

MINUTES
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
WORK-SESSION/REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2022
7:30 PM

**(Location Returned to Franklin Township Municipal Building
202 Sidney Road, Pittstown, NJ 08867.)
Masks are optional.**

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 (absent) Mike Homulak (present)
Craig Repmann (present)

Also present: Katrina L. Campbell, Municipal Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Ambromitis & Cohen)
Igor V. Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Ambromitis & Cohen)
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk
Cameron Keng, Chief Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer
Virginia Evans, Board of Education

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 May 26, 2022, minutes Work-Session/Regular Meeting and Executive Session:

Homulak Second: Burgess

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

Payment of Bills:

The CFO explained that the Bills List was small and consisted of recurring payments.

Motion to approve the Bills List: Burgess Second: Repmann

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

Ordinances:

1. Second Reading and Final Adoption of Ordinance 2022-05: An Ordinance of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, Amending Chapter 75 *Police Department*, of the Code of the Township of Franklin to Include the Position of Chief of Police.

The Township Attorney explained that the ordinance merely creates the position in the Township Code and does not require promotion or hiring of an officer.

Mayor Koury explained that the Town Committee would implement a practice of making a statement of explanation upon the first reading of an ordinance that would supply the factual rationale of the Township Committee and its professionals. He indicated that the new practice would be made to avoid confusion or misinterpretations of an introduced ordinance.

Motion to open Public Hearing: Homulak Second: Repmann All in favor. Motion carried.

Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, stated that he had received emails regarding the ordinance and that he would like more information before the Town Committee made their decision. He requested that the final adoption of the ordinance be postponed. Mayor Koury responded that the ordinance only made the appointment available in the Code and that the Township did not need to appoint an officer to that position. Mayor Koury provided a brief history of the Police Chief position in the township.

Upon further questioning by Mr. Conley regarding financial impacts and potential loss of a patrolman in the Police Department, Mayor Koury explained that the Police Department's supervisor remained a working employee. The CFO explained that there was no salary component to the ordinance and that the position would remove politics from law enforcement in the Township. The CFO further explained that the Chief position would provide the Officer-In-Charge better control over patrolmen and compared the Township's Police Department to the departments in other municipalities. The CFO continued to provide a cost comparison to utilization of the State Police or shared services agreements with other municipalities and cited an increase in cost with a loss of service. He explained that a Referendum had taken place in the Township that indicated residents supported keeping a local Police Department.

Sharyn Sawczak, 7 Nixon Farm Road, questioned if Captain Timothy Snyder was anticipated to be promoted. The Township Attorney explained that all eligible officers would be offered an opportunity for the promotion and that the CFO may have included Captain Snyder in his explanation as he is the current Officer-In-Charge of the Police Department.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, spoke regarding the duties of the Officer-In-Charge and questioned any change of duties upon promotion to Chief.

Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, questioned future composition of the Police Department and criticized the Town Committee's lack of discussion at the previous meeting. The Town Committee explained that there would be no change in the number of officers in the Police Department. The Township Attorney explained that the ordinance had been introduced four weeks prior to the current meeting and that an additional meeting had been available for the public to comment between the introduction and the public hearing. She expressed her frustration with the timing of the email circulated by Dan Connor of 248 Cherryville Road, to other residents, citing that the public has had time to review the ordinance and to ask questions. In response to Mr. Conley's comments that the public had become more aware of local government and has expressed an interest in increased involvement, Mayor Koury explained that the public could contact the Town Committee and municipal staff with questions. Mayor Koury further explained the need for the Town Committee to complete business in a timely manner and that the Town Committee has been learning and adapting in response to residents' feedback. He explained that the

Township was now sending out email notifications when agendas are available on the website and will be providing explanatory statements upon introduction of an ordinance. Mayor Koury and the Township Attorney further explained that work leading up to the introduction of an ordinance may not be visible to the public as it is completed by subcommittees and in executive session when necessary.

Deputy Mayor Burgess provided a brief history of the Chief position in the Township, citing that a Public Safety Director had once been appointed and that the position had been an administrative position not held by an officer. She explained that the Town Committee at the time questioned why the Township was paying an additional employee and determined that an Officer-In-Charge should be selected from the officers in the Police Department. She further explained that there were concerns that the Officer-In-Charge was a political appointee subject to the whim of the Town Committee and that the Officer-In-Charge had no Police Union protections but had to manage Police Union employees.

Mayor Koury explained that incidents of problematic political influence in other municipalities and access to additional training and support for a Police Chief affected the Town Committee's decision to reinstate the position in the Code. He reiterated that, upon retirement of a Police Chief, there is no requirement to appoint a new Police Chief.

Upon questioning by Bruce DeRites, Mayor Koury and the Township Attorney indicated that the explanatory statement for each ordinance introduction would begin with the next introduced ordinance, that the Township Attorney will write both the ordinance and the explanatory statement, and that Franklin Township offers an additional meeting between the introduction of an ordinance and its scheduled public hearing so that the public can ask questions.

Upon Rick Conley's statement that the public had been responding to the emails that were circulated to Township residents, Mayor Koury explained that Dan Connor's email had been forwarded to the Town Committee on the Tuesday before the public hearing and was unaware of all the residents it had been circulated to. The CFO explained that the Town Committee volunteers their time, resulting in limited availability, and that the Township staff is available during regular business hours to provide public information and answer questions. Mayor Koury addressed a point in Mr. Connor's correspondence by explaining that merging police departments with the Town of Clinton would result in less coverage for Franklin Township and an increased cost.

In response to a resident's question, the CFO and Mayor Koury explained that the Police Department currently has six officers who all participate in providing Franklin Township with police coverage. The Township Attorney reiterated that the Police Chief position does not add to the Budget.

Bruce DeRites explained that Dan Connor could not attend the meeting due to other obligations.

Motion to close Public Hearing: Burgess Second: Repmann All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion to adopt: Homulak Second: Repmann

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

Resolutions:

1. Resolution 2022-29: ABC License Renewal – Clinton Elks Lodge No. 2434.
2. Resolution 2022-30: ABC License Renewal – RIMA ENTERPRISE, LLC – Clinton Wine & Spirits, Inc.
3. Resolution 2022-31: ABC License Renewal – Quakertown Recreation Club

Motion to adopt Resolutions 2022-29 through 2022-31: Burgess Second: Repmann

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

4. Resolution 2022-32: Approval to submit a grant application and execute a grant contract with the New Jersey Department of Transportation for the Oak Grove Road Phase III Improvement project.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2022-32: Burgess Second: Homulak

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

Staff Administrative Reports:

CFO: The CFO reported that Township business had begun winding down for the summer, resulting in a smaller Bills List, and explained that upon completion of the Budget the Finance and Tax Collection departments had turned their focus on third quarter tax billing.

ADMINISTRATIVE: The Township Clerk reported on the successful completion of the Primary Election and that no difficulties had been reported regarding the new voting machines. She congratulated the successful candidates and expressed her well wishes for the General Election. Mayor Koury stated that the poll workers had expressed their appreciation for the food that had been provided by the Clerk's Office.

BOE: Virginia Evans, Board of Education, reported that the next Board of Education meeting would take place on Monday, June 13th, 2022, and would include discussion of the school's intended summer projects. She further reported on the status of the remediation of the school's underground storage tank. She thanked the Township Police Department for the extra coverage they had provided. She responded to a resident's questions regarding active shooter training by indicating that the school participates in monthly drills. She indicated that she would not explain training procedures in detail for safety purposes.

Board of Health: None.

Old Business:

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

Committeeman Homulak indicated that the project status remains as expressed at the previous meeting, that the draft plans were anticipated to be completed by the first week of July and that the subcommittee would meet to discuss bidding strategy.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, questioned if George Reichert was still the Township's Emergency Management Officer and if he was still providing coverage in the event of an emergency. Mayor Koury responded that Mr. Reichert was still the Emergency Management Officer and that Mr. Reichert had been contacted to assist in naming a replacement upon his retirement. Committeeman Homulak explained that the Township was still covered for emergency purposes and that the Emergency Management Officer was an administrative position for planning and preparation purposes.

New Business: None.

Committee Member Reports:

Committeeman Repmann reported on his attendance at the 7/22 Coalition meeting earlier that morning, indicating that the next meeting would be held in September and that the coalition was using the Franklin Township Master Plan as a model for other municipalities to utilize for their inclusion of home-based businesses in their Master Plans. He further indicated that once the coalition's initiative was finalized, he would provide a copy to be placed on the website. He explained that Hunterdon County was the leading model in the state and that the Highlands Council was paying for the compiling and completion of the report.

Deputy Mayor Burgess advised those present that anyone who had tested their wells during the well-water testing event that had taken place the previous month, should have been contacted if a problem had been detected. She indicated that residents who had tested their wells but had not been contacted would receive their reports in the upcoming weeks and that the lack of contact indicated that there was nothing to be concerned about regarding their well water.

Deputy Mayor Burgess reported that a group of residents had met with State Department of Environmental Protection representatives on the previous Saturday regarding maintenance of the Capoolong Trail. She indicated that the Township's Green Team had begun discussions with the state representatives.

Committeeman Repmann advised those present that a county-wide "Summer Olympics" would be taking place in August in Union Township. He briefly described the event and asked those who would like to participate to contact the Recreation Committee. Upon questioning by Mayor Koury, Committeeman Repmann indicated that the Franklin Township Community Day would have to be organized by a Town Committee member.

Mayor Koury reported that he was working out dates to schedule a meeting between himself, Deputy Mayor Burgess, and the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) to discuss farmland preservation in Franklin Township. He further reported that he had received advisory notices from JCP&L regarding energy protections and a planned outage for the Clinton Substation to take place on June 16th, 2022, between 12:00AM and 5:00AM. He requested that the Township Clerk place the notices on the website. He reported that the Land Use Board meeting had taken place the previous night and contained a Use Variance for the Walmart Plaza. He explained that approval had been pushed to another meeting and that residents could contact the Land Use Board Clerk for more information.

Mayor Koury advised those present that he would not be able to attend the next scheduled meeting of the Town Committee to be held on June 23rd, 2022, and requested that the Committee discuss a summer meeting schedule. Brief discussion followed.

Motion to cancel the 2nd Town Committee meetings in June, July and August: Repmann
Second: Homulak All in favor. Motion carried.

The Township Attorney advised that should the Town Committee seek to reinstate one of the cancelled meetings that they should readvertise the meeting as a Special Meeting. Mayor Koury explained that the Town Committee would no longer be having the June 23rd, July 28th and August 25th meetings as previously scheduled in the Annual Meeting Notice and that the Town Committee would continue to have the scheduled July 14th and August 11th meetings.

Comments from the Public:

Sharyn Sawczak, 7 Nixon Farm Road, asked questions on behalf of Elizabeth Shaw regarding discussion with Marc Saluk, Hunterdon County Economic Development Coordinator. Mayor Koury responded that he had not received any additional contact for further discussion.

Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, questioned if any resident or company had approached the Township regarding the inclusion of cannabis business in the township. The Township Committee indicated that they had not been approached. Upon further questioning by Mr. Conley, the Township Attorney responded that James Maynard had not had any additional contact since the meeting in which he had expressed his interest in including cannabis cultivation on his property.

Executive Session: None.

Action by the Committee: None.

Mayor Koury wished all present a happy Flag Day, Father's Day, Juneteenth, and Independence Day.

Bruce DeRites updated those present on the current efforts of the Economic Development and Implementation Team (EDIT), indicating that the group had been in contact with a medical company owned by a Township resident that is looking for a property in Franklin Township to erect a doctor's or dentist office. The Township Attorney advised that the Zoning Officer should be contacted once a property has been identified and recommended the property next to the Pittstown Post Office.

Committeeman Repmann advised that medical waste was not allowed in Neighborhood Business and Residential Zones.


Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Homulak Second: Repmann

All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk



Adopted: 7/14/2022