

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, June 8, 2016, 7:30 PM**

MINUTES

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 and Attorney Robert Benbrook.

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

Andy Ball and Renee Harmon, Alina Lodge, spoke to the Committee regarding a 5K/5 Mile Run Walk to be held at and around the Blairstown Airport on Saturday, October 15th. A map of the proposed course was distributed to the Committee. Mr. Ball said that the Blairstown Police Department and the airport have been notified and have been very cooperative. Mr. Lance made a motion to approve this event, contingent upon receipt of a certificate of insurance. Mrs. Dalton seconded the motion.

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

Joel McGreen, Open Space Chair, thanked the Clerk for her assistance throughout the years on behalf of the Open Space Committee.

Rosalie Murray, Heller Hill Road, thanked Mrs. Van Valkenburg for supplying sandwiches to the poll workers on Election Day. She also thanked the Committee for their decision not to sell the Water Company at this time.

Mrs. Murray said that the Township needs to invest in ways to maintain the rural character of Blairstown. She is a strong supporter of the preservation of open space in Blairstown, but would be in favor of maintaining the open space tax and establishing a municipal tax in order to pay for necessary improvements which contribute to the quality of life in Blairstown.

MINUTES

May 11, 2016 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the May 11th minutes, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

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

June 1, 2016 – Special Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2016 – Closed Session Minutes

Mrs. Van Valkenburg made a motion to approve the June 1st Special Meeting minutes and the Closed Session minutes. Mayor Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

ORDINANCE 2016 – 03 AN ORDINANCE GRANTING MUNICIPAL CONSENT TO THE ISSUANCE OF A FRANCHISE TO SERVICE ELECTRIC CABLE TV OF NEW JERSEY, INC., TO CONSTRUCT, OWN, OPERATE, EXTEND AND MAINTAIN A CABLE TELEVISION SYSTEM IN THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN, COUNTY OF WARREN, SETTING FORTH CONDITIONS ACCOMPANYING THE GRANT OF SAID MUNICIPAL CONSENT AND PROVIDING FOR THE REGULATION AND USE OF SAID SYSTEM
Introduction, First Reading

Mayor Shoemaker asked Mr. Benbrook to make corrections to addresses listed for the Ambulance Corps and the Police Department. Mr. Lance also requested that service be provided at the Masonic Lodge. Mr. Benbrook said that Kevin Benbrook is working on this.

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve Ordinance 2016 – 03 on first reading, in anticipation of these corrections and additions being made. Mrs. Dalton seconded the motion.

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

ORDINANCE 2016 – 04 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING EXISTING ARTICLE I OF CHAPTER 128 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN AND ENACTING A NEW CHAPTER 128 ARTICLE I ENTITLED “BRUSH, GRASS AND WEEDS”
Introduction, First Reading

Mrs. Van Valkenburg requested that “hedges” be removed from Section 128-1 because she believes that this would affect a great deal of properties in the township. Mr. Benbrook explained that this would only be enforced in instances where said hedges are a safety issue. Mrs. Van Valkenburg was satisfied with this explanation.

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve Ordinance 2016 – 04 on first reading, which was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.

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

ORDINANCE 2016 – 05 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN CREATING A NEW CHAPTER 132 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN ENTITLED, “MAINTENANCE OF VACANT/ABANDONED PROPERTIES”
Introduction, First Reading

Mr. Lance objected to the registration requirement for abandoned properties. He said that the workload for the enforcement officer would be overwhelming. He is not in favor of this ordinance

and believes that Ordinance 2016 – 06 covers the necessary regulations. Mayor Shoemaker said that the registration requirement is incentive for property owners to take care of their properties.

Mr. Lance stated that the township already has a mechanism for finding out responsible parties on abandoned and vacant properties through the tax records and that registration is not necessary. Mrs. Van Valkenburg feels that it is a good idea to know who to get in touch with in cases of break-ins that occur at vacant properties as well as when upkeep is not being maintained. Mr. Avery added that it encourages property owners who do not live in Blairstown and may not care about the appearance of a property to be more diligent in property maintenance.

Mr. Avery made a motion to approve Ordinance 2016 – 05 on first reading. The motion was seconded by Mayor Shoemaker.

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

ORDINANCE 2016 – 06 AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A NEW CHAPTER 147 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN ENTITLED “PROPERTY MAINTENANCE”

Introduction, First Reading

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve Ordinance 2016 – 06 on first reading, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1 – R.2016 – 069 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2016 – 070 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2016-003
- 3 – R.2016 – 071 Approval of Liquor License Renewals
- 4 – R.2016 – 072 Requesting Approval of Items of Revenue and Appropriation – Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- 5 – R.2016 – 073 Requesting Approval of Items of Revenue and Appropriation – Clean Communities
- 6 – R.2016 – 074 Requesting Approval of Items of Revenue and Appropriation – Recycling Tonnage Grant
- 7 – Application for Blue Light Permit – William McNulty and Amy Zarembo, Blairstown Ambulance Corps
- 8 – Application for membership in Blairstown Hose Company No. 1 – Julian Reyes

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

NORTH WARREN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 2016-17 BUDGET PRESENTATION by Sarah Bilotti, Superintendent

Superintendent Bilotti spoke about budget goals, which include the advancement of student achievement and the funding of necessary projects that will improve information technology infrastructure. Student

schedules will be revamped in the upcoming year and new textbooks will be purchased. Advanced Placement courses are being increased, credits for which are accepted as transfer credits in all New Jersey colleges.

Ms. Bilotti discussed measures being taken to reduce costs, which include reducing staff by attrition and by exploring energy efficiencies, such as more energy efficient lighting and heating. A budget comparison from FY2016 to FY2017 shows a 1.09% increase, with administration costs greatly decreased. The tax levy for Blirstown will increase 3.64% in FY2017.

Mayor Shoemaker thanked Superintendent Bilotti for presenting this information on the North Warren Regional High School FY2016-17 budget.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Clerk – May Report

Finance – May Finance and Fuel Reports

Fire Department – May Report

Police Department – May Report

Tax Collector – May Report

Warren County Health Department – May 6, 2016 Report

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE for information and possible action

- 1 – from Jessica C. Caldwell, J Caldwell & Associates, LLC, re: Declaratory Judgement Case for Blirstown Township

Mayor Shoemaker explained that this issue is in court at the present time. The Township is still protected from builder's remedy. Ms. Caldwell's letter states that the Township needs to make a decision on a course of action with regard to COAH. One option is to continue with the Declaratory Judgment Case, which will cost more money. Another option is to withdraw from the case and take our chances on being vulnerable to builder's remedy. The third option is to attempt to reach a settlement with the Fair Share Housing Center on a housing number agreeable to all parties. Mr. Kevin Benbrook and Jessica Caldwell are both recommending that the Township try to reach a settlement with the Fair Share Housing Center.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg is in favor of the Township Committee having a joint meeting with the Land Use Board to discuss this. Mayor Shoemaker is in favor of waiting until the Appellate Court hands down its decision regarding the gap period before holding a joint meeting. After discussion, it was agreed to wait until the court renders a decision.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

There were no comments or questions on the General Correspondence list.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook had nothing to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The town-wide cleanup dates have been confirmed for September 23rd and 24th. The Free Rabies Clinic will be held on December 4th.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Mr. Rodman is working on the specifications for the Water Company back-up well. The township needs to negotiate with Blair Academy for the placement of the back-up well on their property. Mr. Benbrook stated that this would be finalized through a professional easement agreement.

The annual inspection on the Paulina Dam has been completed and forwarded to the Department of Environmental Protection. Some minor work needs to be completed on the dam.

Mrs. Dalton asked Mr. Rodman if he had an update of the paving to be done between Mohican Road and Kerr's Corner Road. Mr. Rodman replied that he has not received an update but will call the NJ Department of Transportation for any available information.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery reported that the Seniors Group will be going to Silver Branches Resort on July 6th.

With regard to the sewer project, the ad hoc committee is in the process of gathering waste management statistics in order to be able to move forward. A USDA application will be completed and sent in to the State within the week. This will determine our grant eligibility and a response should be received fairly shortly.

The Water Company repairs continue to be completed in order to comply with the NJDEP schedule.

Mr. Avery reported that in an effort to reduce the workload on the DPW, the Township is in the process of eliminating the mowing of properties that are not owned by Blairstown. These properties include the Mohican Fire Hall and the Blairstown Elementary School.

The feral cat problem continues to be addressed in the Village area.

Mr. Avery hopes to introduce the ordinance requested by the Dog Park Committee at the July meeting.

The next meeting of the Blairstown Enhancement Committee will be held on July 12th. The Committee is currently working on a project to get all residents on the Nixle program. The other program currently being worked on is signage for the Blairstown borders.

Mr. Avery is working with JCP&L on having street lights installed at Givens Belet and at the Mount Vernon and Buchanan Roads intersection.

COMMITTEE MEMBER DALTON

Mrs. Dalton reported that interviews were conducted and a new Municipal Clerk was hired. Linda Leidner will take over as Municipal Clerk on July 1st and is currently the Deputy Clerk in Hampton Borough, NJ.

Mrs. Dalton said that the Committee attempted to fill an upcoming vacant Driver/Laborer position with two (2) part-time employees, but has decided that hiring one full-time employee would better serve the needs of the Township. After discussion, it was the consensus of opinion that this would be the best choice. Mrs. Dalton requested that the Committee move ahead with the hiring of John Van Dyke as a full-time employee at \$18.00 per hour with a start date of July 18th. Mr. Avery made the motion to hire Mr. Van Dyk, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

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

Mrs. Dalton reported that Dawn Gallant, our Tax Collector, plans to retire at the end of November. She proposed appointing Kerri Womack, presently Blirstown's Assistant Treasurer, to the position of Assistant Tax Collector, effective July 1, 2016. Mrs. Gallant would then be able to train Mrs. Womack as in preparation for Mrs. Womack to eventually take over as Tax Collector. Mrs. Dalton further proposed that effective December 1, Mrs. Womack would be appointed Deputy Tax Collector. After successful completion of the State examination, Mrs. Womack would then be promoted to Tax Collector. From July through October, Mrs. Womack will work in the tax office with Mrs. Gallant for five (5) hours a month, for a total of no more than 20 hours during the four month period. She will be paid \$25.00 per hour for a total not to exceed \$500.00. During November, in order to have Mrs. Womack involved in a tax collection cycle, she will work seven (7) hours per week in the tax office, at a rate of \$25.00, for a total amount of hours not to exceed 28. The amount to be paid to Mrs. Womack during the month of November shall not exceed \$700.00.

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to follow the plan outlined by Mrs. Dalton. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance summarized the May report of the Blirstown Police Department. The Police Department will be holding a phone scam awareness seminar at the library on June 30th at 6pm.

Mr. Lance spoke about a memorandum from Police Director Gara recommending the promotion of Sergeant Scott Johnsen. Mr. Lance made a motion to promote Sergeant Johnsen to Lieutenant, effective July 1st. Mrs. Van Valkenburg seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Lance reported that the Historic Preservation Committee held many events during May, which was History Month. Events included an Open House, an Indian artifact presentation by Director Gara, and a tombstone seminar. They will have an exhibit at Footbridge Park on the Fourth of July.

Mr. Lance reported that in speaking with Freeholder Ed Smith, the Freeholders are working under the assumption that Blirstown has assumed ownership of Main Street. Mr. Lance said that the Township needs to be proactive on this matter and assert to the County Freeholders that Blirstown absolutely will not take ownership of Main and High Streets. After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Benbrook will also research the viability of filing a declaratory judgment with regard to the ownership of Main and High Streets.

COMMITTEE MEMBER VAN VALKENBURG

Mrs. Van Valkenburg reported that the Recreation Department is conducting many programs at this time. There has been a tremendous amount of support and interest in the programs.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg asked Mr. McGreen to come forward to discuss current open space projects. Mr. McGreen stated that the Committee gave permission to preserve the Nonnemacher property at the May meeting. Surveys of the High Acres farm should take place this month, and the Croucher property is mostly completed and the legal paperwork remains. There has been no progress on the Kostenbader property.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg reported that there are two items coming before the Land Use Board. The first item is regarding road frontage and the second item is regarding building usage.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker proposed drafting an ordinance waiving COAH fees when an owner's property is lost due to a fire. The Committee was in agreement that these fees should be waived.

Mayor Shoemaker asked if the Committee wished to pursue receiving rental fees from the State for the use of their office in our Municipal Building. After discussion, it was decided that having the DCA in our building is a large convenience for our residents and that rental monies would not be pursued.

FROM THE PUBLIC

John Miller, High Street, thanked the Committee for introducing the ordinances dealing with property maintenance. He said that poor maintenance affects property values and the ordinances have been needed for a long time.

Robert Halberstadt, Wasigan Road, said that the GBBA awarded scholarships to Doug Ackerstrom and Gianna Lorusso, North Warren Regional High School students.

Frank Anderson, Polkville Road, thanked the Clerk for her years with the township and wished her a happy retirement.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Avery made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg. All members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk