

MINUTES  
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE  
WORK-SESSION/REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, JULY 14, 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 (present) Mike Homulak (present)  
Craig Repmann (present)

Also present: Igor V. Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Ambromitis & Cohen)  
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk  
Cameron Keng, Chief Finance Officer/Human Resources Officer  
Mike Chabra, Project Manager, New Municipal Building

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 June 9, 2022, minutes Work-Session/Regular Meeting: Burgess  
Second: Repmann

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

Payment of Bills:

Motion to approve the Bills List: Homulak Second: Repmann  
Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Ordinances:

1. Introduction and First Reading of Ordinance 2022-06: An Ordinance of the Township of Franklin, in the County of Hunterdon, New Jersey, Providing for Various Capital Improvement and Related Expenses in and for the Township of Franklin and Appropriating \$269,300.

Mayor Koury read the explanatory statement provided by the CFO:

The Township annually enacts a capital ordinance to fund the capital projects planned for the current year. It is an annually recurring ordinance that is expected. This capital ordinance funds the improvements of our roads and the purchase of police vehicles that were retired based on our capital schedule.

The Township Clerk confirmed that the Public Hearing was scheduled for the August 11<sup>th</sup> Town Committee meeting.

Motion to introduce: Burgess                      Second: Donaruma  
Roll call: Burgess (Aye) Donaruma (Aye) Homulak (Aye) Koury (Aye) Repmann (Aye)

Resolutions:

1. Resolution 2022-33: Resolution Authorizing Fireworks Display – Clinton Elks Lodge #2434 – 211 Sidney Road – In Honor of Bill Tinnes – Saturday, July 2, 2022

The Town Committee explained that the event did not take place because a professional fireworks company could not be located to perform the fireworks display as required by the Fire Marshall. The Resolution was not adopted.

2. Resolution 2022-34: Resolution Authorizing Fireworks Display – Evan and Melanie Samouhos – 151 Whitebridge Road – Annual Summer Party – Saturday, July 16, 2022

Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Burgess, Committeeman Homulak and Mayor Koury explained that event details were not required to be submitted to the Township.

Motion to adopt: Homulak                      Second: Donaruma

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

3. Resolution 2022-35: Appointment – Chief of Police – Captain Timothy Snyder

Motion to adopt: Burgess                      Second: Homulak

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

4. Resolution 2022-36: Governing Body Certification of the Annual Audit (CY2021)

The CFO provided an explanation of the Annual Audit resolution and the Corrective Action Plan.

Motion to adopt: Homulak                      Second: Donaruma

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



needed for the project. In response to questions posed by Mayor Koury and Deputy Mayor Burgess regarding bond rates, the CFO explained the cost and timeframe of the plans and that it would not be advisable to seek bonds without the plans. Upon questioning by Committeeman Donaruma, Mr. Chabra confirmed that the plans contained the same layout as previously provided to the Township Committee. Mayor Koury commented on the benefits of consulting the New Jersey Department of Corrections early in the project.

**New Business:**

1. Discussion Item – Hunterdon County Stigma Free By '23 Campaign
  - a. Resolution 2022-39: Resolution Designating Franklin Township as a Stigma Free Community

Mayor Koury explained that he had received information from the County regarding their efforts to combat the stigma experienced by people who suffer from mental illnesses. Deputy Mayor Burgess explained that the campaign had begun in 2015. Mayor Koury responded to Deputy Mayor Burgess' questions regarding the information he had recently received from the County.

Motion to adopt Resolution 2022-39: Burgess                      Second: Homulak

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

2. Discussion Item – Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Survey

Deputy Mayor Burgess explained that Hunterdon County was seeking residents' input on areas they would like to see preserved and that the County was currently updating the County's Farmland Preservation Plan. The Township Clerk confirmed that a news post with a link to the County's survey had been placed on the Township's website.

3. Discussion Item – Farmland Preservation Plan Update

Mayor Koury reported on the results of a meeting with the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) that had taken place on July 12<sup>th</sup>. He indicated that the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan was due for an update in the current year and that since the Agricultural Advisory Committee was not active, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Township Planner and Land Use Board Chairman would be taking on the responsibility of updating the plan. He explained the municipality's percentages of State, County and Township farmland preservation, additional results of the meeting with the SADC, the Master Plan goal for preservation, and preference for targeting contiguous properties. Deputy Mayor Burgess indicated that the Township would not rush to complete the update to the Farmland Preservation Plan by the end of the year, citing a desire to complete the update properly. The CFO spoke regarding the limited utilization of Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) money the past five years. Deputy Mayor Burgess and Mayor Koury responded to Committeeman Repmann's questions regarding setting priorities. Mayor Koury indicated that he had requested overlay maps for comparing State, County and Township goals and that the Land Use Board may re-evaluate the Township's position on cluster housing. Deputy

Mayor Burgess indicated that the Township would evaluate preferred areas of growth and that 55% of the Township was farmland assessed but not necessarily preserved. She further indicated that the SADC did not seem to understand that the Township did not have water, sewer, or gas services.

Committee Member Reports:

Committeeman Donaruma reported that he had met with Captain (now Chief) Snyder regarding speed trailers that had been requested by residents. He advised those present that Chief Snyder was on vacation and that Sergeant Bollaro was currently in charge of the Police Department. Committeeman Donaruma questioned if Garden State Growers could be encouraged to utilize their driveway that exits on to Route 579 by restricting truck traffic on Locust Grove Road. Upon Committeeman Donaruma's indication that the Land Use Board had attempted to encourage such a restriction, Mr. Chabra explained that he had heard that the Land Use Board had not allowed the restriction. Mayor Koury requested that the Township Clerk contact the Land Use Board Clerk and Zoning Officer regarding any restrictions of truck traffic on Locust Grove Road in response to Garden State Growers. The CFO cautioned that the legality of such a restriction should be investigated.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, commented that the County had not been in favor of utilizing county roads for truck traffic exits in the past due to the proximity of County Historic Districts.

Frank Tota, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, commented that he was trying to understand the implications.

Committeeman Repmann reminded those present that Union Township would be hosting the "Hunterdon Games" event on August 20<sup>th</sup>. He indicated that the Township Clerk had sent out an email blast requesting volunteers to participate on the Franklin Township team. He further indicated that the games were open for participation for anyone aged 18 and over and that not all activities were physical in nature. Committeeman Repmann promoted the Hunterdon County Economic Development website as a resource for area visitors and praised the efforts of Marc Saluk, the Hunterdon County Economic Development Coordinator. He indicated that he would provide website links to the Township Clerk for posting on the Township website and would ask Mr. Saluk to attend a Township Committee meeting.

Deputy Mayor Burgess reported that Elizabeth Basile had been in communication with a representative of the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife regarding the Capoolong Trail and explained that the current goal of the discussion was the safety of the trail. Committeeman Repmann commented on efforts to reach out to County Commissioner Zach Rich regarding taking over the State's side of the trail.

Mayor Koury reported that the Land Use Board had met the previous day for a hearing on a D Variance application and that he could not participate. He advised those present of the applicant's request to place a drive-through food service on the second level of the Walmart complex. He indicated that the Land Use Board currently has a vacancy due to the resignation of Alan Dille and that he would be working with the Chairman of the Land Use Board to look at applications and fill the position. Mayor Koury reported that JCP&L had experienced a loss of power at the Clinton substation due to the excessive heat and reminded those present to report outages to JCP&L. Mayor Koury further reported that Daffodil Planting Day would be taking place again this year and that coordination efforts will be taking place with the Department of Public Works. Mayor Koury updated those present on the status of

the Grandin Road Drainage Project and explained that the Township experienced a delay due to the unexpected need to address the Doe Run project. He indicated that the Grandin Road Drainage project is now scheduled for repairs in autumn 2022 and paving in 2023. Mayor Koury responded to Deputy Mayor Burgess' questions regarding materials.

Comments from the Public:

Frank Tota, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, requested access to information on the Farmland Preservation Program and explained that he was seeking an unbiased and balanced explanation before he attempted to complete the County's survey. Deputy Mayor Burgess directed Mr. Tota to a study completed by Rutgers University twenty-five to thirty years ago and indicated that the study had not been updated since that time. Mayor Koury indicated that development concerns in the study did not address under capacity issues and explained that the Township needed growth. Mayor Koury reminded those present that a preserved property would be preserved indefinitely.

Elizabeth Basile, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned how people could be educated on Farmland Preservation. Deputy Mayor Burgess recommended starting with the Rutgers document and the ordinance that created the Open Space Trust Fund.

Sharyn Sawczak, 7 Nixon Farm Road, indicated that the County survey contained two simple questions and read the questions to those present.

Frank Tota, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned how quickly the Township had filled its current percentage of preservation. Deputy Mayor Burgess responded that the percentage goal of 33% had been defined in a previous version of the Master Plan that had been completed twenty to thirty years prior and that the current version of the Master Plan does not cite a specific percentage goal. Committeeman Repmann and the CFO commented on recent limits placed on the Open Space Trust Fund. Mayor Koury compared the preservation status from five years prior to the current preservation status. Mayor Koury indicated that the Township needed smart preservation and development.

Bruce DeRites, 119 Locust Grove Road, questioned when the Rutgers study cited by Deputy Mayor Burgess had been completed. Deputy Mayor Burgess explained that the study had been completed twenty to thirty years prior and that the author did not feel a need to update it. She expressed her disagreement with the author's position on updating the study. Mayor Koury commented on updated septic system technology and limited access to water, further indicating that Right-to-Farm prevented municipalities from limiting the water usage of farms.

Deanna Seiple, 593 Cherryville Road, requested a clarification of the farmland preservation survey. Deputy Mayor Burgess clarified that it was a County survey and Mayor Koury read information from correspondence he had received regarding the survey.

Rick Conley, 17 Landsdown Road, indicated that he had attended the last Board of Education meeting and spoke regarding the topic of school safety. He explained that Superintendent Diaz praised Captain (now Chief) Snyder and had expressed the school's desire to hire a Class III Officer. Committeeman Donaruma responded to Mr. Conley's questions by explaining the purpose of a Special Class III Officer,

the hiring pool for said officer, and the limitations of the officer's utilization. Committeeman Donaruma and the CFO indicated that they and Chief Snyder would speak with Superintendent Diaz regarding the cost of a Special Class III Officer. Mayor Koury indicated that the Township was not seeking to add members to the Police force. Committeeman Repmann indicated that salary costs would be supplied by the Board of Education budget and that the Township Committee did not have control over those items. Mayor Koury compared the Board of Education's budget to previous years and expressed a desire for more discussion by the Board of Education regarding cost control efforts. The CFO explained municipal and school budget amounts.

Elizabeth Basile, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned why a member of the Township Committee did not attend School Board meetings. Mayor Koury indicated that he did not have time to attend any more meetings. Deputy Mayor Burgess indicated that she had been in semi-regular contact with Superintendent Diaz.

Allison Baken, 60 Upper Kingtown Road, commented on the Township's new Attorney and questioned why the previous Attorney had left. Mayor Koury explained that the previous Attorney was now the County's Attorney, had been appointed the previous week, and that she had not left on poor terms. The CFO explained that the Township retains the legal firm, Lavery, Selvaggi, Ambromitis & Cohen for municipal attorney services, and that Igor V. Bykov, Esq. had been appointed by the firm to be Franklin Township's Attorney. He further explained that Mr. Bykov had been attending Franklin Township meetings for some time and that other attorneys from the firm had attended meetings in the past.

Elizabeth Basile, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, commented on the current membership of the Land Use Board. Mayor Koury explained the number of Land Use Board members, a recent resignation of one of the members, the results of a recent hearing and the decision not to proceed with the vote until more members were present, and that alternate members could not vote on the application in question.

Executive Session:

The Township Attorney explained the need to enter Executive Session, that action could be taken, and that all attendees of the meeting could wait outside of the meeting room except for the Committee, the CFO/Human Resources Officer, 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: Repmann Second: Homulak  
All in favor. Motion carried.

Committee entered Executive Session at 8:58 pm.

Topics discussed:

1. Personnel/Contractual – Police Department – Contract Negotiations
2. Personnel/Contractual – Department of Public Works
3. Personnel/Contractual – Police Department – Special Class III Officer

