

**MINUTES
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE/BOARD OF HEALTH
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024**

Meeting time changed to 7:00 PM

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

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Homulak at 7:00 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 (arrived at 7:04 pm) Alexa Tarby (present)

Also present: Lawrence P. Cohen, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Abromitis & Cohen)
Igor Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Abromitis & Cohen)
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk
Chief Timothy Snyder, Police Department

Executive Session:

Mayor Homulak explained the need to enter Executive Session, that action may be taken, and that all attendees of the meeting could wait outside of the meeting room except for the Committee, the Township Clerk, and the Township Attorneys.

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

Committee entered Executive Session at 7:01 pm.

Topics discussed:

1. Attorney-Client Privilege/Potential Litigation/Contractual – Lease of Township Owned Property – Quakertown Volunteer Emergency Medical Services (QVEMS)

Lawrence P. Cohen, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Abromitis & Cohen), left at 7:27 pm.

Committee exited Executive Session at 7:28 pm.

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

The Township Attorney explained the topics discussed in Executive Session, that action would be taken, and that minutes would become available once the need for confidentiality was no longer required.

Motion to authorize the attorney to file the lawsuit as discussed in Executive Session: Repmann

Second: Donaruma

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

Mayor Homulak explained that the meeting had been scheduled a half hour earlier than the regularly scheduled time and entered Executive Session immediately to accommodate the Township professionals' schedules. He briefly explained the agenda.

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 March 7, 2024, Township Committee/Board of Health Work-Session/Regular Meeting and Executive Session minutes: Donaruma Second: Tarby

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

Payment of Bills:

Motion to approve the Bills List: Repmann Second: Tarby

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

Ordinances:

1. Introduction & First Reading of Ordinance 2024-03: Ordinance of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey Amending and Supplementing Chapter 220 – Land Use – by Removing Section 220-24.2 Entitled “Ground Array Solar Energy System” from Article V – Conditional Uses – and Inserting Same into Article III – Use Regulations – to Designate Ground Array Solar Energy Systems as a Permitted Accessory Use in the Township.
 - a. Public Hearing and Final Adoption scheduled for April 25, 2024.

Mayor Homulak read the following Summary & Explanation statement:

The LUB recently recommended that the Township Committee amend the Solar regulations to permit ground-mounted solar in the RR 5 zone in addition to the AR 7 zone, with a minimum lot size of 5 acres. This was intended to make it easier for residents in the RR 5 zone to utilize ground-mounted solar, without the need to go to the LUB for approvals.

Unfortunately, the LUB did not realize that under the Township’s current ordinances, ground-mounted solar facilities were a “conditional use,” and thus had to, nonetheless, go to the LUB. That was not intended, so the LUB has clarified that ground-mounted solar facilities should be permitted in both the AR 7 and the RR 5 zones, without the need to come before the LUB, as

Committeewoman Tarby reported that she and Committeewoman Seiple had met with County representatives to discuss plans for the New Municipal Building property. She indicated that the County had mentioned that they would be taking out the old baseball lot. Committeewoman Seiple further explained that the lot was not repairable. Committeewoman Seiple clarified that the Township owned a small portion of the land, and that the County owned the large open space portion. She explained that the County was open to placing something on the property for public use. She further explained that information regarding a grant opportunity to create an Open Space & Park Improvement Plan was forwarded to her based on the expressed interest in a public park. She indicated that the grant would fund the hiring of a professional to develop a non-binding plan but that the deadline for submission was April 16th. Mayor Homulak clarified that the grant would be for municipal-owned land and not the county portion. The Township Attorney sought clarification regarding the funding source of the grant, advising caution regarding Green Acres Grants which could cause unintended deed restrictions that could interfere with future projects or opportunities. Committeewoman Seiple indicated that she would forward the grant information to the Township Attorney for review. Brief discussion followed.

Committeewoman Seiple reported that the community Easter Egg Hunt had been postponed from Saturday, March 23rd to Sunday, March 24th.

Committeeman Repmann reported that he had no further updates regarding the Township's ongoing projects. He advised those present that the Franklin Township School had held a Budget Meeting on Tuesday. A resident explained that the school had not yet submitted the Budget to the State and that the Budget consisted of a sizable increase due to a bond, capital increases and a cut in state funding. Mayor Homulak encouraged everyone to attend the Board of Education meetings.

Comments from the Public:

Jane Bowers, 32 Baker Road, commented on the inability to attend the court hearings regarding 24 Baker Road. She explained that she had received information from Assemblyman Peterson's office that the hearing would be conducted via the online Zoom meeting application on Monday, March 25th, possibly at 1:00 pm. She indicated that she had contacted the Municipal Court many times, that they have hours between 8:30 am and 3:00 pm, and was advised to keep checking the court website over the weekend. The Township Attorney explained that the reason the court does not advertise the time for specific hearings is that each hearing is dependent on the conclusion of the prior hearings. He recommended that interested parties log on to the Zooming meeting application as early as possible and keep the application muted until the subject hearing begins.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, questioned how the New Municipal Building's location in relation to the nearby flood plain affects possible grant applications. Committeewoman Seiple explained that the Township's portion of the property is not in the flood plain but that a portion of the open space property is "not great". Mayor Homulak clarified that the County owns the wet area and that the engineers are evaluating.

Executive Session: None.

Action by the Committee: None.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn: Repmann

Second: Donaruma

All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk



Adopted: 04/11/2024