

WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

March 10, 2014 - 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER AND STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The regular meeting of the West Amwell Township Committee was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Present were Mayor Zachary T. Rich, Deputy Mayor George A. Fisher, Committeeman John Dale, Clerk Lora Olsen and Attorney Philip J. Faherty III. Also briefly in attendance were Cathy Urbanski, John Cronce, and Liz Usmiani.

Mayor Rich announced that this meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was included in the Resolution faxed to the Hunterdon County Democrat and Trenton Times on January 6, 2014, was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on said date and has remained continuously posted as required under the Statute. A copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

The meeting was recorded via digital recording system.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

AGENDA REVIEW BY TOWNSHIP CLERK

The following item was added: 11.D New Business: Police Vehicle Request

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made:

- 2014 Dog Licenses Overdue, Late Fees Apply
- Hazardous Waste Days – July 12th, & November 8th; Electronics Recycling, April 12th, all 9 a.m.-1p.m., County Complex, Rt 12
- Auction of Block 8 Lots 20 & 36, March 14th @ 1 p.m.
- Special Township Committee Meeting, March 17th @ 7 p.m.
- Special Township Committee Meeting-Budget Workshop, March 22nd @ 9 a.m.
- First Day of Spring, March 20th
- Hunterdon County 300th Anniversary Parade, March 22nd @ 4 p.m.
- Primary Petitions Due March 31st, 4 p.m.
- Please Come to the Table if You Wish to Address the Committee
- Kindly Turn Cell Phones Off During Meeting

The receipt of the book Hunterdon in My Heart by Walter Choroszewski, courtesy of PEGAS (the administrator of PAIC), was acknowledged. The book is part of the 300th Anniversary and is full of pictures from around Hunterdon County.

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The February 26, 2014 Regular and Closed Session minutes were unanimously approved on motion from Fisher, seconded by Dale.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/TOPIC NOT ON THE AGENDA

Liz Usmiani approached the Committee about property owned by her parents on Hewitt Road next to Hewitt Park. The property was initially purchased in 1987 as an investment but never developed. She and her siblings are trying to tie up loose ends and would to sell the parcel. A sheet providing information on the lot was distributed, including asking price, noting the remainder of which would be a donation for tax purposes. The property would need a septic design for any real estate value. Hunterdon Land Trust has been approached and the recommendation given was to contact Parks & Recreation and Open Space. Ms. Usmiani was advised that the parcel is probably not something that the Land Trust would normally purchase and acquisition by the Township would have to be discussed in further detail.

Cathy Urbanski relayed that she has received several calls on the Township's website. The one from the East Amwell Open Space chair was specifically noted. Apparently the amount of information available, and the stream corridor map, was particularly favored.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION(S) - none

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE AND/OR PUBLIC HEARING - none

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Open Space

- *Auction Update:* John Cronce reported on Saturday's farm tour, relaying that three prospective buyers were present. He advised that the farm lane is terrible, although plowed following the last storm, and the house is probably beyond renovation. The tour took about an hour and a half and the attendees showed interest in the property. One potential buyer raises quail in North Jersey and does organic farming.

Mr. Cronce added that Open Space met recently with Ag Advisory on the Lambert property as their support is needed. Ag Advisory is on board with the project, so work will continue.

Mr. Rich commented on the encroachment of preserved land in Readington for a gas pipeline and in Lebanon Township for a quarry. Mr. Cronce suggested that there needs to be open minds on this subject in order to continue to live here, and mentioned gas and oil finds in other states that have made poor farmers rich. He also relayed that the former Stout farm, the municipal property, and areas along the river were tested previously for oil reserves but there were not sufficient quantities identified.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Possible Appointments – none

The order of the agenda was changed at this point, with the policy manual delayed until later in the evening.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of Resolution on Highlands Water Tax – Mr. Fisher commented on the 'taking' of property values from land owners in this region. They cannot do anything with their land in order that water can be supplied to others. The request is for compensation. Whether or not getting involved helps or hurts the Township was questioned but property values are suppose to mean something. Item held for further review.

Insurance Planning for 2015 – The Township's insurance coverage will be up for a three year renewal period starting in January 2015. A letter from PAIC should arrive mid-summer inquiring about the Township's direction in this regard. The consensus was to go out to bid, with the mayor noting that up to \$30,000 could be saved; Mr. Fisher offering that the Committee would be exercising its fiduciary responsibilities by doing so; and, Mr. Dale agreeing that choices are needed. A brief discussion ensued over taking the group vs stand-alone route, and that most municipalities go with a Joint Insurance Fund (JIF) was noted.

Hunterdon 300th Parade on March 22 – A float is not necessary for Township participation. However, whether or not the Township Committee members will march (or ride) is still TBD. Registration is required if the decision is 'yes.'

Police Vehicle Request – Captain Bartzak has advised the mayor that in order to take delivery by May or June on the initial vehicle for 2014, Winner Ford needs to have the order placed by March 14th. A SUV can be acquired through a capital ordinance, per the Clerk's conversation with the CFO. The request to place the order was approved.

The Hewitt Road property mentioned earlier in the evening was brought up again. Comments such as the property is available now but may not be in the future; is not that expensive; that parking is a problem for sports activities at the park; the narrow road frontage of the park; and, the possibility of using Green Acres funds for acquisition were noted as the park could use some work. Mr. Fisher will talk with Hal Shute and John Cronce about the Green Acres process. Agenda item for the next meeting.

Mr. Fisher relayed that Parks & Recreation have received quotes for repairing the fence at Hewitt Park. Infield mix is also needed. The cost would run approximately \$4000. The CFO will be consulted concerning available funds for these purchases.

Policies & Procedures Manual Review – Sections 4 and 5 concerning employee compensation and benefits and managerial/supervisory procedures were reviewed. Changes to and/or elimination of some existing policies, were proposed and discussed.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There was no public in attendance. However, the following items were mentioned by the Committee for future agenda/discussion purposes: 1) the receipt of an e-mail from DCA concerning the ACO shared services agreement; 2) the Belvidere property and conversations with the Township Engineer concerning possible options to make the properties more valuable/appealing to a buyer; and, 3) the SHR turf contract is to be revised for the end of the month.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS - none

CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence as listed on the Agenda was ordered filed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:30 p.m. on motion from Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk

APPROVED: March 26, 2014