

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, January 13, 2016, 7:30 PM**

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 Shoemaker. Those present were Mr. Avery, Mrs. Dalton, Mrs. Van Valkenburg and Mayor Shoemaker. Also present were Clerk Pizzaia and Attorney Robert Benbrook (arrived at 8:30). Mr. Lance 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT – up to 5 speakers, 3 minutes each

Jackie Espinoza, JCP&L, spoke to the Committee about permanently removing street lights that were turned off years ago at the request of the Committee. She said that JCP&L employees are frequently called out to these lights as they are reported as needing repairs. After discussion, the Committee decided to review the list of street lights supplied by Ms. Espinoza and to let her know which ones can be removed.

MINUTES

December 2, 2015 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the December 2, 2015 minutes, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

January 4, 2016 – Reorganization Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Dalton made a motion to approve the January 4, 2016 Reorganization Meeting minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1 – R.2016 – 018 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2016 – 019 Authorizing the Approval of Temporary Appropriations for the Blirstown Township, Warren County, Municipal Operating Budget for 2016 and for the Water Utility Budget for 2016
- 3 – R.2016 – 020 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2014-002
- 4 – R.2016 – 021 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2014-011
- 5 – R.2016 – 022 Sub-Grant Agreement for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- 6 – R.2016 – 023 Authorizing the Sale of 1987 Case Wheel Loader
- 7 – R.2016 – 024 Cancellation of Unexpended 2015 Budget Appropriations
- 8 – R.2016 – 025 Appointment of Qualified Purchasing Agent
- 9 – R.2016 – 026 Appointments to Land Use Board

Mayor Shoemaker requested that Item #1 be removed from the Consent Agenda. Mrs. Dalton made a motion to approve the remainder of the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

With regard to Item #1, R.2016 - 018, Mayor Shoemaker discussed an invoice from a veterinarian for treating feral cats. He was concerned that this would happen on a regular basis. Mr. Avery said that this type of charge would not be repeated and that the invoice in question is being paid from the dedicated trust account for dog licensing.

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to approve R.2016-018, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- Clerk – December Report
- Finance – December Finance and Fuel Reports
- Police Department – December Report
- Tax Collector – December Report
- Warren County Health Department – December 14, 2015

Mr. Avery made a motion to accept the Department Reports, which was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1 – James P. Fox, Morris, Downing & Sherrad, LLP, re: North Warren Regional Board of Education, Zone Change Application

Mr. Fox stated that since the Board of Education's Planner, Elizabeth Waterbury, was unable to attend tonight, and since the Township Attorney was not in attendance, he would like to return

next month. Mr. Fox wished to close the record in terms of their application, and also expressed concern over the two new Committee members. He hopes that they will be able to review the meeting recordings at which this matter was discussed. He said that an objector to the decision of the Township Committee, whichever way it is decided, could be overthrown if the new members did not listen to all relevant discussions. Mayor Shoemaker responded that he does not want to close the record because counsel is not present to explain the ramifications of that action. He is in favor of postponing this conversation until next month.

Mr. Fox said that a memo was provided to Mr. Benbrook. The Committee responded that they have not seen this memo. Mr. Fox said that he would ask Mr. Benbrook for permission to not notice the next meeting.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg said that she did not understand the matrix presented to the Committee. Mr. Heagele, Business Administrator for North Warren Regional High School, said that the numbers represented the costs paid on the dates for particular projects. The Committee asked for each project to be identified. Mr. Heagele said that he will resubmit the matrix with a description of each project.

2 – Memorandum from Christine Rolef, CFO, re: Summary of Responses – Solicitation for Website Services

Mayor Shoemaker summarized the two bids received, stating that the CFO has reviewed the results and has recommended awarding the contract to Nisivoccia Consulting. Mrs. Van Valkenburg commented that she does not understand the mechanics involved in maintaining a website and that she did not have sufficient time to review the bid results. Mr. Avery spoke in favor of awarding the contract to Mr. Nisivoccia. Mr. Shoemaker made a motion to award the contract for website maintenance to Nisivoccia Consulting for 2016 only, as per quotation. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

1 – from Patricia Sagan, Director of Recreation, re: Request from American Cancer Society

This request is for the use of Sycamore Park for the annual Relay for Life event on June 11 and 12, 2016. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to approve the request, which was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

2 – from Paulette Gutzwiller, re: Stop Sign Installation Request on Shannon Lane

Mayor Shoemaker said that Mr. Rodman is researching the State's regulations regarding the installation of stop signs and will report back to the Committee.

3 – from Ann Marie Fischer, requesting street light turned on at 1 Cobblewood Road and stop sign moved

Mr. Avery said that he will go with the DPW Foreman to the location and report back to the Committee. With regard to the street light, the Committee was in agreement to decline the request to have the street light turned on.

4 – from Fernya Klindt, tendering resignation as Crossing Guard effective January 1, 2016

Mayor Shoemaker said that the Police Department is in the process of hiring a replacement. Mrs. Van Valkenburg suggested presenting Mrs. Klindt with a plaque in honor of her many years of service with the township. The Committee was in agreement.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg made a motion to accept the resignation, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

5 – from William H. Sigety, re: Boy Scout Eagle Project

The Committee considered ideas to suggest to Mr. Sigety with reference to his project. Mrs. Van Valkenburg suggested a sign in front of the Municipal Building posting the dates of Committee meetings. Mrs. Dalton suggested having benches placed around a particular tree in Sycamore Park. Mayor Shoemaker will provide Mr. Sigety with the Committee's suggestions.

6 – from Michael Selvaggi, Esq., of Lavery, Selvaggi, Abromitis & Cohen, re: North Warren Municipal Court, requesting final court payment of \$19,189.00

This will be addressed when Mr. Benbrook arrives.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

There were no comments on the General Correspondence list.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The Clerk had nothing to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Rodman received an update from Ruth Ettinger of the DEP regarding the removal of the Paulina Dam. She indicated that a scope of work is being written at this time, which will include a fresh water mussels survey.

The sewer feasibility group will be holding a meeting on Friday, January 15th to review the final report that they will submit to the Committee. Mr. Rodman will see if they can submit the report prior to the February 10th meeting.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery said that the Seniors' Christmas party was very well attended, and added that the seniors are appreciative of all that the Committee members do for them.

Mr. Avery will be meeting with Carl Stoddart on Friday at the Water Plant to review the issues that need to be addressed.

The kitchen in the Givens Belet building is being worked on and the curtains in the meeting room will be cleaned. The building continues to be used as a community center. A new furnace has been installed and there are plans to paint the building in the spring.

The ordinance review committee will have a report ready for the February meeting. Mayor Shoemaker suggested having the report distributed to the Committee prior to the next meeting.

The Blairstown Enhancement Committee is working with the State on the Cedar Lake Farm project.

Mr. Avery had a sound engineer evaluate the system and gave a preliminary estimate, which includes placing speakers in the ceiling. The estimate totals approximately \$4,100. Mayor Shoemaker said it would be much less expensive to mount quality speakers on both sides of the room. Mrs. Van Valkenburg said that this could be a good scout project.

COMMITTEE MEMBER DALTON

Mrs. Dalton announced that the Land Use Board will meet on Monday, January 18th.

Mrs. Dalton has scheduled meetings with the superintendents of Blairstown Elementary School and North Warren Regional High School. She will be emphasizing how the Committee can work in concert with the schools to further their goals.

COMMITTEE MEMBER VAN VALKENBURG

Mrs. Van Valkenburg feels that it is important that the Committee discuss important matters in detail before making decisions. She suggested holding work sessions once a month in order to discuss these matters.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg requested to attend an NJLM seminar on budget preparation. Mrs. Dalton would also like to attend. Mrs. Van Valkenburg made a motion to approve her and Mrs. Dalton's attendance at a cost of \$75 each. Mayor Shoemaker seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

With regard to the Water Company, Mrs. Van Valkenburg talked about the deficiencies cited by the NJ DEP. She said that the response to the DEP by the township lacked any substance and she is concerned that an important infrastructure has been ignored for such a long period of time. She said that the filters have not been changed since 2005. The tower at Blair Academy needs to be repaired. She suggested putting a moratorium on the Open Space tax fund and moving the monies to a general fund to go towards the infrastructure repairs. Mrs. Van Valkenburg emphasized that the Committee needs to seriously work on a plan of action.

Mayor Shoemaker said that the Committee is aware of these problems. Three contractors have been brought in to give quotes on the filters and we have only received one.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg suggested that the Committee reconsider The DPW Foreman's proposal that he, as a certified water operator, assume full control and responsibility of the water company.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker attended a meeting in Morristown this morning with regard to gypsy moth spraying. There are two corridors in Blirstown that are affected, totaling 590 acres that have been identified as having high egg mass infestation. The cost to spray these areas will be about \$33,000. If the State receives the federal grant that has been applied for, municipalities will be reimbursed 50% of the cost. Weather permitting, the spraying would commence on May 16th. The State wants an answer on participation by January 28, 2016. Mayor Shoemaker said that municipalities can sign up at this time and opt out at a later date. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to opt into this spraying program, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

Mayor Shoemaker asked Mr. Benbrook about the Hope Court issue listed under **Unfinished Business**. Mr. Benbrook said that the Hope Court is requesting a final payment of \$19,189. Mr. Benbrook summarized the history of this subject, stating that when Blirstown left the Hope Court, there was a question of where the monies would go for tickets issued by the Blirstown Police Department prior to leaving the court but adjudicated after our departure. Blirstown requested an audit of the Hope Court before agreeing to make this final payment. Hope was reluctant to supply this audit for months, but eventually released it.

After a review of this audit by Mr. Benbrook and the CFO, they are in agreement that the audit is accurate and that Blirstown should, in fact, make this final payment of \$19,189.00. In answer to Mrs. Van Valkenburg's question on why Blirstown should make this payment, Mr. Benbrook responded that we owe the payment by contract, the amount appears to be fair, and that the Hope Court was still performing a service for Blirstown during the period the payment covers.

Based on Mr. Benbrook's recommendation, Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to make a final payment to the Hope Court in the amount of \$19,189. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Shoemaker
NAY – Van Valkenburg
ABSENT – Lance

Mayor Shoemaker said that the Police Department has been interviewing candidates in anticipation of hiring a police officer. He asked Mr. Gara, Police Director, to come forward to speak about the potential hire. Mr. Gara said he has been searching for the right candidate and is recommending that Paul Choe be hired as a probationary police officer. Mr. Choe is a Special Law Enforcement Officer, currently working in Nutley, NJ. Mr. Gara believes that Mr. Choe will be an asset as a community minded, people oriented officer.

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to hire Paul Choe as a probationary police officer, effective March 1, 2016, contingent upon successful completion of a background check, in addition to physical and psychological examinations. Mrs. Van Valkenburg seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: AYE – Avery, Dalton, Van Valkenburg, Shoemaker
ABSENT – Lance

FROM THE PUBLIC

Fred Cook, Four Corners Road, said that the sound system in the room is fine and suggested that anyone sitting in the back of the room who cannot hear move forward.

Harold Price, Alice Court, said that due to the fire in 2000, some of the titles for various township vehicles were destroyed. He suggested keeping an inventory of the vehicles, especially the DPW and fire department vehicles. Mr. Avery said that he has completed an inventory of DPW vehicles in order to keep track of repair costs.

Mr. Price asked Mayor Shoemaker what the Committee's plans are with regard to the Environmental Commission. Mayor Shoemaker said that the Township Committee will be reviewing the role of the Commission, determining its goals and making decisions on whether the board should be a stand-alone commission or be merged with another entity.

Debra Waldron, Maple Lane and Land Use Board Chair, requested that if legal counsel is not present at the February meeting that the Committee not hear the Board of Education at all. Mr. Benbrook assured Mrs. Waldron that Kevin Benbrook would attend the February meeting.

Jeanette O'Brien, East Avenue, reported that the water pressure is very bad. Livia Angelone, East Avenue, said that the pressure is very bad in the morning. There is sometimes a sulfur smell and the water is corroding the fixtures.

Robert Halberstadt, Main Street, said that, as a member of the ambulance squad, he is appreciative of the fine job the police department does on emergency calls. Many of the officers have performed life saving measures.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Avery made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mrs. Dalton. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk