

MINUTES  
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE/BOARD OF HEALTH  
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2025  
7:30 PM

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

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

Roll Call: Sebastian Donaruma (present) Donald Scott Edlmann (present)  
Jessica Moustakas-Blew (present) Deanna Seiple (present) Alexa Tarby (present)

Also present: Igor Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi & Cohen, P.C.)  
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk  
Cameron Keng, Chief Finance Officer/Human Resources (CFO/HR)  
Darlene A. Green, PP, AICP, Township/Affordable Housing Planner  
(Colliers Engineering & Design)

Mayor Donaruma briefly explained the agenda.

Proclamations & Presentations:

1. State of New Jersey Fair Housing Act (Affordable Housing).
  - a. Resolution 2025-17: Resolution of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, Establishing the Township's Present and Prospective Fair Share Obligations for Affordable Housing for the Fourth Round 10-Year Period of 2025-2035 and Authorizing the Filing of a Declaratory Judgement Action Seeking a Certificate of Compliance in Accordance with the Fair Housing Act.

Darlene A. Green, PP, AICP, Township/Affordable Housing Planner (Colliers Engineering & Design), explained the history of affordable housing legislation in New Jersey and how that legislation affects the Township's obligations. She further explained that a Township must remain in compliance with the law, or a developer could start a "builder's remedy" lawsuit that allows developers to ignore a municipality's zoning laws and underlying issues with a property. She explained the Township's obligations and how they had been adjusted in prior years. She indicated that the new legislation adopted in 2024 radically changed the deadlines and that the Township was required to adopt a binding resolution, which commits the Township to an obligation, by January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025, to avoid risk of a "builder's remedy" lawsuit. She explained how the obligation numbers were compiled and supplied by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), specifying that a municipality's numbers took factors such as household income (higher income leads to increased obligations), assessed value of properties (higher values leads to increased obligations), and land capacity. She indicated that the DCA report had provided a fourth-round rehabilitation obligation of "0" and a fourth-round development obligation of "52". She further indicated that her investigation into the supplied obligation numbers could only be adjusted by 2 units, a

number she did not feel was worth fighting over. She explained that the Township would seek a durational adjustment like it did with the third-round obligations. She indicated that the Township Attorney would process the resolution, and the Township Clerk would have the resolution posted on the Township website within 48 hours. Brief discussion followed. Ms. Green explained that the next deadline that would have to be met after the January 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, would be the June deadline for the adjustment to the Fair Share Housing portion of the Master Plan. She further explained that the Fair Share Housing portion of the Master Plan was the only portion of the Master Plan that requires both the Land Use Board (LUB) and the Township Committee to work on together. The Township Attorney explained that once the binding resolution was adopted, interested parties had until the end of February to challenge the resolution.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-17: Tarby

Second: Moustakas-Blew

Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Comments from the Public on Agenda Items Only:

Ingrid Taff, 41 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned the affordable housing project behind the Cracker Barrel Restaurant. Mayor Donaruma and the Township Attorney explained that the project addressed the Township's third-round affordable housing obligation. Darlene Greene, Township/Affordable Housing Planner, explained that the property consisted of six acres. Mayor Donaruma explained that the fourth-round obligations would have the same challenges as the third-round obligations and would include a durational adjustment. Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Seiple, the Township Attorney and Township/Affordable Housing Planner explained how the Township addressed each rounds' obligations and how a zoning overlay and a mandate to support water and sewer requests came from the Township's settlement agreement in the third-round. The Township Attorney responded to Ms. Taff's questions regarding the effect affordable housing would have on taxes or otherwise be a burden to the Township. He indicated that any effects would be dependent on the agreement made between the Township and the developer.

Old Business:

1. Farmland Preservation – Furlong Farm (Pittstown Road – Block 27, Lot 12 (Franklin) and Block 21.04, Lot 19.04 (Alexandria).

Mayor Donaruma explained that the same request had been received a couple of years ago and that some points that had been raised at that time included the Township's approach towards its farmland and open space preservation goals, the property's frontage on a county road, and that the slope of the property made it "self-preserving". The Township Attorney explained that Nick Dunbar, an associate of the requestor, had been sent to address any questions the Township Committee may have and that the Township Committee had not supported the request when it was first presented in 2021.

Nick Dunbar commented on the "self-preserving" nature of the property, indicating that the slopes make it difficult to develop. He further commented on the percentage of farmland and open space preservation. He explained that the property extends into Alexandria Township and that Alexandria Township had agreed to the preservation. He further explained that preserved farmland is still taxed



The Township Committee agreed to table the ordinance.

Resolutions:

1. Resolution 2025-18: Tax Sale Redemption of Lienholder – Certificate #23-00002 – Block 20, Lot 2.17 – 74 Sidney School Road.

Mayor Donaruma explained that a company had paid outstanding taxes on a property, that the resident had now paid their outstanding taxes, resulting in the Township's obligation to return the company's payment to them. He indicated that the resolution officially authorizes the Township to pay back the company.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-18: Seiple Second: Edelmann  
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

2. Resolution 2025-19: Tax Sale Redemption of Lienholder – Certificate #24-00003 – Block 29, Lot 35.01 – 100 Upper Kingtown Road.

Mayor Donaruma indicated that this resolution was the same process as Resolution 2025-18.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-19: Edelmann Second: Seiple  
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

3. Resolution 2025-20: Appointment – Land Use Board – Class I – Mayor/Designee – Donald Scott Edelmann.

Mayor Donaruma explained that this is a "house-keeping" resolution.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-20: Seiple Second: Tarby  
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Old Business: (cont.)

2. Capoolong Creek Trail Repair and Maintenance Report and Update.

Mayor Donaruma reported that he had received a letter from the State regarding a Federal grant opportunity that may be of assistance to the Capoolong Creek Trail repair and maintenance project. He indicated that the Township Attorney and Township Engineer were working on reviewing the grant opportunity together and that the trail seems to be eligible for the project. The Township Attorney commented on the ownership of the trail and how it may affect the application for the grant. Brief discussion followed regarding a feasibility study made by the County, eligibility for the grant, a pre-application interview, and a report created by Fish & Wildlife that had been forwarded to the Township Engineer. Deputy Mayor Seiple indicated that the Route 78/22 Coalition may have some interest due to their push for tourism and a connection with the Town of Clinton. Mayor Donaruma indicated that a resolution for a Trail Clean-up team was still in progress.

### 3. New Municipal Building (43 Lower Landsdown Road) – Status Update

Mayor Donaruma reported on the status of the upgrades to the New Municipal Building, indicating that progress was being made and that current efforts pertained to the installation of flooring and doors. He indicated that the upgrades should be completed by the end of the first quarter.

#### New Business:

1. New Jersey Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Equity (BRIDE) Pilot Program – Brightspeed (acquired Lumen Technologies (D/B/A CenturyLink)
  - a. Letter of Support.

Mayor Donaruma briefly explained that Brightspeed had purchased Century Link and was seeking to upgrade the DSL service infrastructure to high-speed internet. Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Seiple, Mayor Donaruma explained that a municipal letter of support provides a greater chance for the company to acquire the grant.

Motion to Authorize Mayor to sign a Letter of Support for Brightspeed's application for the BRIDE Pilot Program: Tarby  
Second: Moustakas-Blew  
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

#### Committee Member Reports:

Committeeman Edelmann reported that questions had been asked regarding the Police Department. He indicated that he had met with Chief Snyder to discuss the questions, and that Chief Snyder had provided a report to answer the questions. He read said report aloud before the Township Committee and members of the public. He briefly commented on the officer currently in training, indicating that it was a "bonus and asset" to have a resident as part of the Police Department.

Committeewoman Tarby reported on questions that had been asked regarding the NIXLE emergency notification system. She provided a brief history regarding discussions for an emergency notification system that resulted from storm emergencies that took place the prior summer. She explained that Chief Bradley Patkochis, Quakertown Fire Company, would post notices on the fire company's Facebook page. She further explained how to sign up for the NIXLE emergency notification system. She indicated that links to the NIXLE emergency notification system and the Quakertown Fire Company's Facebook page had been posted on the Township Website and email blasted to subscribers. Committeewoman Tarby also reported that a Recreation Commission meeting had been scheduled for the upcoming Thursday and that the Recreation Subcommittee was scheduled to meet the whole Recreation Commission. She explained that they would be discussing events for the year and encouraged participation.

Deputy Mayor Seiple reported that she had attended the Route 78/22 Coalition meeting and briefly described the coalition. She briefly described the coalition's current efforts, specifying home-based initiatives, communication and cooperation with a new, more receptive team from Department of Transportation (DOT), and the efforts of Jersey Central Power & Light (JCP&L) to address their

infrastructure. Committeeman Edelmann commented that JCP&L had been marking trees. Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, further commented on JCP&L's efforts, power outages at the school and the school's need for a generator. He requested that a presentation be made to JCP&L regarding ash trees. Mayor Donaruma advised that JCP&L is subject to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) regulations and commented that they seem to have acquired the funding they requested for their projects.

Committeewoman Moustakas-Blew reported that she was on the Recreation Subcommittee with Committeewoman Tarby and would be attending the same Recreation Commission meeting. She further reported that a "round-up" would be taking place in March for children going to Kindergarten in September.

Mayor Donaruma reported that he had attended a meeting regarding local initiatives and advised of County services that the Township may utilize, including shared services for printing, records storage, and the Health Department. He further advised of the free services offered by the county library, including access to eBooks, online courses, and equipment available for residents' use.

Comments from the Public:

Ingrid Taff, 41 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned the Township Committee's position on virtual access to meetings, addressing the cost to upgrade to hybrid meetings. Mayor Donaruma explained the Township's commitment to allow live video access to meetings, indicating that hybrid meetings were too difficult for the staff to control. He indicated that a live feed would allow the public to watch, but not participate, and that anyone who wished to participate would have to come to the building. He further indicated that the New Municipal Building would meet Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliance. Ms. Taff further questioned utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) for minutes. Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, requested that the Township make the audio work correctly for the meetings, citing that the microphones at the school do not work correctly.

Dan Connor, 248 Cherryville Road, questioned the staffing efforts of the Police Department. Mayor Donaruma explained the Police Department's staffing efforts and the reasons for coverage issues. He further explained the Township's difficulties in acquiring trained officers and the need to send new officers through the academy. He indicated that the Township had only one Special Officer and that the officer was (financially) covered by the school. Mr. Connor explained that the County Library was not owned by the County but by a Board of Trustees and that utilization of the County Library required a "buy-in" with a separate tax.

Executive Session:

The Mayor and Township Attorney explained the need to enter Executive Session, that no action was anticipated 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 (CFO/HR) 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: Tarby  
All in favor. Motion carried.

Second: Moustakas-Blew

Committee entered Executive Session at 8:54 pm.

Topics discussed:

1. Attorney-Client Privilege/Litigation/Contractual – Lease of Township Owned Property – Quakertown Volunteer Emergency Medical Services (QVEMS).
2. Attorney-Client Privilege/Contractual – Potential Lease of Township Owned Property – Current Municipal Building (202 Sidney Road).

Committee exited Executive Session at 9:32 pm.

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

The Township Attorney explained the topics discussed in Executive Session, that no action would 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: Tarby    Second: Moustakas-Blew

All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk

  
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Adopted: 02/13/2025