

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 8, 2017 7:30 PM**

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 by Mayor Shoemaker. Those present were Mr. Avery, Mrs. Dalton, Mr. Lance, Mrs. Van Valkenburg and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were: Clerk Leidner, and Christine Rolef, Treasurer. Attorney Kevin Benbrook was absent.

The **FLAG SALUTE** was conducted.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

Mayor Shoemaker 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.

RESOLUTION No.2017- 036 AUTHORIZING AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PERSONNEL and CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Motion was made by Mr. Lance and was seconded by Mrs. Dalton
Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker.
All ayes: Motion carried.

Executive Session began at 6:49 pm.

Motion to re-open the Regular Meeting at 8:05 pm was made by Mr. Lance and was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.
Roll Call Vote: AYE - Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker.
All ayes: Motion carried.

Mayor Shoemaker noted for the record that all members of the Township Committee were present at the Executive Session.

Mayor Shoemaker explained the results of the Executive Session. The following were discussed: Personnel issues, purchase of security cameras for the Hose Company, who suffered losses recently.

Mayor Shoemaker requested a motion to have security cameras installed in the Stillwater Rd. Fire House, paid by the Fire Co., at no cost to the Township.

Motion was made by Mr. Avery and was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.
Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
All ayes: Motion carried.

Mayor Shoemaker requested a motion for Township to pay for Hepatitis B shots for the new Hose Co. full time members. This is a requirement by the State.

Motion was made by Mr. Lance and was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker

All ayes: Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeanette O'Brien, 16 East Ave., asked about the status of the water. Mr. Avery said the well will be located by the east end of the Fire House building on Stillwater Rd. Mrs. Van Valkenburg noted a grant is being investigated.

Laura Tafuni, 89 Hope Rd., asked about signage from the County at Buck Hill Brewery. Mayor Shoemaker noted the Police Dept. notified the owner and staff, there is no parking on the highway. There currently is a sign there. Mrs. Dalton informed that Capt. Johnson is speaking to the County.

Mrs. Tafuni is concerned about recent burglaries and suggested adding to the Police Dept. She stated there needs to be property checks at night for businesses and homes.

She is concerned about a proposed gas station in Hope. Although not in Blirstown's jurisdiction, she foresees problematic traffic from Rt. 521 to Rt. 94 which would affect Blirstown. She noted the small lot will only have one entrance/exit. She said trucks, which enter, can't make the turn to get back on Rt. 80. Hope Township has not approved the plan yet.

MINUTES

January 11, 2017 – Regular Meeting Minutes

January 25, 2017 - Regular Workshop Minutes

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker

Abstention - Dalton

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1 – R.2017 – 037 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2017 – 038 Approval to Submit a Grant Application and Execute a Grant Contract with the NJ Department of Transportation for Overlay of Mohican Road
- 3 – R.2017 – 039 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2016-005
- 4 – R.2017 – 040 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2014-014
- 5 – R.2017 – 041 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2014-006
- 6 – R.2017 – 042 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2014-003
- 7 – R.2017 – 043 Authorization to Transfer Funds
- 8 – R.2017 – 044 2016 Tonnage Grant Application

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
All ayes: Motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF 2017 BUDGET

- R.2017 – 045 Resolution to Defer School Taxes
- R.2017 – 046 Introduction of 2017 Budget
- *R.2017 – 047 Resolution for self-examination of Budget

Mr. Lance would like to include Resolution R.2017 - 047 for self-examination of the Budget, noting this was not included in the packet. Ordinarily the Budget would go to Trenton for review and approval. If the Township fills certain statutory requirements, this would allow Blairstown's self-examination of the Budget.

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the introduction of 2017 Budget, including R.2017-047 Resolution for self-examination of Budget. Motion was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
All ayes: Motion carried.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Clerk – February Report
- Finance – February Finance and Fuel Reports
- Fire Department – February Report
- Police Department – February Report
- Tax Collector – February Report
- Warren County Health Department – February 14, 2017

Mrs. Van Valkenburg asked if the Twp. Committee should contact Warren Cty., asking them to take action on complaints listed on their report. She said they have appeared for a long time.

Mayor Shoemaker responded the anticipated answer to be "awaiting guidance from the Court".

Mrs. Van Valkenburg stated she will call Pete Summers seeking a change.

Mr. Lance made a motion to accept the Department Reports. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
All ayes: Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1 – Back-Up Well Update

Mr. Rodman explained the Township is proceeding with the well at the Fire House. Mr. Rodman made note that there are no fire-fighting chemicals are kept in the Fire House. If storage of

equipment becomes an issue, Fire Chief, Calvin Inscho, said it can be stored at Walnut Valley Fire House.

Mr. Rodman also revealed the specs are prepared and ready to go to bid. The specifications will be given to Christine Rolef, CFO next week. Upon approval, Linda Leidner, Township Clerk., will provide a date for opening those bids. Mr. Rodman explained the Division of Safe Water Drinking contact mentioned there is an engineering application which needs to be submitted before they would review the well application. Mr. Rodman said hopefully a waiver can be granted on some of the requirements. Mr. Rodman stated he has left messages for Charles Cavanaugh to bring him up to speed and awaits his response.

Mrs. Rolef asked if there is a new price estimate. Ted Rodman responded, "It will be over the \$40,000". She explained she needs an estimate since the Bond Ordinance is for \$40,000. Mr. Lance noted approval is needed from Mr. Cavanaugh, from the DEP, to extend this for another year, if a grant is being sought. He said what needs to be decided is, will it be funded internally or will the Township go for the Community Development Block Grant. Mr. Rodman noted Mr. Cavanaugh is unaware of the grant possibility. Mayor Shoemaker confirmed going out for that bid, would preclude getting that grant. He said the grant limit is \$400,000. Mr. Lance pointed out the Award Notice is in December for the grant. He said Blairstown would be notified the end of this year, if Blairstown is approved, and that is not certain. Mr. Rodman stated he will reach out for Mr. Cavanaugh and explain it's going to be at least the end of this year before Blairstown knows whether they will be receiving the grant. Mrs. Rolef mentioned that Bruno & Assocs. wants a summary of the project. They may be able to "get a feel" for whether this request will be entertained, from their contact. If an immediate "No" is anticipated, the Township can move forward.

Mrs. Rolef said Blairstown falls in the middle of the NBI Rank. It's how they rank your investment for the grant and your donated pay back. Mrs. Van Valkenburg said it is a ranking based on income. Blairstown is a 379 Municipality Index Rating.

Mr. Rodman also reported that the East Crisman Bridge is going to be closed for an extended period of time. There will be a pre-construction meeting on Tuesday to reveal how long it will be out. Detour routes will be proposed which should not affect Blairstown. The County will do it. He will let the Police Department know.

Mr. Rodman pointed out Warren County was scheduled to start paving different sections of Route 519 today.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Rolef stated last Monday, she and Mrs. Van Valkenburg, met with an associate from Bruno & Assocs., grant writers. The following were explained:

Community Development Block Grant

The maximum award is \$400,000. In 2015, 22 municipalities were awarded the grant. It requires a 5% municipal contribution. June to September is the application process with awards certified in December. The Twp. Committee must decide if they want to proceed. There is concern about the time frame and deadlines Blairstown was given. Mr. Avery pointed out that the Township is under pressure from the DEP also.

Transportation Alternative Program

This covers streets and sidewalks. The Township has until the fall to decide if they have any sidewalk projects that they would be interested in.

DOT LAIF Program

This is a program for transportation issues in need of emergency attention. It is ongoing with no deadline. It is on an as-needed basis. It is for something emergent that is not budgeted for. Mrs. Van Valkenburg said the guiderails on Stony Brook and Mt. Vernon, and storm drains are big issues. She said it is an emergent situation.

Baseball Grant

The CFO is working on getting the fencing on the ball field which the Township owns.

Historic Preservation

The CFO explained, to qualify, the Township must own the property and it has to be deemed historic already. Mr. Lance noted the Township is making an amendment to include the Footbridge as part of the Historic District.

Mr. Lance indicated stabilization of the Lime Kiln by the Teal Farm is on the list. Research must be done to determine if it is in the Township Right-of-Way.

Fire Dept. Grant

The CFO explained the AIS Grant is for the fire truck & equipment. It is extremely competitive and going toward larger municipalities.

There is also a grant for recruiting new members turn-out gear and physicals.

Police Grant

There is a grant, possibly in June, which is a hiring grant for new police officers. The grant covers 3 years of salary, and benefits. The Municipality is responsible for the final 2 years of this 5 year grant.

Mrs. Dalton asked if there is a grant to buy the equipment mandated for the well testing. Mrs. Rolef responded "equipment is not covered".

Storm Water Management Grant and Master Plan Grant

Bruno Assocs. will look into both of these grants. The CFO said she'll "keep on top of it".

Mr. Rodman suggested investigating if a grant exists for Waste Water Management Plan. He doesn't think Blairstown has a final, approved Waste Water Management Plan.

Mrs. Rolef summarized by stating the 2 big questions are: 1. Does Twp. Committee want to proceed with Community Development Block Grant for the well? 2. Does Twp. Committee want to look into LAIF for emergencies?

Mr. Lance suggested applying for both of these grants at the same time. If denied, the process will be underway to fund that well immediately. He suggested doing the Introduction at the first meeting in April to amend Bond Ordinance for the well, to have the application and funding in place in case it is needed.

Ms. Rolef, CFO stated the Budget will be approved at the 1st meeting in April.

Ms. Rolef also noted that the Salary Resolution can be discussed at any time.

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

1 – from Corey Tierney, Appalachian Trail Advisory Committee request to close down Main Street on Saturday April 22, 2017 from 10am – 4pm for Appalachian Trail Day. This request will be forwarded to the Freeholders if there is no objection from the Township Committee.

Mayor Shoemaker stated this is in conjunction with Blirstown being designated the first Appalachian Trail community designated in New Jersey. He explained activities are planned, and this is ATAC's way of asking if Township Committee is okay with that.

Mr. Lance noted Historic Preservation is leading 2 walking tours that day, which they were asked to do. They were told by the GBDA who set this up, they can't have a table there. They are not a local vendor. Pastor Harvey is a member of HPC and granted permission for a table at Presbyterian Outreach Center. GBBA sent correspondence stating tables are only for things for sale. Mayor Shoemaker noted GBDA is a private organization. Mr. Lance countered, "We still own the sidewalk". Mayor Shoemaker asked for a vote in favor of supporting this function, and for having the County close Main St.

All members of the Township Committee agreed to approve the closing of Main Street for Appalachian Trail Day.

2 – from Melanie Myers, Administrative Specialist 3 Municipal Division, Re: 2016/2017 Annual Visitation of the Blirstown Municipal Court.

Mayor Shoemaker noted Melanie Myers (above) is making an annual visitation to the Blirstown Court on March 30, 2017. Mrs. Van Valkenburg suggested that would be a good time to discuss "the pleading down of the tickets etc." in that court, with the Prosecutor. Mrs. Dalton noted it says the visitation "is to review the practices and procedures associated with the Court session".

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

1- "Go Green with Hope" Green Fair on Saturday, April 8 from 10am to 1pm at Hope Township School, 320 Johnsonburg Road, Hope. Everyone is invited to this Free Recycling Event. Flyer is on our Website.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg suggested the brochure for this be posted in the Township. Electronics collections will be done - including computers, printers, appliances and televisions. The County doesn't accept them anymore. Paper shredding is also being done. The date is Saturday April 8, 2017. Mrs. Leidner noted, it is on the website already.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mayor Shoemaker explained the Benbrooks are not here. Kevin Benbrook is preparing for a court appearance tomorrow for the Fair Share Housing Case. He said, hopefully The Settlement Agreement will be approved.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

Ms. Leidner, RMC, was approached again by The Board of Elections, asking if Blairstown would like to have 2 polling places. The Evangelical Church offered their location as a required, backup location. It is very large, has a big parking lot which is well lit. The County is willing to work with Blairstown. Mrs. Van Valkenburg noted if some of the machines go down in one location that is a problem. Mrs. Leidner explained this would be a permanent change. The consensus was in favor.

Mrs. Leidner confirmed there be 2 (machines) in 1 location, and 3 (machines) in the other location. She said they do it by population in different areas of the town.

Mayor Shoemaker said it should be started on a small basis so that it will be set for the next big election. Mrs. Leidner will check about breaking-up districts, and report back.

Mayor Shoemaker asked for a voice vote for splitting polling places - 1 in Town Hall, 1 in the Evangelical Church.

Voice Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Shoemaker
NAY – Van Valkenburg

Mrs. Leidner asked to cancel or reschedule Township Committee’s 2nd meeting in April since that is the date of the Municipal Clerk’s Conference. She will be gone Mon., Tues., & Weds. nights. Previously, she has gone for many years to get CEUs.

The CFO stated the Budget will be approved at the 1st meeting in April.

The CFO stated the Salary Resolution can be discussed at any time.

Mayor Shoemaker suggested the 2nd meeting, April 26, 2017 be cancelled.

Roll Call Vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Lance, Shoemaker
Abstain – Van Valkenburg

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Rodman said he reviewed his topics earlier in this meeting.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery reported there is a water line flush scheduled in April. The approach will be different to avoid past problems with flushes. Everyone will be notified. It will be on the website. Mr. Lance suggested a posted Notice. Mrs. Van Valkenburg recommended putting a bright Notice sticker on the water bills when they are mailed. Mr. Lance suggested a self-inking stamp. Mrs. Van Valkenburg requested indicating the breakdown of water use fees on the bill.

Mayor Shoemaker noted an engineer who looked at the system a month ago, thought enough water wasn't being used to flush it. The engineer said if a greater amount was used, the people on High St. would have no water. There is not enough pressure to keep the High Street main full during a longer flush.

Mayor Shoemaker explained that Carl Stoddart, DPW Supervisor would like to setup a couple tankers to replenish the tower and give a very thorough flush. That way, everyone has water, all the time. He pointed out, it would take a day or two for the water to clear up after the flush.

Mrs. Avery and Mrs. Van Valkenburg met with Mr. Stoddart at the DPW garage to work out a plan to replace the aging fleet and equipment.

Mr. Avery reported that the Senior Citizens are very pleased with the Township support, again this year. They are creating a schedule of events. Mr. Avery will keep the Township Committee posted as the sign-ups come up for the events.

COMMITTEE MEMBER DALTON

Mrs. Dalton noted that Blirstown Elementary School Chess Club won Third Place in the Rutherford Hall, Allamuchy, competition.

Mrs. Dalton reported that Read Across America was held on March 2. She explained the High School Honor students came to the Elementary School and read to the students.

Mrs. Dalton revealed that six - 6th graders were selected to perform with the County All-State Band in Phillipsburg on March 2. She explained that the top-ranking musicians come together county-wide.

Mrs. Dalton explained that the Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored an essay contest based on a question related to National Parks. Out of 100 submissions, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place were awarded to Blirstown Elementary students.

Mr. Leal, Superintendent of Blirstown Elementary, invites community members to attend their board meetings and encourages questions for solutions. The next meeting is March 16, 2017 at 7 pm.

Mrs. Dalton announced that NWRHS has been selected as a semi-finalist to host a teacher of Mandarin Chinese. The program is entitled Teachers of Critical Languages. She explained they could reapply for a grant next year- (yr. #2) also, which would pay the salary and possible housing. Then, the plan is to see if the school could include it in their budget, for year 3. Mrs. Dalton has been asked to serve as the liaison to this individual. She revealed there are over 100 students who have signed up to take Mandarin Chinese.

Mrs. Dalton noted that the next meeting NWRHS Board Meeting will be held on March 20, 2017 at 6:40pm, in the high school Media Center.

Mrs. Dalton reported that efforts are continuing for bids for the security desk and things that need to be done in the Main Office, to keep personnel safe. Sketches and prices are being submitted.

Mrs. Dalton remarked that hopefully, by the next Township Committee Meeting we will be able to move forward, and make a decision.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg encouraged attendance to the 2 School Board Budget Hearings to see how tax dollars are being used. She noted enrollment is down.

Mrs. Dalton asked what % of taxes is going to support the infrastructure in Blirstown. Mr. Lance responded, "The 2cent Open Space Tax"- everything else goes to schools, the County and the Library. He said ¾ of the overall tax bill is going to the 2 schools. She declared, "People need to be more involved with what's happening with our schools".

COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance reported there were 25 summons, 3 parking tickets and 4 warrants issued by the Police Dept.

Mr. Lance revealed there is a Heroin & Opioid Prevention Education Seminar on Tuesday March 28, at Phillipsburg High School @ 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

Mr. Lance noted that there is also a Heroin & Opioid Symposium at the Crossbar, 285 Grant St., Phillipsburg, on Sunday March 19, 2017 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

Mr. Lance reiterated, Historic Preservation Committee will be conducting 2 walking tours at the Appalachian Trail Community Day being held on April 22, 2017.

Mr. Lance reported that the Historic Preservation Committee will be hosting a big Friday The Thirteenth Walking Tour on Friday, October 13, 2017.

Mr. Lance reported that there is a public meeting at NWRHS tonight in the cafeteria regarding the DWGNRA historic structures. Mr. Lance noted even though there are no historic structures involved, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is also located in Blirstown

COMMITTEE MEMBER VAN VALKENBURG

Mrs. Van Valkenburg announced the Open Space Committee met. Joel McGreen is the Chairman. Tom Gross is Vice Chairman, and Jane Santini is Secretary. She noted, the Open Space Committee meetings are open to the Public.

Mr. McGreen reported that he spoke with the owner of the Kostenbader Estate. The owner is still interested in selling.

Mr. McGreen announced the Open Space Committee closed on the 84 acre Croucher Farm. Mr. McGreen noted that Tax dollars helped preserve 1,049 acres in Blirstown.

Mr. McGreen noted the Ardia Farm is still dealing with finalizing the estate.

Mr. McGreen stated there is no news on Nonnemacher. An offer was made a month ago which was the certified market value for the 2 farms.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg pointed out the Land Use Board meets the 3rd Monday of each month. She encourages attendance.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg met with Rich Motyka, Tax Assessor this morning. She revealed Blairstown has been at a 99 - 100% Valuation. Most of the properties are selling at assessed values. Lower-priced homes have been selling above assessment. Blairstown is at a stalemate. There are not a lot of people moving into the area. It will be tougher for the Town – budget wise. There is no development going on or big businesses coming in. The Town is hurting. Blairstown is becoming an older population.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker reported that he was notified the State is resurfacing Eastbound Rt. 80 from Old Mine Rd. to mile 12.3. Bids start in May. Starting date uncertain, maybe in the Fall. The roads will be open for daytime commuting with work being done at night.

Mayor Shoemaker noted that junk is being hauled out by the tenant of the Kostenbader property, perceivably resultant from the Zoning Officer's violation letter to the property owner.

Mayor Shoemaker revealed the Police Department computers have been hacked, presumably by hackers in Russia. The older server's repair cost was estimated between \$3,000. - \$5,000. The server was inherited from the County. A new Server, was installed, costing \$4,800. Mr. Gara noted that Police Departments in other areas, i.e. Dover, were also affected but the virus the attacks were not confined solely to Police Departments.

FROM THE PUBLIC

Jeannette O'Brien, East Ave., asked why place the well next to the Fire House. Mr. Rodman explained, the location was chosen to be in an aquifer where filtering for iron and manganese didn't have to be done. Additionally, it will not be necessary to go under the Kill to get the water to the tower from the Crisman Road plant site. He noted if there is any problem with a line under the Kill, the Township would be out of luck getting water from the other side, to the tower.

She asked, "What about a Footbridge Park location"? Mr. Rodman responded, that would be the other side of the Kill again, which is being avoided.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Lance made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Avery. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 pm.

Submitted by:

Marion C. Spriggs,
Deputy Clerk