

MINUTES
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE/BOARD OF HEALTH
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025
7:30 PM

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

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Donaruma at 7:32 pm. Mayor Donaruma read the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) Statement and led the flag salute.

Roll Call: Sebastian Donaruma (present) Donald Scott Edelman (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

Mayor Donaruma 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 13, 2025, Township Committee/Board of Health Work-Session/Regular Meeting & Executive Session minutes: Edelman Second: Tarby

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

Payment of Bills:

Motion to approve the Bills List: Tarby Second: Moustakas-Blew

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

Budget:

1. Introduction & First Reading of Ordinance 2025-01: Calendar Year 2025 – Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a Cap Bank.
 - a. Public Hearing and Final Adoption scheduled for April 24, 2025.

Mayor Donaruma read the following explanatory statement:

This ordinance is a standard good practice that establishes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and a Cap bank. The Cap bank preserves the ability to use funds in the future

which is used to offset unfunded mandates from the State that can't be planned for. This ordinance provides financial flexibility to the Township.

Motion to introduce Ordinance 2025-01: Seiple Second: Tarby
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

2. Resolution 2025-24: Self-Examination of CY2025 Budget.

Upon request by Mayor Donaruma, the Township Clerk explained that the Township's annual financial compliance with State Law had resulted in a level of trust by the state which allows the CFO to review the annual budget on an honor system and certify that the budget had been completed correctly.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-24: Tarby Second: Seiple
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

3. Resolution 2025-25: Introduction of the Municipal Budget of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, for the Year 2025.
a. Public Hearing and Final Adoption scheduled for April 24, 2025.

Mayor Donaruma briefly explained that the Township was introducing the annual budget and that a copy of the budget would be posted on the Township website for the public to review. He indicated that questions should be directed to the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and that the 9% increase represented in the budget only affected the municipal portion of the tax bill. He provided a brief example of how the increase would affect a resident's tax bill. He indicated that a presentation would take place at the scheduled public hearing.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-25: Seiple Second: Tarby
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Ordinances: None.

Resolutions:

1. Memorializing Resolution: 2025-26: Appointment – Electrical Subcode Official & Inspector – Robert McIntosh.

Mayor Donaruma explained that the municipality was replacing a retiring employee and that there would be no staff increase.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2025-26: Edelmann Second: Tarby
Roll call: Donaruma (Aye) Edelmann (Aye) Moustakas-Blew (Aye) Seiple (Aye) Tarby (Aye)

Old Business:

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

Mayor Donaruma reported that efforts continued to be taken to schedule a meeting with the State representative. The Township Attorney indicated that he would follow up with the State representative regarding a tentative meeting date scheduled for the second week of April.

2. 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 a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) should allow the first meeting to take place in the building on April 24th. He indicated that only the meeting space would be available as it would take longer for the staff to move in. He explained that he will continue to attend construction meetings on Fridays to ensure that progress continues.

New Business:

1. New Jersey Development & Re-Development Plan & the County Cross-Acceptance Plan
 - a. (Resolution 2025-27) Cross-Acceptance Response Template & Municipal Comments.

Mayor Donaruma explained that the State had put out a preliminary Development & Re-Development Plan and had requested comments from the municipalities. He explained that this process allowed the township to express ideas, comments and objections to the plan.

Motion to approve (Resolution 2025-27) the Cross-Acceptance Response Template & Municipal Comments: Tarby
Second: Edelman

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

Committeewoman Tarby explained that the process of completing the Cross-Acceptance Response Template with Municipal Comments was a lengthy process completed by the Township Planner and municipal staff.

Committee Member Reports:

Committeewoman Moustakas-Blew reported that the Easter Egg Hunt would take place on Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 am.

Deputy Mayor Seiple reported that she had attended the 78/22 Coalition meeting and advised that many municipalities in Hunterdon County were members of the Highlands Commission which was pushing an effort to advance tourism. She indicated that Franklin Township would directly benefit from these efforts and explained that Bruce DeRites, a founding member of the Township's grassroots organization the Economic Development Initiative Team (EDIT), would be participating in this effort with her.

Committeewoman Tarby reported that the tree authorized to be planted at the New Municipal Building and decorated for Township events, had been donated by Laura and Jim McDevitt of Quakertown Road and that Locust Grove Nursery would oversee the transplanting of the tree. She advised that Laura and Jim McDevitt were also involved with the annual Hunterdon Polo Classic event which would take place in June. Committeewoman Tarby further reported that the Land Use Board (LUB) had reviewed the wording for the requested alteration to the Master Plan that would remove cannabis businesses from the Master Plan and advised of the next steps that would be taken by the Land Use Board. She indicated that the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) would be holding a meeting to promote farmland preservation and review their new formula. She commented that she would begin planning a grand opening of the New Municipal Building and the process of planning the pavilion for the property.

Committeeman Edelman reported that the recruit for the Police Department would graduate the Police Academy on April 9th and that the Police Department's new traffic sign had been paid for. He further reported that the Department of Public Works (DPW) retiree had not yet retired but that the department would continue their efforts to proactively seek a replacement. He indicated that the DPW would begin repairing potholes and assist with the move into the New Municipal Building. Mayor Donaruma expressed his appreciation for the DPW's efforts to assist the township in saving money by assisting with the move into the New Municipal Building and completing other small tasks regarding the project.

Comments from the Public:

Ingrid Taff, 41 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned the tax increase on the municipal budget. Mayor Donaruma explained the percentage of the tax bill that is dedicated to the municipal budget and how the tax increase affects that portion of the bill. A member of the audience further explained how the increase to the school tax affected the tax bill. Committeewoman Tarby directed the public to the school website and social media account for more information on the school budget.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, provided a brief history of the creation of the Economic Development Initiative Team (EDIT) and listed the original members. He indicated that he had forwarded information to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Committeewoman Tarby to build ideas anticipated to increase revenue for the Township. Mayor Donaruma and Committeewoman Tarby briefly commented on some ideas and expressed their interest in encouraging clean ratables that make financial sense to the Township. Brief discussion followed.

Ken Mandoli, 310 Sidney Road, questioned the utilization of the Quakertown Volunteer Emergency Medical Services (QVEMS) building after Atlantic Health had moved out of the building. The Township Attorney indicated that the Township could not discuss the matter due to ongoing litigation.

Executive Session:

Mayor Donaruma explained the need to enter Executive Session, that action was not 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 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: Edelmann

Committee entered Executive Session at 8:06 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 8:27 pm.

Motion to exit executive session and resume regular meeting: Tarby

Second: Edelmann

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 8:27 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk



Adopted: 04/10/2025