

MINUTES  
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE/BOARD OF HEALTH  
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING  
THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023  
7:30 PM

**Franklin Township School, 226 Quakertown Road, Pittstown, NJ 08867**

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

Roll Call: Mayor Philip Koury (present) Deputy Mayor Michael Homulak (present)  
Sebastian Donaruma (present) Craig Repmann (present) Deanna Seiple (present)

Also present: Igor Bykov, Attorney (Lavery, Selvaggi, Ambromitis & Cohen)  
Christine Burke, Municipal Clerk  
Frederick Roll, Supervisor, Department of Public Works (DPW)  
Adam T. Wisniewski, P.E., Representing Township Engineer, Colliers Engineering & Design

Mayor Koury initiated a moment of silence for the passing of Roger Soltys, Chairman of the Land Use Board (LUB).

Mayor Koury explained that Roger Soltys, who had provided more than thirty years of service to the Township, had passed away earlier in the morning. He further explained that the Land Use Board (LUB) Clerk and Township Clerk would be creating an appropriate Commendation, and that funeral service information had yet to be provided.

Comments from the Public on Agenda Items Only:

No one from the public spoke regarding Agenda Items.

Proclamations & Presentations:

1. Presentation – Township Engineer – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Proposed Changes to the Route 78, Exit 15 Interchange

Mayor Koury explained that he had requested that the Township Engineer do a presentation, with input from the Township Planner, on the NJDOT proposed changes to the Route 78, Exit 15 interchange, particularly addressing concerns regarding traffic on Frontage Road and access issues to Township sites.

Adam Wisniewski, P.E., representing the Township Engineer, Colliers Engineering & Design, thanked the Mayor and Township Committee and explained that he had attended a meeting with County and Township staff and professional representatives regarding the proposed changes. Mayor Koury explained that the changes would affect the east-bound side of Route 78, Exit 15. The Township Engineer explained proximity concerns regarding the current traffic lights at multiple intersections on Pittstown Road. He demonstrated the site with a map overlay. He explained that the Walmart driveway

would be widened from two lanes to four lanes with two ingress and 2 exits, which include access to Route 78.

Upon questioning by a resident, the Engineer explained the changes to the entrance driveways to Frontage Road, the hotel, and Cracker Barrel Restaurant. He further explained that the changes would include intelligent traffic signal design and programs and a dedicated exit from Walmart. He indicated that he still needed to discuss truck access with the County Engineer.

The Township Engineer explained the two options available to leave the Cracker Barrel restaurant site and the Township's access easement for the Affordable Housing development site. He indicated that the Township would have to acquire a blanket access easement for the site and that residents of the affordable housing development site would have to go around the restaurant and hotel to leave the site.

The Township Engineer explained the entrance and exit movements for the project and indicated that extensive signage would be implemented to explain the traffic movements. Mayor Koury expressed concern over moving accidents from Pittstown Road to the Walmart intersection. The Engineer commented on acquiring access to details of a full traffic pattern and explained that the County and NJDOT were seeking a Resolution of Support from the Township but that the NJDOT was ultimately in charge of the project. He further explained that the County and Township had limited control over the project and that Right-of-Way (ROW) easements, accessibility and property agreements would have to be acquired.

Mayor Koury expressed concern over the maintenance of the Cracker Barrel parking lot due to increased usage. The Township Engineer explained that portions of the site would be paved to highway standards. Upon questioning by a resident, the Township Engineer explained and demonstrated the limitations of the NJDOT responsibility for maintenance. Mayor Koury indicated that further discussions would have to be made between the owners of Cracker Barrel, NJDOT, the County and the Township.

Upon questioning by a resident, the Township Engineer explained that he would need to see the grading plan for the Affordable Housing development site, the Walmart site, and the Cracker Barrel restaurant site to determine if there would be another driveway option for the Affordable Housing site.

Upon questioning by Committeeman Repmann, the Township Engineer explained that he would need to see a phasing plan from the NJDOT before he could speculate on how the construction would affect traffic in the area. Committeeman Homulak suggested that the current access to Route 78 would remain open while the project was under construction. Brief discussion followed. Committeewoman Seiple questioned if driving through a restaurant parking lot was standard practice for entering and exiting housing developments. Frederick Roll, Supervisor for the Department of Public Works (DPW) explained that such practices were not uncommon in Southern New Jersey and Florida. Committeemen Homulak and Donaruma expressed concern regarding morning rush hour traffic entering and exiting Route 78. The Township Engineer expressed concern regarding the hotel driveway.

Upon further questioning by Committeewoman Seiple, the Township Engineer further explained the dedicated traffic lanes for access to Route 78 and the hotel and a right turn lane to enter the Walmart.

Mayor Koury responded to Committeewoman Seiple's questions regarding school traffic from Southridge Community Church, explaining the location of the church's driveway in relation to the site map and back entrance of the Walmart site.

Mayor Koury and the Township Engineer further explained and demonstrated the Route 78, Exit 15, traffic design. They responded to residents' questions regarding traffic congestion on Route 78, the widening of the Walmart driveway, access to the Affordable Housing development site and the site's lack of direct access to the Shoprite and Walmart stores due to steep slopes between the sites.

Mayor Koury and the Township Engineer explained that the Township did not have any control over the project but were collecting comments and concerns to forward to the NJDOT. The Township Engineer explained that when developing the Affordable Housing development site plan alternative entrances and exits could be explored.

Mayor Koury expressed a desire to prevent loss-risks to the Township's rateables, specifically the Walmart, Cracker Barrel and the potential rateables from the affordable housing development site. He explained that the presentation was being held to keep the Township Committee and the public informed on what is being planned by the NJDOT.

Further questions from residents included mention of length of the Route 78 exit and the age of traffic studies on the exit. The Township Engineer explained the utilization of statistical data models.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the April 27, 2023, minutes Township Committee Work-Session/Regular Meeting:

Homulak

Second: Donaruma

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

**Payment of Bills:**

Motion to approve the Bills List: Repmann

Second: Homulak

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

Elizabeth Basile, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned the payment to Colliers Engineering. Adam Wisniewski, P.E., representing the Township Engineer, Colliers Engineering & Design, explained that the bill likely included a combination of the engineering services for the Oak Grove Road Improvements project and other projects.

**Ordinances:** None.

**Resolutions:**

1. Resolution 2023-32: Contract Award for Road Maintenance and Repair Materials Joint Bid with Kingwood, Delaware & Franklin Townships.

Motion to adopt: Repmann Second: Homulak

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

Mayor Koury commented that he had received a call from Alexandria Township regarding the price of asphalt. Frederick Roll, Supervisor of the Department of Public Works (DPW) indicated price quotes from the beginning of the year.

2. Resolution 2023-33: Resolution of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey Authorizing the Department of Public Works to Solicit Bids to Purchase a 2023 Ford F250 (or equivalent) for the Department.

Motion to adopt: Repmann Second: Seiple

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

The Township Attorney explained that bid specifications had been provided by the DPW supervisor and that he was still making necessary corrections.

Old Business:

1. New Municipal Building (43 Lower Landsdown Road) – Status Update
  - a. Resolution 2023-34: Resolution of the Township of Franklin, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey Approving the Plans and Specification and Authorizing the Solicitation of Competitive Bids for the Alteration of the Interior of the Township’s New Municipal Building, Located at 43 Lower Landsdown Road.

The Township Attorney explained that he was still reviewing the voluminous bid specifications and ensuring that all appropriate redactions would be made regarding the publicly accessible copy of the specifications.

Motion to adopt: Homulak Second: Repmann

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

New Business: None.

Committee Member Reports:

Committeeman Donaruma reported that the owner, or manager, of the den Hollander farm on Locust Grove Road would be issuing a memorandum to their truck drivers suggesting a speed limit of 25 miles per hour on that road. He further reported that the Township of Clinton would be allowing Franklin Township to borrow one of their speed radar signs for a short time.

Committeewoman Seiple reported that the Township Fishing Derby would be taking place over the weekend.

Committeeman Repmann further reported on the Fishing Derby. He also reported that the 78-22 Coalition meeting originally scheduled to be held that morning, had been cancelled.

Mayor Koury reported that the Land Use Board (LUB) meeting originally scheduled to be held the previous evening had been cancelled due to lack of business. He explained that the next LUB meeting would include application hearings and further business regarding a ground-mount solar ordinance.

Mayor Koury reported that he had received an email from the Borough of Lebanon and Town of Clinton regarding support for a Bill that would allow the burning of Christmas Trees. Upon questioning by Mayor Koury, Frederick Roll, Supervisor for the Department of Public Works (DPW), explained that the Township chips the Christmas Trees they pick up and provide them to local sheep and goat farmers. The Township Committee briefly discussed the Township's disposal of Christmas Trees. Mayor Koury read the letter from the Borough of Lebanon.

Mayor Koury reported that he had received correspondence regarding recent accidents involving the Pittstown Inn barn and concerns regarding pedestrian crossing from the Pittstown Inn parking lot to the restaurant. He indicated that a recommendation for a pedestrian crossing light and guard rail be installed. He further indicated that he would meet with Alexandria Township and Hunterdon County representatives regarding the request.

Mayor Koury reported that June 3<sup>rd</sup> was the next scheduled Township bulk waste day and that mattresses would not be accepted. He further reported that the County would be hosting a bulk shredding day for residents. He explained that local boy scouts had a road-side clean-up event on May 6<sup>th</sup> and thanked the scouts for their efforts.

Mayor Koury reported that he had spoken with the Township Planner and Chief Finance Officer (CFO) regarding the total preserved land in Franklin Township and anticipated future preservation efforts. He read from correspondence provided by the Township Planner that indicated that the Township's current preservation percentage was 25.84% and that the inclusion of the target list of properties submitted by the County and State would increase that percentage to 33.04%. He indicated that he had requested that the CFO provide a 5-year budget analysis regarding farmland preservation. He explained that he was supportive of preservation efforts but expressed a need for smart preservation and development in the Township.

Mayor Koury reported on efforts to repair the emergency staircase at the current Municipal Building. The Township Clerk clarified that the staircase had been approved for employee use but had not yet been cleared for resumption of meetings. Frederick Roll, DPW Supervisor, further explained the progress of the repairs.

Mayor Koury wished everyone a happy Mother's Day and expressed his appreciation to Committeewoman Seiple for the timely publication of the Township's Electronic Newsletter.

Comments from the Public:

Frank Tota, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, commented on the mayor's request for a Budget analysis regarding preserved property in Franklin Township and questioned if the analysis would take farmland assessments into account. Mayor Koury explained that the properties targeted by the State and County were already farmland assessed. He further explained that local seniors had expressed concerns over

increased taxes. Committeeman Donaruma explained that the analysis is intended to envision the potential effects the preservations would have in the future. Upon further questioning by Mr. Tota regarding preservation percentages, Mayor Koury explained that if all targeted properties were preserved, the Township would hold a 33% preservation percentage. Committeeman Repmann explained the Township's history of farmland preservation and that a lot of properties are self-preserving and can't be developed. Mayor Koury further explained that a preserved property was no longer eligible for development even if the farmer wished to. Mayor Koury reiterated that the Township has a revenue problem and explained that the municipality seeks to maximize every revenue it receives. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the Finance Subcommittee, Committeemen Homulak and Repmann. He further explained that the municipal government does not have control over other agencies' budgets.

Elizabeth Basile, 16 Upper Kingtown Road, questioned the efforts of the Township Planner regarding updating the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan. Mayor Koury explained the obstacles faced by the Township Planner and municipal staff regarding gathering information and indicated that the Township Planner would be working with the State and County now that the necessary files had been located and reviewed. He thanked the Township Clerk for her efforts to repair, correct and update the municipal filing system.

Executive Session: None.

Action by the Committee: None.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn: Repmann    Second: Donaruma                    All in favor. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Prepared by Christine Burke, Township Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christine J. Burke", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Adopted: 05/25/2023