

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Friday, March 18, 2016 – 10 AM  
TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**MINUTES**

**OPENING; ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Shoemaker. Those present were Mr. Avery, Mrs. Dalton, Mr. Lance, Mrs. Van Valkenburg and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia, Robert Benbrook, Township Attorney, CFO Christine Rolef and DPW Foreman Carl Stoddart.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was conducted.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Shoemaker read the following statement: Notice of this Special Meeting has been sent to two official newspapers of Blairstown Township noting the date, time and agenda thereof in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Mayor Shoemaker announced that the Closed Session that was scheduled in order to discuss a personnel matter is no longer necessary as the issue has been resolved.

**DISCUSSION – Ownership Status of Main Street**

Mayor Shoemaker gave a brief background of this issue, which came up again recently when Warren County Freeholder Ed Smith met with him and expressed that the County wanted Blairstown to take ownership of Main Street. According to Freeholder Smith, Main Street does not meet the definition of a county road in that it does not connect two municipalities.

Blairstown Township does have a history of assisting the County with the maintenance of Main Street, including snow removal. Mayor Shoemaker said that the County would continue to maintain High Street. According to Freeholder Smith, removing the snow on Main Street is extremely difficult and that during the last snow storm, the Police Department was not cooperative in having the vehicles removed. Adding to the problem is the township ordinance that requires residents to remove the snow from the sidewalks after a snowfall. For many, there is no option but to put the snow in the street.

Mayor Shoemaker said that a point against taking over Main Street is the expense that would be incurred for maintenance. An advantage would be that the township would have control over the road. The parking lot proposal involving Blair Academy is being affected because of the County's ownership. At this point, Mr. Rodman reported that the County's objections may cause the loss of approximately six parking spaces and will cause the project to be more expensive.

Mayor Shoemaker asked Mr. Benbrook if the County could vacate or abandon the road if they feel it does not meet county road criteria. Basically, Mr. Benbrook said that the County would be legally able to vacate the road if it were "unnecessary for public travel". Mr. Benbrook said that the

County would be hard pressed to prove that Main Street is unnecessary for public travel. He believes that from researching case law that the County cannot vacate Main Street.

With regard to snow removal, Mr. Benbrook said that an option would be to have the Township perform the snow removal at the County's expense. Mrs. Van Valkenburg questioned who would be responsible for collecting the money from the County.

Mr. Lance said that he is not in favor of taking over ownership of Main Street. He said that the problem was caused by one member of the Police Department refusing to cooperate with the County and that person is no longer with the Department. He is in favor of not plowing, but having a cooperative effort in hauling away the snow. Carl Stoddart, DPW Foreman, said that the cooperation depends upon the County plowing Main Street in a timely manner.

Mrs. Dalton said that taking over Main Street would also involve fair weather maintenance, which would be costly. Mr. Stoddart agreed that sweeping and paving would now be the township's responsibility.

Mayor Shoemaker said that he is in favor of the option of having the township plow Main Street and billing the county for it. Mr. Lance is in favor of tightening the ordinance regarding parked vehicles during snow emergencies and assuring the county that the ordinance will be strictly enforced.

After discussion, the Township Committee was in agreement to the following:

- to amend the snow removal ordinance stating that there will be no parking on either side of Main Street during snow emergencies, following Warren County's criteria
- to assure the County that the vehicles will be cleared to allow the County to plow, and assuring that the Police Department will enforce the local ordinance, including the towing of vehicles that are not in compliance
- Blairstown will continue to assist the County with removing the snow with our vehicles and manpower during snow emergencies
- to amend the ordinance to state that a "pathway" or "walkway" ( width to be defined) of the sidewalks must be cleared, as opposed to the entire sidewalk; no shoveled snow may be placed into the street

Mayor Shoemaker will present this plan to the Warren County Freeholders. With reference to the snow plowing invoice received by the township from the County, the Township Committee was in agreement not to make payment.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no members of the public present.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Van Valkenburg made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Avery. All members were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 am.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk