

MINUTES
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
WORK-SESSION/REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020
7:30 PM

(Location Changed to Online Application: Zoom - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88459669294>)

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Koury at 7:30 pm. Mayor Koury read the OPMA Statement and led the flag salute.

Roll Call: Mayor Philip Koury (present) Deputy Mayor Diane Burgess (present)
Sebastian Donaruma (present) Mike Homulak (present)
Craig Repmann (present)

Also present: Katrina L. Campbell, Municipal Attorney
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk
Cameron Keng, Chief Finance Officer
Stan Prater, JCP&L
Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board
Lora Jones, Township Historian
George Reichert, Office of Emergency Management

Comments from the Public on Agenda Items Only:

No one from the public spoke regarding Agenda Items.

Presentation:

1. Stan Prater, JCP&L – Storm Response

Mayor Koury introduced Stan Prater, JCP&L, and explained that he had been requested by the Committee to discuss the storm response efforts made in August regarding Tropical Storm Isaias. The Municipal Clerk gave Mr. Prater Zoom application Host Permissions so he may display a PowerPoint Presentation for those attending the meeting. During the presentation, Mr. Prater explained the impact of Tropical Storm Isaias, the extent and type of damage, how the winds affected JCP&L's ability to effect repairs and the amount of damage caused by the storm. He compared the storm to Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene. Upon request for clarification by Deputy Mayor Burgess, Mr. Prater indicated that the statistics presented reflected the entire State of New Jersey and that Hunterdon County specific statistics were not available. Mr. Prater indicated that power was restored to Franklin Township residents in five days.

Mayor Koury explained that Franklin Township residents experience difficulties during outages because of their need to utilize power to operate wells for water. He further explained that coordination problems existed between tree crews and line crews and that communication with residents regarding their Estimated Time of Restoration (ETR) were not accurate. He noted that communication with Mr. Prater during the outage was fine. Mr. Prater explained that ETRs change when crews go out and find

more work than anticipated. He further recognized that communication between tree and line crews were a problem further complicated by non-local crew assistance.

Mr. Prater continued his presentation by explaining how ETRs work and how JCP&L is attempting to improve communication by implementing a granular, or user specific, module. John Bencoter, 171 Old Franklin School Road, requested an opportunity to speak with Mr. Prater via the Zoom application's chat option. The Clerk forwarded the request to Mayor Koury. Mayor Koury explained that questions and answers would take place after the presentation.

Upon questioning by Committeeman Homulak regarding improvements, Mr. Prater acknowledged areas where JCP&L could improve and proceeded to explain the Strategic Restoration Process. Upon further questioning by Committeeman Homulak, Mr. Prater explained the resources used to restore power after Tropical Storm Isaias and the coordination issues between crews. He further explained coordination complications due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. George Reichert, Township Emergency Management Coordinator, explained prioritizing opening roads and corridors through the Township. Mr. Prater explained the timeframe utilized for assessment during the Strategic Planning process, emphasizing that main roads were opened first. Mr. Reichert explained that Quakertown Road was strategically important as it was the main route to the hospital.

Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Burgess, Mr. Prater explained how marks on poles indicate which utilities own the pole and that procedures were in place to protect workers from COVID-19. He further explained that the restoration crews are considered essential workers. Upon questioning by Committeeman Repmann, Mr. Prater explained the JCP&L infrastructure improvement plan for preventative maintenance. He further indicated that JCP&L had applied for a rate increase to support infrastructure improvements and would continue some tree trimming but could not specifically say which improvements would come to Franklin Township. Upon further questioning by Committeeman Repmann, Mr. Prater indicated that the consistent outages on Lower Kingtown Road had been addressed just before the COVID-19 outbreak and would follow-up with specifics on what improvements were made. Upon questioning by Committeeman Donaruma, Mr. Prater explained that even though Franklin Township was a rural municipality, it maintains a higher priority status as its substation affects multiple municipalities. He further explained that the outages caused by Tropical Storm Isaias was a major event.

Upon conclusion of Mr. Prater's presentation and questions by the Committee, Mayor Koury opened the meeting to public questioning.

Committeeman Repmann exited the meeting approximately 8:15 pm and would return after attending a family matter.

John Bencoter, 171 Old Franklin School Road, questioned what was being done to prevent future outages and explained that he typically loses power more than twice a year. Mr. Prater explained that fallen trees cause 70-80% of all outages and that tree trimming continues but some trees are outside of JCP&L's ability to remove as they remain on residential property. Mr. Reichert further explained homeowners' responsibilities regarding tree maintenance and outage preparation. Upon further

questioning by Mr. Benscoter, Mr. Prater explained JCP&L's maintenance plan, specifying aggressive tree trimming, the installation of smart fuses and how they work, and the application for a rate increase to implement the infrastructure updates. Mr. Benscoter expressed his criticism of Mr. Prater's presentation and requested that JCP&L share its infrastructure update plan with residents. Mayor Koury explained that Mr. Prater had come to a Committee Meeting to explain the infrastructure update plan the previous year. Upon the request of Deputy Mayor Burgess, Mr. Prater indicated that he would include known details regarding outages when sending notifications. Mayor Koury requested that a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation be forwarded to the Clerk.

Mr. Prater exited the meeting and the Zoom application Host Permissions were transferred to Mayor Koury.

2. Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board – Farmland Preservation – Magnolia Creek Farm and Furlong Farm

Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board, began a presentation regarding a Farmland Preservation Application for Magnolia Creek Farm, 555 Pittstown Road, Block 42, Lots 1 and 1.01, at 8:37 pm. Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Burgess and the Township Attorney, Mr. Hornby indicated that the majority of Magnolia Creek Farm is horse pasture utilized for the farm production purpose of horse training. Upon invitation by Mayor Koury, Lora Jones encouraged the Committee to preserve the land and indicated that it would have been included on a list provided by the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Upon further questioning by Mayor Koury, Mr. Hornby indicated that preservation of the farm was more appealing due to its contiguous placement to other farms and that financing options had not been explored at this stage of the preservation process. Upon questioning by Committeeman Donaruma, Mr. Hornby and Ms. Jones explained that 37,000 acres was dedicated farmland that the Township's goal was to preserve 33%. The Township Attorney explained that 28% had been preserved and that preservation had been addressed in the Township Master Plan. Committeeman Homulak and Mayor Koury questioned the impact on development options in the Township. They further expressed their support for farmland preservation but also explained the Committee's obligation to utilize Township resources for intelligent preservation and development options.

During the presentation, Mayor Koury returned Zoom application Host Permissions to the Township Clerk who shared a map demonstrating the Magnolia Creek Farm property.

Upon questioning by John Benscoter, Mr. Hornby explained the use of an older map that did not include a new home recently built on the property. The Township Attorney further explained the map and that the two subject lots would be preserved together and would no longer be able to be sold separately. Mr. Hornby explained that the property would maintain a standard assessment for tax purposes.

Bob Hornby proceeded to address the Committee with a presentation regarding preservation of the Furlong Farm, 406 Pittstown Road, Franklin Township Block 27, Lot 12 and Alexandria Township Block 21.04, Lot 19.04. Upon request of the Mayor, the Township Clerk shared a map of the subject property. Mr. Hornby explained that the property was still being reviewed and was not originally on the County's

target list. He expressed his opinion that the farm was a model of how agriculture should be operated, and preservation could avoid trouble with stormwater flooding. He further explained that the property was located in both Franklin Township and Alexandria Township and that he had not yet heard back from Alexandria Township's Planner. Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Burgess, Mr. Hornby explained the size of the farm and indicated that it was not contiguous with other preserved farms. The Township Attorney explained that the County was looking to confirm that the Township had no objection in exploring the possibility of preservation. Mr. Hornby explained where each farm was in the preservation process.

Motion to authorize Mayor to sign letter received from the Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board regarding the Farmland Preservation Application of the Magnolia Creek Farm: Burgess

Second: Donaruma

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

The Township Attorney clarified that the subject letter only clarifies to the County that the Township has no objection to exploring the possibility of farmland preservation and does not commit the Township to preservation or monetary obligation.

Mayor Koury expressed concerns regarding zoning around the Furlong Farm. Mr. Hornby explained that the Furlong Farm was still being investigated and that further research regarding Zoning and other concerns would continue once the farm was added to the target list. Lora Jones explained that Mr. Furlong was an internationally respected veterinarian and already had one preserved farm in another part of Franklin Township. Upon further questioning by Mayor Koury, Mr. Hornby indicated that once the farm was added to the target list, the County could begin its investigation.

Motion to permit Bob Hornby to research whether Furlong Farm should be included on the Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Target List, subject to approval from Alexandria Township: Burgess

Second: Donaruma

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Committeeman Donaruma reiterated that the motion was only in support of researching if the property should be considered for preservation and did not indicate support of preservation at this time. He further expressed concerns regarding the subject property's proximity to the Pittstown Neighborhood Business District. Deputy Mayor Burgess requested research regarding stormwater impacts. Upon questioning by Committeeman Homulak, Mr. Hornby explained that the research could take two to three weeks and that the County could apply to the State by Thanksgiving.

Upon conclusion of the presentation, the Town Committee proceeded to the Approval of Minutes at 9:19 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 8, 2020 minutes Work Session/Regular Meeting and Executive Session:

Burgess Second: Repmann

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Payment of Bills

Motion to approve the Bills List: Donaruma Second: Repmann

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Ordinances: None.

Resolutions:

1. Resolution 2020-50: Resolution of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, to Authorize Application for the County's COVID-19 Municipal Grant Program

Motion to adopt: Burgess Second: Donaruma

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

2. Resolution 2020-51: Resolution of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, Authorizing the Application and Acceptance of a Grant from the State of New Jersey, Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, in the Amount of \$17,235 from the Local Government Emergency Fund to Reimburse for COVID-19 Related Emergency Expenditures During the Period of March 1, 2020 Through December 31, 2020.

Motion to adopt: Donaruma Second: Homulak

Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Staff Administrative Reports:

CFO: The CFO reported that the grant resolutions required for submission of COVID-19 reimbursement had been completed earlier in the meeting. He further reported that the Added/Omitted Tax Bills had been mailed and that property values had decreased. He explained the status of the Tax Sale process and that the fourth quarter tax collection was coming. He further explained that he anticipated a 95% collection rate. The CFO also reported on the anticipated results of the 2020 Census and explained that Franklin Township's population had decreased. He advised the Committee to keep in mind that the decrease in population would cause an increase in tax burden on the remaining residents. The CFO indicated that he was not familiar with the specifics of door-to-door Census canvassing in Franklin Township upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Burgess.

Police: Committeeman Donaruma explained that Captain Snyder had submitted an email to him indicating that the Police Department did not have anything new to report.

Administrative: The Township Clerk reported that nothing new had taken place in the past two weeks. She indicated that she continued to work on End of Year and Election preparations, and the Deputy Clerk continued to work with Lora Jones on the Road Rallye taking place on Saturday, October 24th, in celebration of the Township's Dodransbicentennial. She further reported that the Deputy Clerk had forwarded all the Newsletter articles to the publisher on Friday, October 16th, and that the Newsletter should be received by residents by the end of the year.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

1. Discussion Item: New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) – 2020 Best Practices Inventory Survey.

The Township Clerk explained the purpose of the Best Practices Inventory Survey and that the Township's score indicated that the Township would receive full grant funding from the State. The Municipal Attorney explained how the Inventory's score affects grant funding. Upon questioning by the Committee, the CFO explained the answer to the survey questions regarding a Township Social Media account. He further explained how the Township's Social Media account is utilized and that the policy affecting the account is established by the Township's IT professionals.

2. Discussion Item: 2021 Municipal Building Annual Holiday Calendar

The Township Clerk explained that the administrative staff had requested to exchange Columbus Day for the Monday after Christmas as a Municipal Holiday. Deputy Mayor Burgess requested that the 2021 Holiday Calendar be clarified to reflect the request and suggested changing the Personnel Manual. The CFO and Attorney explained that setting the Municipal Holiday Calendar was a policy decision. The CFO explained that any staff seeking to take additional days would use their own time and the Department Heads would ensure that the Municipal Building was always staffed on days scheduled to be open.

Motion to approve 2021 Municipal Building Annual Holiday Calendar: Burgess Second: Donaruma
All in favor. Motion carried.

3. Discussion Item: 2020 End of Year Meeting & 2021 Reorganization Meeting

Upon brief discussion the Town Committee selected Tuesday, December 29, 2020 beginning at 9:00 AM for the annual Year End Meeting.

Committee Member Reports:

Committeeman Craig Repmann reported that Franklin Township's Movie Night was scheduled for Saturday, October 24th and that the gates would open at 5:00 PM.

Mayor Philip Koury reported that he had received a notification from the New Jersey Department of Health indicating that the Quakertown Volunteer EMS had not filed their State report. Committeeman

Donaruma indicated that he would follow-up on the matter. The Township Attorney recommended that the Mayor forward the notification to the Governing Body.

Mayor Koury also reported on the NJLM Annual Conference, the Township Newsletter, an additional Code Blue Center located in Flemington, and Franklin Township's lagging response rate to the General Election. Upon request by Mayor Koury, Deputy Mayor Burgess indicated that she would serve as the Alternative Voting Delegate to the NJLM Annual Conference. The Township Clerk indicated that she would upload the Newsletter to the website once it was received. Mayor Koury encouraged residents to vote.

Comments from the Public:

No members from the public came forward to speak.

Upon questioning by Mayor Philip Koury, James Witkowski, Board of Education, updated the Committee on the status of reopening the school and ensuring access to virtual learning to Franklin Township students.

The Township Attorney updated the Committee on the status of drafting a contract for the Officer-in-Charge of the Police Department and indicated that the draft should be ready for the next Town Committee meeting.

Board of Health: None.

Executive Session: None.

Action by the Committee: None.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Repmann Second: Burgess

All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:46 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk



Adopted: 11/12/2020