

MINUTES
HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
March 16, 2023

Start Time: 6:32 p.m.

The **Sunshine Statement** was read into the record by Mayor Paul Ritter.

The **Flag Salute** was led by Mayor Paul Ritter.

- **Roll Call:** Kelsey Bayzick, David Miller, Tom Tedesco, Mayor Paul Ritter. Robin Freitag appeared via GOTOMEETING from her vacation.
Also Present: Leo Selb, Admin/Clerk; Jeannette Pace, Deputy Clerk; Township Solicitor Matt Ritter, Esquire; Michael Garcia, Municipal Auditor

- **Approval of Minutes**

Approval of the February 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

Discussion:

Freitag asked for clarification of who was attending zoning courses (page 3 of the draft minutes) and Selb confirmed that it was new zoning officer Dave Elwell. A Motion was made by Bayzick to approve the minutes with that clarification to be made with Freitag seconding the Motion.
Voice Vote: All in favor.

Approval of the February 15, 2023 Executive Meeting Minutes

Discussion: None

Motion by Miller; Seconded by Bayzick; Voice Vote: All in favor.

- **Department and Committee Reports (Clerk's, Tax Collector, Public Works)**

Approval of Department Reports

Discussion:

Selb outlined what was going on with the Public Works Department and gave an update on the work being done at the West Cumberland Little League. Selb also advised the Committee of the various grants he was working on regarding Broadband and the Fire Department. He also gave an update on the status of the final repairs at the Senior Center.

Tedesco commended Deputy Clerk Pace on her report.

Bayzick commended the Directors at the Senior Center for getting the center back up and running after being away for so long. There are numerous new activities and they are seeing an increase in participation from the seniors.

Motion to Approve Department Reports made by Bayzick and seconded by Freitag. Voice Vote: All in favor.

- **Treasurer's Report and Approval of Bills**

Approval of Treasurer's Report for February, 2023

Discussion: None

Motion by Bayzick; Second by Miller. Voice Vote: All in favor.

ORDINANCES:

Ordinance For Adoption:

23-05: ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)

Since there was a small amount of public present, Municipal Auditor Michael Garcia explained to the public what the Ordinance represented. Township Administrator Leo Selb explained the tax levy cap to the public.

Motion to Open to the Public made by Bayzick; Seconded by Tedesco. Voice Vote: All in favor. No one from the public spoke.

Motion to Close the Public Portion made by Bayzick; Seconded by Miller. Voice vote: All in favor.

Discussion:

Municipal Auditor, Michael Garcia, presented the budget. Garcia advised that we had a \$66,000 cap at the end of the last meeting which meant a 2% tax levy, or a 3.4¢ increase in taxes. However, after more scrutiny, we were able to cut the budget another \$48,000 which had us only \$18,000 over and a 1.8¢ tax increase.

Garcia advised that subsequently Township Administrator Leo Selb performed a detailed analysis of the Interlocal Services and determined that the revenues were less than those that were actually billed. This would enable us to anticipate a higher amount of revenue. At the end of the day, we would be approximately \$1K over the tax levy cap and that would mean only a 1.2¢ tax increase. The additional scrutiny also allowed for a 1% salary increase to employees in 2023.

Garcia and the Committee went through each of the cuts that resulted in the cap and then Garcia recommended introducing the budget at this meeting because of the current state review with adoption at the May meeting.

Motion to Adopt made by Miller; Seconded by Bayzick.

Roll Call Vote:

	BAYZICK	FREITAG	MILLER	TEDESCO	RITTER
YES	X	X	X		X
NO				X	
ABSTAIN					

Pass By 4-1 Roll Call Vote.

RESOLUTIONS:

#23-44: RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET TO BE READ BY TITLE ONLY

Discussion: None.

Motion to Approve made by Bayzick; Seconded by Miller. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-45: RESOLUTION INTRODUCING THE HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP 2023 BUDGET

Discussion was had regarding issues such as the tax levy cap, pilot administrator salary, changes in health insurance coverage, shared services amounts, salaries for new positions as well as other budget areas discussed in the workshop session.

Motion to Approve made by Bayzick; Seconded by Freitag. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-46: RESOLUTION FOR 2022 BUDGET TRANSFERS

Discussion: None.

Motion to Approve made by Bayzick; Seconded by Miller. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-47: RESOLUTION APPROVING EMERGENCY TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS

Discussion: None.

Motion to Approve made by Tedesco; Seconded by Bayzick. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-48: RESOLUTION APPOINTING CONTACT PERSONS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES LIABILITY (EPL) ATTORNEY CONSULTATION SERVICE

Discussion: None.

Motion to Approve made by Miller; Seconded by Tedesco. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-49: RESOLUTION APPROVING EMPLOYMENT SEPARATION AGREEMENT WITH CHARLES D. HAAF AND GENERAL RELEASE

Discussion: None.

Motion to Approve made by Tedesco; Seconded by Bayzick. Voice Vote: All in favor.

#23-51: RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATOR AND TOWNSHIP SOLICITOR TO PREPARE AN RFP TO SOLICIT AGAIN FOR LEAD-BASED PAINT SERVICES

Discussion: Selb advised that we had received one bid, however, it was rejected because it didn't comply with the RFP. The initial RFP asked for a bid bond, which is not needed in this situation. Therefore, a new RFP needed to be posted.

Motion to Approve made by Bayzick; Seconded by Freitag. Voice Vote: All in favor, except Miller abstained.

MOTIONS:

Motion to approve Application for Clean Communities Mini-Grant on behalf of Citizen's for a Cleaner, Brighter Hopewell Township.

Discussion: This is an application made to clean streets through the Clean Communities Grant.

Motion to Approve by Tedesco; Seconded by Miller. Voice Vote: All in favor.

Motion to approve Clerk to draft a letter to any and all banks to remove the names Bruce Hankins and John Hitchner as signatories on accounts and add Tom Tedesco and David Miller as signatories.

Discussion: Ex-Mayor, Bruce Hankins, appeared at the meeting and advised the Committee that he had received a letter from Ocean First in his capacity as a signatory on Township accounts with their institution.

Motion to approve by Bayzick; Seconded by Miller. Voice Vote: All in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Motion to Open to the Public made by Bayzick; Seconded by Freitag. Voice Vote: All in favor.

Discussion:

Donna Griebau of Barretts Run Road appeared and made a presentation before the Committee regarding the current zoning ordinance for having chickens in a residential area. She gave out various handouts to the Committee in support of her presentation. She, along with other residents, had received a letter from our current zoning officer because she supposedly had chickens. She advised that she got rid of her chickens last summer but still had the coops. She presented her facts and asked that the Committee look into changing the current zoning ordinance prohibiting chickens in a residential area.

Jean Basa questioned the Committee regarding the resident complaint it received regarding the chickens. Township Administrator explained that when we receive complaints, we act on them with the information provided. We are not permitted to enter private property and simply send a letter to the residents in question for their response.

Feyta Demicci questioned the committee about having chickens on her property. She owns 7 acres but is in a residential zone. She gave her support to the previous speakers and also asked the Committee to look into changing the current zoning ordinance.

Ex-Mayor Bruce Hankins spoke and indicated that he was part of the Committee that put the current ordinance in place. The concern is that many residents do not want chickens in a residential area. He stated that if a property is for sale and a prospective buyer sees a neighbor with chickens directly next door, that may deter them from purchasing the property. He mentioned the previous Committee's take on the de-valuing of the properties if chickens are located in a residential area and that he believed that it would have an adverse effect on the County's evaluation rate which would in turn affect all property owners.

Mayor Ritter advised the public present that there is currently a subcommittee tasked with revising the current Master Plan, which hasn't been revised in approximately 25 years. The Committee will bring this issue to the sub-committee for presentation to the Land Use Board for their recommendations. Mayor Ritter also advised the residents present that they could also make an application to the Land Use Board for a variance to have the chickens. The process for this was explained to the residents.

Bayzick mentioned and received consent by the rest of the Committee that no enforcement to the residents that received letters from the zoning officer would take place until after the Master Plan is completed and the issue resolved one way or the other.

A Motion to close the public portion was made by Miller and Seconded by Freitag with a Voice Vote all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Senior Center Update: Selb gave an update on the status of the Senior Center. The Mayor publicly complimented Hopewell's Environmental Commission for the wild flower garden

behind the center.

- Convenience Center: Selb explained the grant to the public regarding the new ramp being installed this summer at the convenience center.
- Broadband: Selb mentioned that the Broadband project has commenced and is on track for completion in 14 months which would be in or about February of 2024.
- West Cumberland Little League: Selb advised that the Public Works Department had been out to cut the fields and do some property maintenance around the ballfields. He mentioned that the League had received some donations to have the dugouts and concession stand repaired.
- DMC – Purchase of Property at Business Park: DMC wants to build a facility in Hopewell and is interested in the property at the Business Park at the Amish Market. The Mayor relayed his thoughts and mentioned that the new owners of the Amish Market may be interested in leasing the lots. The Committee suggested looking at other properties in an effort to bring DMC into Hopewell.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Tattoo Parlor (Priolo Plaza), Cigar Shop (strip mall) and Banquet Room (strip mall): These are 3 new business looking to come into Hopewell. Further research will need to be done to see if either is a permitted use in the zone. If not, each one will need to bring an application before the Land Use Board for a Use Variance.
- Polling Places: Deputy Clerk Pace advised that the list of polling places is due April 1st. Discussion was had and it was the consensus that all 3 districts use the Township Offices as the polling places so long as the CDC is okay with us utilizing its offices.
- Replacement of copier: Selb advised that the lease is up on the copier and a new one will need to be purchased. Estimates are being obtained.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Thank you card from Gus Gosweiler's family was read by the Committee

SOLICITOR'S REPORT:

- Solicitor Ritter had nothing further to add other than what was already discussed in regular session.

RESOLUTION #23-50 AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION

The General Nature of the subject matters to be discussed are Personnel and Contracts.

*****Action May Be Taken*****

There was NO MOTION on a Resolution to enter into Executive Session.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

Motion by Bayzick; Seconded by Freitag. Voice Vote: All in favor.

End Time: 9:08 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: April 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Leo F. Selb, Jr., Township Administrator/Municipal Clerk
Jeannette Pace, Deputy Clerk
cc: Township Committee
cc: Ritter Law Firm