

MINUTES
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE/BOARD OF HEALTH
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024
7:30 PM

Franklin Township Municipal Building, 202 Sidney Road, Pittstown, NJ 08867

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Homulak at 7:30 pm. Mayor Homulak read the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) Statement and led the flag salute.

Roll Call: Sebastian Donaruma (present) Michael Homulak (present)
Craig Repmann (present) Deanna Seiple (present) Alexa Tarby (present)

Also present: Igor Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Abromitis & Cohen)
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk
Cameron Keng, Chief Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer (CFO/HRO)
Bradley Patkochis, Chief, Quakertown Fire Company/Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Mayor Homulak briefly explained the agenda and advised those present of the addition of an Executive Session.

Comments from the Public on Agenda Items Only:

No one from the public spoke regarding Agenda Items.

Proclamations & Presentations: None.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the February 8, 2024, Township Committee/Board of Health Work-Session/Regular Meeting minutes: Donaruma

Second: Seiple

Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Repmann (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Motion to approve the February 8, 2024, Township Committee/Board of Health Executive Session 01, and Executive Session 02 minutes: Donaruma

Second: Tarby

Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Repmann (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Payment of Bills:

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) explained that the bills list contained regular items except for a first payment for the New Municipal Building Renovations project.

Motion to approve the Bills List: Repmann Second: Donaruma
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Repmann (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Ordinances: None.

Resolutions: None.

Board of Health: None.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

Committee Member Reports:

Mayor Homulak updated those present on a zoning violation complaint made against 24 Baker Road, which was explained at the previous two meetings. He explained that the court date had been postponed, that the defendant was seeking a warehouse and that a transport schedule needed to be created and provided to the Police Department. He further indicated that fines would be imposed pending the satisfactory outcome of the next hearing date.

Mayor Homulak further reported on efforts to connect the New Municipal Building parking lot with the Landsdown Trail. He explained that the Department of Public Works (DPW) supervisor had been in contact with the County and that a meeting had been scheduled to view the site. He requested that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) attend the meeting.

Mayor Homulak also reported that the annual Budget would be introduced at the next meeting. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) explained the status of the budget, that COVID-19 pandemic money was no longer available to support the budget, and the township's options of either increasing revenues or reducing costs. He indicated that planning in prior years had helped in adjusting for the loss of revenue and explained the annual budget timeframe for introduction, public hearing, and final adoption.

Deputy Mayor Donaruma reported on his efforts to address the Fire Department's request for an increase to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) budget, indicating that he had spoken with the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) regarding the need for a new ambulance and any annual increases. He further reported on efforts to address the repairs and maintenance of the Capoolong Creek Trail, indicating that he had spoken with the State representative who explained that they were waiting for the engineering report. He also explained the efforts of the local community group's assistance with seeking grant options for the repair and maintenance of the trail. He indicated that a student conservation association would be walking the trail the following Thursday.

Upon Mayor Homulak's questioning, Deputy Mayor Donaruma explained that he had spoken with the CFO regarding the inclusion of a referendum on the General Election ballot regarding the ambulance. Committeeman Repmann explained that purchasing details for the referendum would have to be worked out. A brief discussion followed regarding likely support for the referendum, which government

entity would purchase the ambulance, the possibility of a joint purchase with other municipalities, staggering capital purchases, the timeline for the purchase, and how to pay for the purchase. Chief Bradley Patkochis, Quakertown Fire Company/Emergency Medical Services (EMS), questioned referendum options. The Township Attorney and Township Clerk explained submission deadlines for a referendum and the cost of holding a special election.

Chief Patkochis explained the cost of an ambulance, how other communities determine their funding for emergency medical services, grant options, purchase timeframe and amount, and his belief in community support. He compared the purchase to that of a fire truck. Committeeman Repmann commented on total versus annual cost. Chief Patkochis indicated that the second EMS ambulance was back in service and commented on the cost of the repairs. He expressed his appreciation for the support from each of the municipalities receiving service and indicated that this was the first capital project the service had experienced during its fifteen years of service to the community. Committeeman Repmann indicated that Chief Patkochis should be included in any referendum discussions.

Committeewoman Tarby reported that she had met with County Commissioner Soloway regarding recreational uses on the New Municipal Building property. She indicated that the county was seeking to have a path connecting the municipal parking lot with the Landsdown Trail path and explained the county's hopes for the property. She explained that the Township may have an option to lease space on the county open space property for a gazebo or other community space. Committeewoman Seiple explained that the Township owns only a small amount of land immediately around the New Municipal Building and that the rest of the property was sold to the County as open space. Committeewoman Seiple further explained that options were being researched regarding grants and/or leases with the County. Upon questioning by Mayor Homulak, Committeewoman Seiple explained the potential benefits of repurchasing or leasing the land from the county. Committeewoman Seiple further clarified comments made by Commissioner Soloway regarding utilizing the New Municipal Building as an emergency shelter at a Senior Group meeting. She explained that the current Municipal Building is a short-term emergency shelter to be used as needed, and the New Municipal Building would be utilized in the same manner.

Committeewoman Seiple reported that a Recreational Basketball Game would be held on March 15th at the Franklin Township School. Committeewoman Tarby advised those present that the local Polo Match would take place on June 8th, that the match was being held by the Hunterdon Polo charity organization, would support local charities, and expressed her opinion that the event would be a nice community day.

Committeewoman Seiple further reported on efforts to publish a digital newsletter, indicating that there had been multiple contributions to the newsletter and described some of the included information. She indicated that the newsletter was a little more robust than previous newsletters and explained some alterations to an article regarding the efforts to repair and maintain the Capoolong Creek Trail. She also explained that the newsletter would be printable for those seeking a printed copy as requested by Sue Larson of the Senior Group.

Committeeman Repmann reported on the status of the New Municipal Building Interior Renovations Project, indicating that the work had been 40% completed and that any delays would come from Township approvals. He explained that he would have the Township Engineer draft an email providing a status update. He further reported that the 78/22 Coalition would be holding a meeting the following day. He explained that an Executive Session regarding contractual matters with Ingerman, the company contracted to develop affordable housing in the township, was scheduled to take place later in the meeting.

Comments from the Public:

Ingrid Taff, 41 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned if the Township Committee intended to host hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings at the New Municipal Building. Mayor Homulak and the Township Attorney explained that hybrid meeting options had been explored and that the cost of additional staff and equipment needed to be taken into consideration. Deputy Mayor Donaruma questioned if a non-interactive option could be explored and compared the online Zoom application to services provided by Facebook and Twitter. Committeeman Repmann briefly explained the liability concerns regarding interactive social media platforms, specifically regarding the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and commentary. Committeewoman Tarby commented on issues associated with Facebook, specifically regarding streaming and updates. Mayor Homulak reiterated that legal concerns and the costs of installing and maintaining the technology had to be considered. Committeewoman Tarby commented on utilizing YouTube for non-interactive streaming. Chief Bradley Patkochis commented on options utilized by other municipalities.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, questioned if the township had any commitments to construct and maintain a pickleball court. Committeewoman Seiple explained that she had been in communication with the County and the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) regarding any initial and maintenance costs for such a project. Upon further questioning by Mr. DeRites, the Township Committee explained that there were no cost savings to attempt to repair and convert the township's tennis courts. The Township Committee further reiterated that the tennis courts were closed due to liability concerns. Committeewoman Tarby indicated that any pickleball or tennis courts would be better on the New Municipal Building property. Committeewoman Seiple explained that the County had not denied any proposals for recreational development on the New Municipal Building property or the County open space immediately adjacent to it. Deputy Mayor Donaruma recommended attending a County Commissioner meeting to seek County assistance. Upon further questioning by Mr. DeRites, Committeeman Repmann explained the time schedule for the completion of the New Municipal Building and Mayor Homulak confirmed that public groups would be able to utilize the New Municipal Building facilities upon submission of a Facility Use Form.

Executive Session:

Mayor Homulak explained the need to enter Executive Session, that no action was expected to be taken, and that all attendees of the meeting could wait outside of the meeting room except for the Committee, the Township Clerk, the Chief Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer (CFO/HRO) and the Township Attorney.

Upon confirmation of the absence of all but the required attendees, the Township Clerk stopped audio recording of the meeting.

Motion to enter executive session: Repmann Second: Donaruma
All in favor. Motion carried.

Committee entered Executive Session at 8:22 pm.

Topics discussed:

1. Contractual – MBI Development of Delaware LLC (Ingerman) – Affordable Housing Development – Status Update.
2. Personnel – Police Department – Special Class II Officers.
3. Contractual – Northeastern Interior Services – New Municipal Building Interior Renovations – Status Update.

Committee exited Executive Session at 9:18 pm.

Motion to exit executive session and resume regular meeting: Repmann Second: Donaruma
All in favor. Motion carried.

The Township Attorney explained the topics discussed in Executive Session, that action would not be taken, and that minutes would become available once the need for confidentiality was no longer required.

Action by the Committee: None.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn: Repmann Second: Donaruma All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk



Adopted: 03/07/2024