

WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

April 6, 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 7:37 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 George Fisher, Hal Shute, John Cronce, Cathy Urbanski, Dave Beaumont and Mike Panzarella

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

The mayor led the assembled group in the pledge to the nation's flag.

AGENDA REVIEW BY TOWNSHIP CLERK

No additions or deletions were noted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Party Change Declarations for June Primary Due April 13th
- WA Fire Company Roast Beef Dinner, April 9th, 4-7
- Please Come to the Table if You Wish to Address the Committee
- Kindly Turn Cell Phones Off During Meeting

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The March 16, 2016 Regular and Closed Session minutes were unanimously approved on motion from Dale, seconded by Bergenfeld.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/TOPIC NOT ON THE AGENDA

John Cronce came forward requesting that new flags be purchased as those currently on the flagpole are in need of replacement.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION(S)

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE AND/OR PUBLIC HEARING

Introduction: Ordinance 04, 2016 (Copy attached to original minutes)

The following ordinance was read by title and introduced on first reading:

AN ORDINANCE CREATING A UNIFIED ELECTRONIC REPORTING SYSTEM FOR DEALERS IN SCRAP METAL

Bergenfeld moved to introduce the Ordinance on first reading and Dale seconded. Motion carried unanimously. The public hearing will be held May 4th.

Introduction: Ordinance 05, 2016 (Copy attached to original minutes)

The following ordinance was read by title and introduced on first reading:

AN ORDINANCE CREATING A UNIFIED ELECTRONIC REPORTING SYSTEM FOR DEALERS IN PRECIOUS METALS AND OTHER SECONDHAND GOODS

Bergenfeld moved to introduce the Ordinance on first reading and Dale seconded. Motion carried unanimously. The public hearing will be held May 4th.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Open Space

- *Authorization to Post January 12, 2016 Minutes to Website:* Approved
- *Project Status Updates:* Mr. Cronce reported that one of the two requested appraisals for the Holcombe property has been received. Also relayed was that the open space committee

voted at their last meeting to purchase signs for four West Amwell preserved farms. These will be approximately the size of a speed limit sign. Mr. Cronce commented that all but one owner has responded positively to this initiative. Prices are being sought and should be available for the next meeting. Funding would come from the open space trust fund.

Environmental

- *Median Strip Planning Design*: Cathy Urbanski presented the most recent design prepared by Sweet Valley Farms. Japanese Dogwood trees were selected as their roots go down instead of spreading; are slow growers; disease resistant; and, not desirable to deer. The plan is for 17 of these trees be planted in the median at approximately 35 feet apart. At either end of the median would be a boulder with purple catnip and fountain grass.

The proposed design was unanimously approved on motion by Bergenfeld, seconded by Dale.

- *MOU for Designation of the Lower Delaware River and Selected Tributaries as a Component of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System*: Mrs. Urbanski urged the Committee's support of this effort in that it provides another layer of protection for the Alexauken Creek.

Rich motioned to sign on to the MOU and Bergenfeld seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Urbanski relayed that the form can be faxed to the organization.

Parks & Recreation

- *Authorization to Post February 8, 2016 Minutes to Website*: Approved

Mr. Bergenfeld spoke about the dug outs at Hewitt Park and recommended that the roofing shingles being donated by Strober-Wright be a brownish hue. Mayor Rich relayed that parks and rec are planning a movie night after the last game, complete with hamburgers, hotdogs and a band. Further details pending.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Possible Appointments – none

Updates – A letter from Daryl J. Dearolf, a consulting structural engineer with Harrison-Hamnett, P.C., has provided a letter concerning the **unsafe structure on Route 31**, Block 23 Lot 12. The recommendation is that the structure is in immediate danger of partial or full collapse and should be demolished due to its proximity to Route 31. An application to the State Historic group can move forward. 2) Attorney Faherty relayed that a closed session for **Block 46 Lot 5, 6, 7** will be needed for the next meeting, as well as for the Route 31 property. 3) A proposal from Holicong for a wireless **alarm system** for the DPW garage is expected tomorrow. 4) An onsite meeting was held this past Monday with John Drexinger of Onyx, Jeffrey Thoens of Whitman and another gentleman concerning the **solar installation**. In attendance for the Township were George Fisher, Hal Shute, Cathy Urbanski and John Cronce. The group met at the high school and walked to the area adjacent to the County yard. The company is eager to start but needs to appear before the planning board first. Mr. Rich noted that there is 'Blackrock' money behind this particular entity. Mr. Fisher relayed that there's some uncertainty about the municipal building panels as these appear to have slipped between the cracks due to all the contract changes. Also mentioned was that the lid to the mid-level voltage junction box in the parking lot that covers all the underground wires needs to be bolted into place. Mr. Shute added that the electrical box in the basement is leaking. Mr. Bergenfeld to investigate.

Resolution re: A-302, Revenue Restoration Bill – As a follow up of the discussion at the last meeting concerning this legislation, a resolution was presented for consideration.

RESOLUTION #55-2016

RESOLUTION CONCERNING A-302 AND SUPPORTING RESTITUTION OF ENERGY TAX RECEIPTS TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORTING ELIMINATION OF USE RESTRICTIONS

WHEREAS, taxes on gas and electric utilities were originally collected by the host municipalities, and when the State made itself the collection agent for these taxes, it promised to use the proceeds to provide municipal property tax relief; and

WHEREAS, just as municipalities collect property taxes for the benefit of school districts, counties and other entities; the State is supposed to collect Energy Taxes for the benefit of municipal governments; and

WHEREAS, for years, though, State officials have diverted funding from Energy Taxes to plug holes in the State budget and to fund unspecified State programs; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative impact of years of underfunding has left many municipalities with serious needs and burdensome property taxes; and

WHEREAS, municipalities were denied a total of \$331 million in combined Energy Tax and Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid (CMPTRA) funding in Fiscal Years 2009, 2010, and 2011, not a dollar of which has yet been restored ; and

WHEREAS, as a result of these cuts, in a number of municipalities property taxes are higher now, despite the fact that they are spending less, proving that the State's diversion of tax relief funding has contributed to higher municipal property taxes; and

WHEREAS, legislation has been introduced, in recognition of the need to begin to restore revenues meant for local use; and

WHEREAS, while the bill, A-302, would, by Fiscal Year 2021, bring funding for all municipalities back to 2008 levels; it would also deny locally elected and locally responsive Mayors and municipal governing bodies the ability to determine the best use for these moneys; and

WHEREAS, statistics demonstrate that local officials are clearly committed to limiting their reliance on increased property taxes; most notably showing that, since the imposition of the 2 percent levy cap in 2010, and despite the allowance for certain common sense exceptions, local levies have averaged 2 percent growth; and

WHEREAS, local officials are also committed to providing for the health and safety of their fellow citizens, to promoting local economic development and redevelopment opportunities, and to protecting the rights of future generations to enjoy the same, if not a better, quality of life, than that of their parents and grandparents; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey mayors and municipal governing bodies are best suited to assess local needs, and to determine the highest and best use for these revenues, which were always intended to fund local priorities and services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Governing Body of West Amwell Township thanks the sponsors of A-302 for this effort to restore important assets to local government; and be it, further

RESOLVED, that we do ask our legislators to consider the need for high quality local programs and services and the constraints under which local officials must operate; and that we urge our representatives in Trenton to trust local officials to responsibly balance local needs and local resources, and to amend the bill to remove the restriction on use of these resources; and be it, finally

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be forwarded to our State Senator, our delegates to the General Assembly, to The Speaker of the General Assembly, the Republican Leader of the General Assembly, the President of the State Senate, the Republican Leader of the State Senate and to the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

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

Tax Collector – With the resignation of the current tax collector, an advertisement was placed. Two applications were received and distributed for consideration, although only one applicant is currently qualified. In the meantime, a discussion with East Amwell has produced a possible shared service allowing the Township to retain Mrs. Hyland's services. The agreement would be for five years and includes payment to East Amwell but will be a wash by giving East Amwell more police time. The proposal met with general consensus. The agreement has to be reviewed by the East Amwell attorney prior to any action on East Amwell's part but should be ready for action by West Amwell at the next meeting. The East Amwell administrator will be advised of tonight's decision. Looking next to the future, Mayor Rich advised that in a few years both townships will be in a similar situation and there's an employee looking for more hours that is interested in learning tax collection. This will involve working in the tax office and taking the required courses for certification. There was general consensus as to this proposal.

Proposed Tax Assessor Notification to Construction/Work Without Permits Form – Dave Beaumont offered again to hold a meeting with the Construction Official and Tax Assessor, as the form doesn't get to the root of the issue, and would like to talk over the full process. He also advised of a home sold after January 1st at a price higher than assessed value with no permits for the work done. The new owner wants to do work on the existing permits but there are none and the former owner was a contractor. All told 4 homes have sold higher than assessed value, two of which had renovation work. Having an inspection before a house is sold would result in getting permits issued and would show the State that the sales are reasonable and defensible. After a lengthy discussion about pros and cons of the current situation of work without permits; effect on equalized valuation; and, possible legal problems inherent with the use of the form, the item was held.

Labor Attorney – Attorney Faherty provided the name and number of a local attorney who specializes in employment law on the management side. The mayor will reach out.

Personal Policy – A copy of the current policy manual was provided. Mr. Rich relayed that he would like to begin a review of same in the fall.

Hazard Mitigation Plan/Hunterdon County HMP – The draft plan was circulated for review. The consultants are looking for at least 4 signatures. Authorization was given for the mayor's signature.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution to Hire TJ Burd as Temporary Laborer/Roads –

RESOLUTION #56-2016

WHEREAS, the West Amwell Township Committee has determined that an additional employee would be beneficial for Road Department operations; and

WHEREAS, current employee TJ Burd has expressed interest in this opportunity and the Township Committee is in agreement with Road Supervisor Rollero that TJ Burd would be an excellent addition to the department; and

WHEREAS, a CDL license is needed for this position and its acquisition is required as is the receipt of satisfactory results of both a physical and a drug/alcohol test; and

WHEREAS, the Salary & Wage Ordinance has a Temporary Laborer category with a wage range of \$12.05 to \$18.00/hr,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the West Amwell Township Committee, that TJ Burd be hired for the Temporary Laborer position

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that TJ Burd receive \$15.00/hr

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this employment be effective April 18, 2016

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

S & W Resolution Amendment –

RESOLUTION #57-2016 Amending Resolution #84-2015

BE IT RESOLVED by the Committee of the Township of West Amwell that the 2015 Salary and Wage Resolution, adopted May 6, 2015 be amended as follows:

Position	Salary/Compensation
<u>Add:</u> Temporary Laborer TJ Burd	15.00/hr

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

Copier Leases – Police & Municipal Offices – It is time to replace the current copiers. Pricing for upgraded models of the current IKON/Ricoh machines under State contract were provided. The increased cost was questioned but the need for a reliable machine, with the amenities listed as important for office efficiency, was defended. Item held.

Clean Up Days – Mayor Rich relayed that the cost of cleanup days is killing the Township and that any increase to regular garbage and trash fees is not anticipated. The options for cleanup are to either eliminate them or charge \$100 to participate. Mr. Fisher was recognized and relayed that the Committee is here to provide services and that the numbers are only \$4000 out. An increase to \$40 or \$50 for a truckload was mentioned but felt to be too high. He suggested that this service be retained. The roll off cans need to be emptied and turned over to discourage illegal dumping. Dave Beaumont commented that the Township doesn't know the number of residents who are doubling up on depot use vs those who use curbside service. Item held.

Preservation Tax – The open space tax is current at \$.06. Reducing this to \$.04 to free up \$.02 cents for use for operating expenses is under discussion. Whether or not this action could be undertaken sans voter approval was dismissed. A referendum question will be prepared.

Pittore 50 Year Service Proclamation – The attached was prepared and presented to Mr. Pittore on April 2nd at the Rescue Squad dinner. It is noted here for the record as it was signed by the members of the Township Committee.

Request from Karen Rissmiller for Use of Municipal Lot for Fund Raiser Car Wash on May 14th – This is a similar event to the one held last year for St. Baldrick's to benefit children's cancer research. Approved.

Closed Session – Mayor Rich advised that this is no longer needed as he has been in conversation with Mr. Rollero concerning the requested review.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Cronce came forward with kudos for the Township Committee members noting the impression made on tonight's audience in that good things are happening.

Mr. Beaumont provided an update on the school's recent strategic planning session for a 5 year plan. Four goals were specifically mentioned but nothing particularly new. Mr. Beaumont took the communications/community objective and spoke about the need for transparency with the public. He noted that the finance/facilities objective needed more focus on the financial aspect. Also relayed was talk about moving sixth grade up to the high school for an actual middle school set up and perhaps having administration in Stockton. Mr. Beaumont relayed that there were mostly parents in attendance and that the next meeting will be in May for plan action items.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Tax Collector – The monthly report for March 2016 was received showing receipts in the amount of \$106,452.33.

Police – The March 2016 Monthly Report showing 1016 incidents, 239 summonses and 0 warnings was received. Fifty one (51) summonses were issued in conjunction with the shared service with East Amwell.

Website Review - None

The foregoing reports were accepted as filed 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 9:10 p.m. on motion from Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk