

# WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

March 2, 2016 - 7:30 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 7:34 p.m. Present were Mayor Zachary T. Rich, Deputy Mayor John Dale, Committeeman Stephen Bergenfeld, Clerk Lora Olsen and Attorney Philip J. Faherty III. Also in attendance were Hunterdon County Planners Sue Dziamara and Ken Bogen, Freehold Director Suzanne Lagay, John Anderson, John and Barbara Henchek, Ryan Rollero, George Fisher, Cathy Urbanski, John Cronce, and Dave Beaumont.

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 7, 2016, 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

Mayor Rich led those in attendance in the pledge to the nation's flag.

## AGENDA REVIEW BY TOWNSHIP CLERK

The following items were added in unanimous vote on motion from Dale, seconded by Rich. 9.B Environmental – 319h Grant Projects; 13.B. Letter of Resignation from the Tax Collector.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Municipal Offices Closed on March 25<sup>th</sup> for Good Friday
- Please Come to the Table if You Wish to Address the Committee
- Kindly Turn Cell Phones Off During Meeting

## PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The February 17, 2016 Regular session minutes were unanimously approved on motion from Dale, seconded by Bergenfeld.

## OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/TOPIC NOT ON THE AGENDA

John Anderson of JCP&L relayed that tree trimming along both sides of the new substation and PSE&G power lines will commence within the next month. As the spans involved are in remote areas, the work will be accomplished via helicopter with a large saw appendage. The landing zone is located in Hopewell Township. One issue still to be resolved is with farmland preserved property and they are working with the State on this. The helicopter is from Aerial Solutions and can be viewed on U-tube. Mr. Anderson will alert the Township Clerk as the actual start date nears. Mr. Anderson also noted that he is partnering with the County on the CEDs utility plan, a presentation of which is upcoming this evening.

## SPECIAL PRESENTATION(S)

The order of presentations listed on the agenda was changed on mutual consent.

**John Henchek**, a resident of Quarry Street in Lambertville and a local historian, provided information concerning the location of a **potter's field** in West Amwell. This is the final resting place of hundreds of people, most of whom were Irish but also included many of African descent who cared for them, who died while building the canal due to the Asiatic cholera pandemic around 1832. The primary source document for this information is from the writings of a person named Sarah Gallagher who witnessed and recorded the information. The location of the field is on property once owned by John Lilly. The 32 acre piece is now owned by Marie Janyszewski and is located across from the former George Stymiest home on the Old Rock Road. Page 669 of the Hunterdon County Deed Book 259, has this potter's field as Block 17 Lot 4. Mr. Henchek expressed concern that this particular field is in the area slated for the proposed PennEast pipeline, as it is to follow the power lines, and is preserved farmland. The D & R Canal Commission is interested in the study; the State Historic Commission is to get pictures; and, PennEast to do a contour study consistent with body burial. This may be difficult as the bodies were stripped and the clothing burned prior to disposal behind the Baptist Church in Lambertville. Mr. Henchek concluded that a potter's field is off limits for construction. A copy of the letter, and related documentation, sent to FERC was provided.

**County Freeholders & Staff** provided a presentation on Hunterdon County's **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. Planners Sue Dziamara and Ken Bogan, together with Freeholder Suzanne LaGay, spoke about the 2013 grant received to fund this project and gave an overview of Hunterdon in 1970-2000 versus 2000-2015; the public-private participation involved; factors of economic future; economic development goals; creating partnerships; and implementation milestones. The purpose of CEDS is to revitalize communities, foster economic vitality, maintain a competent and diverse workforce, create public-private partnerships and identify funding opportunities. Freeholder LaGay hastened to say that this is not a top down County initiative but one of getting feedback from all entities involved for interconnection.

## **INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE AND/OR PUBLIC HEARING**

None

## **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Open Space**

- *Holcombe Appraisal Quotes/Award*: The 'green light' letter from the SADC has been received for the project to proceed.

### **RESOLUTION #44-2016**

WHEREAS quotes have been received for the preparation of appraisals in accordance with SADC guidelines for the purchase of an Agricultural Easement on Block 11 Lots 1 & 1.01 Holcombe as follows:

Lawrence V. Melamed (Curini Appraisal Company, Inc)	\$2,275.00
R. Michael Schaible (Vanguard Appraisal Services)	\$1,850.00
Tom Rodriguez (Tom Rodriguez Associates)	\$2,100.00

WHEREAS two appraisals are required for this project; and

WHEREAS R. Michael Schaible and Tom Rodriguez have submitted low quotes for the requested work; and

WHEREAS the CFO has certified that funds are available in the Reserve for Preliminary Expenses for this expenditure.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the West Amwell Township Committee that the quotes for appraisal work on Block 11 Lots 1 & 1.01 Holcombe be awarded to R. Michael Schaible of Vanguard Appraisal Services and Tom Rodriguez of Tom Rodriguez Associates.

*The Resolution was unanimously approved on motion by Rich, seconded by Dale.*

- *Project Status Updates*: John Cronce relayed that he walked the Thompson property off of Rt 518, noting that it is an unusual property. It would also serve as the missing link to other preserved properties. A draft option agreement is being prepared by Alix Bacon of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and should be available for the next meeting. Sharon Dragan is also to review.

### **Environmental**

- *Preserved/Conservation Easement Map*: Cathy Urbanski presented the latest conservation easement map showing farmland, open space, municipal and county properties to replace the 2013 one. The map was produced by Banisch Associates.

- *Median Strip Planting Update*: Plans developed by Sweet Valley should be available by the end of the week. Mrs. Urbanski noted that some excellent ideas have been presented.

- *319h Grant Projects*: DEP approval for the proposed municipal building projects has finally been received. Mrs. Urbanski also relayed that Bill Kiriluk has agreed to participate as the runoff from 202 is affecting the temporary of the Alexauken Creek that runs through his property. She then overviewed some previous proposed projects that were turned down. A meeting will be held here on March 7<sup>th</sup> so that by the next meeting there will be final plans for the municipal property.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Possible Appointments** – none

**Updates** – 1) Attorney Faherty advised that a letter was sent to Royal Tax Lien Services, together with a Quit Claim Deed for the **unsafe structure on Rt 31 Block 23 Lot 12**, with a

request for execution of same. A question was raised as to getting approval from the State for property demolition prior to deed acceptance. An application is to be prepared and a call placed to the contact person as to whether the Township can file. 2) Mr. Cronce advised that Hal Shute has an idea for the **municipal sign**. Item held. 3) Attorney Faherty presented a letter sent to Attorney Tauriello concerning ownership of **Block 46 Lot 5** as the title search shows the property to be vested in the Estate of Kate Arnett. However, it is not included on the deed provided earlier by Mr. Tauriello covering various lots owned by Arnett in both Lambertville and West Amwell. A possible donation to the Township is sought. 4) The mayor overviewed his research on **cell phones** as there is a new system for equipment and phone plans that can save \$1500/year. New plans provide for free phone upgrades yearly. The police have flip phones as well as three smart phones. The cell phone need for the DPW Supervisor was noted. Mr. Rich will have this item completed shortly. 5) The recent letter to NJDOT concerning **Route 29** issues raised and discussed previously was presented. An e-mail from Mr. Ehrenreich expressing appreciation for same has been received. 6) The bid notice by SHREC bid for **electric & natural gas** was to be published on March 1<sup>st</sup> with the auction to be held March 15<sup>th</sup>. Lambertville is lead agency on this venture.

**Third Amendment to Site Lease Agreement:** Held

**Resolution Discharging Mortgage on Block 12 Lot 24 –**

RESOLUTION #45-2016

WHEREAS, the mortgage between Chris Rose and the Township has been satisfied with payment duly received

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Clerk be authorized to execute a discharge of mortgage and file same with the Hunterdon County Clerk

*The Resolution was unanimously approved on motion by Rich, seconded by Dale.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

**DPW Issues** – 1) The **laborer** discussion was held. 2) Ryan Rollero advised that the alarm system doesn't work since the change-over to Comcast. There's been a dueling battle between Comcast and Holicong with each blaming the other. He also relayed that the current alarm system is old and the problem may be that it doesn't communicate with Comcast. The problem that exists affects phone and internet. A new system may be needed. Three years of Holicong bills were requester. Possibly a change in security vendors was indicated.

**Proposed RAPID Program** – Attorney Faherty advised that this push is coming from the prosecutor's office, with the program requiring each town that is involved to create an ordinance. RAPID is a data base that tracks what items are sold to second hand stores or scrap yards and the data base can assist with theft investigation. There's lots of record keeping involved, which may insure that the Township will never have these types of businesses, but creating an ordinance is a requirement so that the police department can gain access to the data base to assist in tracking the stolen property of residents. In reviewing the attached map, Mr. Dale noted that there are limited participants across the state and questioned its value. Also questioned was whether these particular businesses are even allowed in the Township. Detective EJ Skillman will be requested to attend the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the program in more detail.

**A-302, Revenue Restoration Bill** – The League has advised that although the sponsors of the bill acknowledge the need to begin to restore revenues meant for local use, this particular bill needs to be amended before proceeding any farther. The bill includes a provision which would deny locally elected and locally responsive Mayors and municipal governing bodies the ability to determine the best use for these moneys to meet the needs of the community and would require any restored funding be subtracted from the municipality's adjusted tax levy. Mr. Dale to review and report back.

**Resolution Prohibiting PennEast from Surveying in the Public Right-of-Way** – A brief discussion over what other municipalities were doing; that getting surveys done is a big deal for PennEast; that drones are supposedly being used to conduct aerial surveys, which is not permitted; and, that a letter is coming from the Delaware Riverkeeper stating at DEP can't give clean water approval as there is no information. Item held for further consideration.

**Municipal Participation - Traffic Striping Various Roadways** – Four roads were chosen as possibilities for this activity. A letter will be sent to the County indicating interest in participating.

**Red Cross Proclamation** –

**AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH 2016  
Resolution # 46-2016  
A Proclamation**

In **West Amwell Township, we have a long history of helping our neighbors in need.** American Red Cross Month is a special time to recognize and thank our Everyday Heroes – those selfless Red Cross volunteers and donors who give of their time and resources to help community members.

These heroes help families find shelter after a home fire. They give blood to help trauma victims and cancer patients. They deliver comfort items to military members in the hospital. They use their lifesaving skills to save someone from a heart attack, drowning, or choking. They enable children around the globe to be vaccinated from measles and rubella.

The American Red Cross depends on local heroes to deliver help and hope during a disaster. **We applaud our heroes here in the West Amwell who give of themselves** to assist their neighbors when they need a helping hand.

Across the country and around the world, the American Red Cross responds to disasters big and small. In fact, every eight minutes the organization responds to a community disaster, providing shelter, food, emotional support and other necessities to those affected. It collects 40 percent of the nation's blood supply; provides 24-hour support to military members, veterans and their families; teaches millions lifesaving skills, such as lifeguarding and CPR; and through its Restoring Family Links program, connects family members separated by crisis, conflict, or migration.

We dedicate the month of March to all those who support the American Red Cross mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies. Our community depends on the American Red Cross, which relies on donations of time, money and blood to fulfill its humanitarian mission.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Zach Rich, Mayor of West Amwell Township, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of West Amwell Township and the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim March 2016 as American Red Cross Month. I encourage all Americans to support this organization and its noble humanitarian mission.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand sixteen, and of West Amwell Township, State of New Jersey.

*The Resolution was unanimously approved on motion by Dale, seconded by Rich.*

**Assessor Website** – Concern has been raised about the posting of construction permit information on the Tax Assessor's website. Discussion ensued over the legality of posting building permits as well as having public records on a private website due to possible hacking. It was also relayed that the State has a website for assessors. Attorney Faherty suggested that the Assessor be provided with the issues raised and also to inquire of the State if such postings are proper. He also relayed that, as a State statutory employee, the Township can't tell the assessor how to do his job; however, he will research the legality of this. Dave Beaumont was recognized and noted that the assessor is well respected in his field and trying to do his job. He suggested that the perceived problem be discussed with the assessor so his side could be heard.

*The change in agenda order was unanimously approved.*

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Mr. Beaumont provided information on the recent school board meeting where the preliminary budget was voted on. He confirmed that the teacher contract has been ratified and questioned whether there was an educational benefit from the consolidated contracts. The percentage increases for the 4 year contract are: 2.45% above prior year aggregate of the 4 schools; 2.35, 2.30, and 2.30. As for the preliminary budget, operating expenses are up 5% over last year and a \$700,000+ roofing project is anticipated. He also noted that a larger State aid percentage was received but suggested that State funding be checked further. A meeting to develop a strategic plan to identify strengths, challenges, and put together a vision is anticipated. Mr. Beaumont further noted the only non-parents in attendance were he and David Burd.

**Closed Session** –

RESOLUTION #47-2015

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances, and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Committee of West Amwell Township, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of and action upon the hereinafter specified subject matter.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:  
UNWARRANTED INVASION OF PRIVACY
3. It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when the matter has been resolved.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

*The Resolution was unanimously approved on motion by Bergenfeld, with a second from Dale.*

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**Treasurer** – none

**Tax Collector** – The monthly report for February, 2016 was received showing receipts in the amount of \$2,423,241.13.

A letter of resignation was received from Tax Collector Hyland. The resignation is effective April 15<sup>th</sup> and was accepted as filed. The position will be advertised.

**Clerk/Human Resources** – A specific policy for the sending of flowers, cards, and/or other items was determined. If directly for an employee personally, payment for the selected item to be charged to the Township.

**Website Review** - none

*The reports were accepted as received without comment.*

**CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence as listed on the Agenda was ordered filed.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 11:05 p.m. on motion from Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lora Olsen, RMC  
Township Clerk

APPROVED: March 16, 2016