be this year.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- The budget summary with line itemizations was discussed. CFO Christine Rolef explained that these were the same appropriations that were presented and discussed at the February

meeting with one exception; the Fire Chief, Calvin Inscho, respectfully requested an increase of the Capital portion to \$15k, so that their contribution would remain the same as prior years. The Township Committee will need to approve this.

- Mrs. Rolef noted that an Open Space analysis was included in the packet that she distributed. It is what we have in our Open Space fund; committed balances (our debt service), two approved projects at Nonnemacher Farm and Mohican Road, and the two years left on a front loader. Mrs. Rolef explained what was charged to Open Space in 2018 expenditures which amounted to \$147k. The current 2 cent tax levy brings in roughly \$142k.
- **Paul McNamara of the Blirstown Ambulance Corps** was invited to present information on the Blirstown Ambulance Corps, chiefly as it concerns financial issues and the amount of donation that the Township traditionally has supplied them with. The Ambulance Corps budget is currently \$250k, 75% of which they will raise themselves. The other 25% they request from the towns they serve; Blirstown, Hope, Hardwick, Frelinghuysen, and Walpack. There is a formula based on the number of calls that are answered in each town which directly correlates to the contribution each town is requested to make.
- Mayor Lance explained that the contribution would have to be a Capital item. It will have to go into reserve and the Ambulance Corp would purchase any Capital item with the funds. He went on to explain that we need an actual amount from the Ambulance Corps to which Mr. McNamara replied that the Corps would need to meet to discuss before providing a solid number. Mrs. Waldron, as liaison to the Ambulance Corps, requested that Mr. McNamara set up a meeting to plan more effectively. Mayor Lance said that he would like to agree to at least last year's contribution of \$10k. It was agreed to put \$10k into Capital.
- **Private Road Snow Plowing Reimbursement** - Mayor Lance explained that since the beginning of the budget discussions, private road plowing reimbursement was remaining in the budget for 2019. Several members of the community commented on the reimbursement of Private Roads.
- Mrs. Van Valkenburg explained that the Township Committee has tried to cut costs everywhere possible. There are only 3 full time office staff members. The Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, CFO, Recreation Director are all part time. Two Police Officers were hired to replace officers that left. Mayor Lance explained that years ago the budget was \$5.1/\$5.2 million. At that time the Township Committee was forced to lay off several employees. Since that time the budget has been cut to around \$3.9 million. Had the budget remained as it was there would have been a Municipal Tax 14 years ago.
- Mrs. Van Valkenburg brought up the fact that the Township roads are in need of repair due to the previous Committee's trying to not have a Municipal Tax. Mayor Lance noted that the roads are bad in every municipality in Sussex & Warren County. Mayor Lance explained that the State has been good to Blirstown with State Aid over the past couple of years. Blirstown received \$150,000.00 for repaving Belcher Road. Mayor Lance went on to explain that there are applications in at the State for Heller Hill and the lower half of Mohican Road. Mrs. Waldron explained that the roads need to be addressed now. Many are falling apart and if they are not addressed they will go into further disrepair. Mr. Sikkes noted that several people have

complained about high taxes and his concern is does the Committee want to hear residents complain about high taxes or the roads needing repair. His concern is that by raising taxes it will cause further financial hardship to many families in Blairstown. Mayor Lance will not support a Municipal Tax. Mrs. Waldron explained that preplanning by having funds in Fund Balance is important. Mrs. Waldron stated that while the current committee would use the proposed 3.5 cent Municipal Tax this would bring in \$250,000.00 for addressing Blairstown's roads. Mr. Moorhead made the point that when residents say that they pay high taxes, none of it is municipal tax. The county and school taxes are what residents pay each quarter. Mrs. Van Valkenburg inquired as to how we are going to fund the budget. Mrs. Waldron is in favor of having a tax in order to help get money in place for the future. Mrs. Waldron offered a 3.5 cent tax – \$.03 for roads and a half for Open Space. Mayor Lance offered up the Open Space Tax and leave everything else the same. The budget will be presented as it is. The Open Space Tax will be 2.5 cents.

- **Crossing Guards** – Mrs. Rolef stated that we would have to increase the Police S&W in order to fund the crossing guards, adding that we can make the crossing guards a salary position to put an end to the unemployment that is being paid out to the guards since they have been filing for unemployment in the summer.
- **Open Space Tax** is currently two cents. Mrs. Rolef suggested we offer an additional one cent. Mrs. VanValkenburg stated that she is done funding anything with regard to Open Space. Mayor Lance, Mr. Sikkes, and Mr. Moorhead suggested going up to two and a half cents. Mrs. VanValkenburg stated that she wanted to discuss the regular budget first, hence the discussion moved to the regular budget.
- Mrs. Waldron stated that we need to consider the Walnut Valley remediation project in our budget.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Possible Ordinances to be Introduced on April 10, 2019**

- a. Ordinance Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 17:36-9 Requiring Companies Writing Fire Insurance on Risks Located in a Municipality to Pay Unpaid Municipal Liens Out of Claim Payments in Excess of \$2,500.00
- b. Ordinance to Place Stop Signs at Intersections located off of Walnut Valley Road

### **Appointment to Blairstown Historic Preservation Committee**

- An application was submitted by Mrs. Marie Sweet for membership to the Blairstown Historic Preservation Committee.

Motion to appoint Mrs. Marie Sweet to the Blairstown Historic Preservation Committee was made by Mrs. VanValkenburg, seconded by Mrs. Waldron.

Roll Call Vote: Aye – Moorhead, Sikkes, Van Valkenburg, Waldron, Lance  
All ayes – Motion carried.

## **FROM THE PUBLIC**

- **Fireworks Agreement** – Bob Law of the Blairstown Rotary asked if we had reviewed the fireworks agreement. Mrs. Leidner replied that the contract is in the hands of the Township Attorney and our insurance company for review. Mayor Lance said that he will be signing it as long as the money comes into our trust fund. The Township will contribute \$3k and the Blairstown Rotary will contribute \$7k.
- **Marianna Stires** – asked if there had been any grants received for the clean-up of Walnut Valley. Mrs. Waldron commented that we had a company last year that was charged with finding grants for us and they said we were ineligible.
- **Keith Stires** – suggested that for people who were paying for private road plowing, perhaps they could pitch in to buy their own trucks with plows to service their roads during winter. Mr. Stires said that it might be a significant cost savings for them.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Moorhead made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Sikkes. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 pm.

Approved by:  
Linda Leidner, Municipal Clerk

Submitted by:  
Lori Nienstedt, Deputy Clerk  
April 9, 2019