

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN
REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, May 11, 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

No one signed up to speak tonight.

MINUTES

April 13, 2016 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lance made a motion to approve the April 13th minutes, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

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

PROCLAMATION – May 2016 Proclaimed as OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

Mayor Shoemaker read the proclamation in full.

PROCLAMATION – May 2016 Proclaimed as HISTORY MONTH

Mayor Shoemaker read the proclamation in full.

Mrs. Dalton thanked the Historic Preservation Committee for organizing the Open House held by the Committee last week, the Walking Tour and other interesting events that showcase Blairstown.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1 – R.2016 – 062 Authorization to Pay Bills
- 2 – R.2016 – 063 Redemption of Certification of Sale No. 2015-007
- 3 – R.2016 – 064 Authorizing Blairstown Township to Provide Municipal Funding Share for the Purchase of Development Rights to High Acres Farm
- 4 – Application for Blue Light Permit – Laura Durl Lester, Blairstown Ambulance Corps
- 5 – Application for Red Light Permit – Scott Durl Lester, Blairstown Ambulance Corps

Mrs. Van Valkenburg requested that R.2016 – 064 be removed from the Consent Agenda. Mr. Avery made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, with the exception of R.2016 – 064. Mrs. Dalton seconded the motion.

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

With regard to R.2016 – 064, Mrs. Van Valkenburg asked Joel McGreen, Open Space Chair, to explain this purchase. Mr. McGreen said that this resolution authorizes the township to pay approximately 20% of the cost to preserve High Acres Farm. The High Acres Farm is comprised of approximately 134 acres and will be preserved in perpetuity.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg made a motion to approve R.2016 – 064, which was seconded by Mr. Avery.

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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Clerk – April Report

Finance – April Finance and Fuel Reports

Fire Department – April Report

Police Department – April Report

Tax Collector – April Report

Warren County Health Department – April 8, 2016 Report

Mayor Shoemaker 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 Steve Marvin, County Administrator, regarding discontinuance of Main Street, High Street and a portion of Blair Place as county roads by Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Mayor Shoemaker said that Blairstown has attempted to come to an agreement with the County with regard to snow plowing, which is the main issue the County has with Main Street. Mr. Benbrook reiterated his legal opinion that the County’s resolution to “discontinue” Main Street is meaningless without a resolution from the municipality accepting Main Street. Mr. Benbrook’s advice is to do nothing at this point, as no action is required. There was a discussion on what would happen if the County did not plow come winter. Mr. Benbrook said that the County legally would be responsible because the Township has no legal responsibility.

Mayor Shoemaker said that he spoke to Freeholder Ed Smith and told him that both parties need to meet in order to come to a viable solution, as Blairstown has no intention of accepting ownership of Main Street.

After discussion, it was decided that Mayor Shoemaker will meet with the Township Attorney to draft a letter outlining the steps that Blairstown is willing to take to help the County with the snow removal.

2 – from Nicholas Paoella, Assistant County Engineer, re: Warren County Five Year Schedule for Roads and Drainage Improvements, Resurfacing Projects, and Bridge and Culvert Improvements

Mayor Shoemaker explained that this correspondence lists the places in the County scheduled for work. The only work listed in Blairstown is a bridge and culvert improvement project on East Crisman Road over the Paulinskill. The letter asks that the County be notified if the township plans on performing work in this same area in order that the two projects can be coordinated. Mayor Shoemaker will consult with Mr. Rodman on this.

3 – from Debra Lynn Nicholson, Esq., representing Aqua, regarding RFP on the sale of the Water Department

Mayor Shoemaker explained that Aqua has expressed interest in purchasing the Water Department. Mayor Shoemaker asked the Committee if there was in interest in preparing a Request for Proposal in anticipation of selling the Water Company. Mayor Shoemaker explained that if the Township does not sell the Water Department, it could cost more than \$500,000 to make the necessary repairs.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg spoke against the sale of the Water Company. She does not understand why the Township is considering the installation of sewers when they do not want to put the necessary money into the Water Company. She also wants to know more about how selling the Company will affect the water rates for the users.

Mr. Benbrook explained that the Committee does not need to decide tonight if it is in favor of selling the Water Company. If the Committee decides to issue an RFP to sell the Water Company, it always has the right to reject all bids if, in fact, the Committee chooses not to sell.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg said that she is in favor of talking to the potential buyers before sending a big package. Mr. Benbrook said that the RFP route is the process that is used in New Jersey and that an RFP could also bring in other potential buyers.

Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to prepare and to advertise a Request for Proposal for the sale of the Water Company. Mr. Avery seconded the motion.

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

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

There were no comments on the General Correspondence.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

The Clerk had nothing to report.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY

Mr. Benbrook had nothing to report, other than that a COAH meeting will take place on Thursday, May 12th to decide what direction the Township plans to take with regard to Affordable Housing.

FROM THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBER AVERY

Mr. Avery reported that the Seniors Club went on their first trip of the year on April 20th. There were 57 seniors in attendance, including Anita Ardia. The next trip is planned for July 6th.

With regard to the sewer study, the Committee is in the process of obtaining waste management data in order to make informed decisions.

Mr. Avery is currently working on the pricing of a new dump truck for the Department of Public Works. He is working with the CFO on a potential five-year plan for the financing of this truck.

Mr. Avery has been working with Jean Iurato on the feral cat problem in the Village area and they continue to make progress.

With regard to the Givens Belet building, the kitchen is being refurbished and he hopes to be able to move the Seniors Nutrition program to the building in the near future.

A resident expressed concern to Mr. Avery over the placement of a speed limit sign on Main Street. It was decided to move the sign and place it across from O'Connell's office.

The proposed property maintenance ordinance drafts have had some minor changes and will probably be considered for approval on first reading at the June meeting.

Mr. Avery spoke about a street lighting agreement between the Township and JCP&L. The agreement is a master street light contract written by JCP&L and is a standard form. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to authorize the Mayor to sign contingent upon attorney review. Mrs. Dalton seconded the motion.

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

FROM THE TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

With regard to the sewer project, Mr. Rodman reported that the Township is waiting for the determination of eligibility for grants and loans from the Department of Agriculture and the NJEIT. This will give the Township a better understanding of costs and fees.

The inspection report on the Paulina Dam has been received. It was determined that the dam is in poor condition because it does not meet established criteria for dealing with a 100 year storm. Mr. Rodman said that the Township will be amending its plan for the dam repairs, extending remediation for another year. Hopefully, the NJDEP will make a move on the plans to remove the dam before this comes into play.

Mr. Rodman has applied to the NJDOT for discretionary aid for Maple Lane overlay work.

Mrs. Dalton asked Mr. Rodman to look into the work from Mohican Road to Kerr's Corner Road, which was supposed to begin last week. Mr. Rodman will contact the State on this.

COMMITTEE MEMBER DALTON

Mrs. Dalton presented the finalized wording on the proposed change to the personnel policy, which would offer family coverage medical benefits to all employees. Mrs. Dalton made a motion to approve this change to the personnel policy, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

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

Mrs. Dalton reported that a replacement for the DPW mechanic was interviewed and selected. Michael Sullivan will begin on July 18th at a salary of \$24.00 per hour, with benefits in accordance with the personnel policy. Mayor Shoemaker made a motion to approve Mr. Sullivan's hiring, which was seconded by Mrs. Dalton.

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

Applications are due by May 16th for the part-time positions to replace the custodian, and resumes for the Municipal Clerk position are due on May 20th. Candidates will be selected and interviewed and the new employees will be appointed at the June meeting.

Mrs. Dalton reported that Sarah Billotti, Superintendent, and Chris Heagle, Business Administrator, will attend the June meeting to present the North Warren Regional High School 2016-2017 budget.

Gypsy moth spraying will begin on or about May 16th through June 16th. The State estimates that spraying will begin around May 19th. Residents can go to an interactive map on the internet at www.arcgis.com, where they can type in their address and the map will show where they are relative to the spraying route.

Mrs. Dalton received a complaint about the condition of catch basins on Belcher Road. Mrs. Dalton viewed the catch basins and said that they are in poor condition. Mr. Avery said that the DPW employees will be working on this around their heavy mowing schedule.

COMMITTEE MEMBER LANCE

Mr. Lance reported that the filtering media will be replaced in the next couple of days, which should greatly improve the water quality distributed to the water users.

Mr. Lance summarized the Police Department report for the month of April. He also reported that Officers Bisanzio and Glinko will be riding on a 350 mile unity tour that raises awareness for fallen officers killed in the line of duty.

The Historic Preservation Committee has planned many events for history month. Besides the Open House in the Municipal Building, the BHPC conducted a walking tour of High Street. The next event will be another Open House at the Municipal Building, at which Robert Gara will speak about Native American artifacts. On May 22nd, there will be a Cemetery Art and Symbolism class, which will begin at the First Presbyterian Church and continue up to the cemetery at Blair Academy.

COMMITTEE MEMBER VAN VALKENBURG

Mrs. Van Valkenburg reported that the Open Space Committee held a meeting on Thursday, May 5th, and asked Mr. McGreen to come forward to explain current projects. Mr. McGreen spoke about the Nonnemacher Farm, an approximate 125 acre parcel, which is being considered for farmland preservation. Mr. Nonnemacher originally went to the County for funding. However, the County is out of preservation incentive grant funding as has asked Blairstown to take the project on as a PIG with municipal funding. Mr. McGreen said that we have sufficient funds remaining to preserve this property if the Committee agrees to it. The agreement would be that the Township provides approximately \$73,000 to \$78,000, or 20% of the cost to preserve the Nonnemacher Farm. The County agreed to pay all of the soft costs, which includes the appraisals, the survey and the legal fees. They will also pay the short-fall of the State portion. Mr. Lance made a motion to proceed with the

Nonnemacher Farm application for farmland preservation, which was seconded by Mrs. Van Valkenburg.

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

Mrs. Van Valkenburg said that the township does not have a lot to offer in the way of recreation for seniors. She would like to revisit the plan to develop the Gorab property. She will work with the CFO and Recreation Director to seek grants to develop this property into a real park and recreation area for the entire town. She added that the other parks in Blairstown are nice but are more geared towards sports and she would like to see a recreational park for residents with interests other than sports, such as trails and park benches.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg would like to begin charging the Department of Community Affairs for usage of the building, especially in light of the fact that they service other municipalities in our building. She will speak with someone in the DCA and will work with the CFO to come up with a monetary figure for reimbursement.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg praised the Police Department for their participation in Police Day at the Blairstown Elementary School.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg spoke about an email she received from a resident, who is concerned about the deteriorating condition of vacant buildings in the Village area. Mr. Avery said that the ordinance addressing this problem should be introduced at the June meeting. The resident also had concerns about septic requirements for small properties in the Village area, problems with the Water Company, and the prohibitive costs to the Village area residents with regard to the installation of a sewer system. The resident also feels that the Committee views the Village area as a detriment to the township. The Committee disagreed with this assessment, and Mrs. Van Valkenburg agreed that this is not true, as evidenced by the refurbishments and improvements the Committee has been working on for the past couple of years.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg asked about the disbanding of the Environmental Commission and whether it will be reinstated in the near future. Mayor Shoemaker said that other items have had a higher priority and that he intends to have this Commission reinstated soon.

Mrs. Van Valkenburg reported that she recently toured Givens Belet and she does not feel that the building is suitable for the Nutrition Center to be located there. She said that the building is full of mold and is not conducive to having seniors meeting at that location.

MAYOR SHOEMAKER

Mayor Shoemaker said that the NJ DOT is supposed to resume the bridge work on Route 94 in the next couple of days. In light of all of the problems that have arisen with the contractor on this job, Mayor Shoemaker suggested that the Committee send a letter to Senator Oroho, requesting a change in legislation with regard to the awarding of contracts for this type of construction work. He would like to see contractors barred from bidding on future work if deadlines and budgets are not met. Mayor Shoemaker will work on a draft to be considered by the Township Committee.

Mayor Shoemaker said that a Tour de Blairstown is being planned by the Blairstown Farmers Market and Foodshed Alliance. The date of the event is August 6th and they are expecting 100 to 150 riders.

The new director of the Warren County Economic Development Committee will be introduced at a meeting being held on May 12th in Belvidere.

Mayor Shoemaker introduced Gina Trish, who was instrumental in having the park in the Village area built. She spoke about purchasing approximately 20 to 30 yards of mulch for the park and asked that the Township pay for this expense. She also presented a drawing of a sign that she would like the Township Committee to purchase for the park. She said that the park is used by the majority of the area children on a daily basis.

With regard to the sign, Mr. Lance said that he would see if there is a Boy Scout who would work on this as an Eagle Scout project. Mr. Avery and the Recreation Director will work with Mrs. Trish on plans for the park sign.

There is a stone bench that has not been set properly and Mrs. Trish would like this rectified. The DPW will be asked to look at the bench and to reset it.

FROM THE PUBLIC

Harold Price, Alice Court, asked if the clerk position is being advertised. Mrs. Dalton responded that it was. Mr. Price questioned whether the Committee would be hiring a new clerk or were considering a business administrator. Mrs. Dalton responded that a clerk will be appointed.

Mr. Price strongly objected to Mrs. Van Valkenburg's suggestion to revisit the possible development of the Gorab property into a municipal park.

Jim Kern, Mayor of Pohatcong, introduced himself and stated that Blairstown was lucky to have such an active and productive Historic Preservation Committee. He also praised Mr. Gara, Police Director, who was a former Chief of Police in Pohatcong.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no further comments from the public, Mrs. Dalton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Van Valkenburg seconded the motion, with all members voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC
Municipal Clerk