

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

A.) OPENING CEREMONIES & ROLL CALL

The regular scheduled Work Session Meeting of the Monroe Township Council was called to order by **Council President Frank Caligiuri** at **7:00 PM** in the Conference Room on the first floor of the Municipal Complex, located at 125 Virginia Avenue, Williamstown, New Jersey.

This meeting was advertised pursuant to the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act (*NJSA 10:4-6 thru 10:4-21*). Notices were placed in the official publications for Monroe Township (i.e.: South Jersey Times, Courier Post and the Sentinel of Gloucester County). A copy of that notice has been posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex.

SALUTE TO OUR FLAG – Cncl. DiLucia led the Assembly in the Salute to Our Flag.

ROLL CALL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Cncl. Walter Bryson		Excused
Cncl. Marvin Dilks	Present	
Cncl. Rich DiLucia	Present	
Cncl. Bob Heffner	Present	
Cncl. Bart McIlvaine	Present	
Cncl. Cody Miller	Present	
Cncl. Pres., Frank Caligiuri	Present	
Mayor, Daniel Teefy	Present	(Arrived 7:20PM)
Business Admin., Kevin Heydel	Present	
Solicitor, Charles Fiore	Present	
Engineer, Chris Rehmann	Present	
Dir. of Public Safety, Jim Smart		Excused
Dir. of Code Enforcement, George Reitz	Present	
Dir. of Public Works, Bob Avis		Excused
Municipal Clerk, Susan McCormick	Present	

B.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

• **Open Space Advisory Committee Recommendations for 2015**

Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri advised that the Open Space Advisory Committee is interested in introducing a Resolution that would make it mandatory to spend at least 20% of the funds that are currently in the Open Space Fund for the acquisition of open space. The thought was that when the voters approved the Open Space voluntary tax contribution, the perception was that it was going to be used for the acquisition of Open Space. In reality, the ordinance (*as written*) is for the acquisition and maintenance of Open Space however this (*resolution/ordinance*) will insure that at least 20% will be used strictly for acquisition of

MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015

B.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION (cont'd)

Open Space. **Cncl. Dilks** referred to the recommendations submitted by the committee and questioned if they wanted council members to look at all their recommendations. **Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri** indicated that Mayor Teefy also attended the last meeting of the committee and they had made a number of recommendations for acquisition of properties and what not so they would like us to report back to them on those recommendations as well as giving some direction as to what they should be doing in 2015. **Cncl. Heffner** questioned if the committee just went strictly by Block and Lot, did anyone walk the properties to determine if it was wetlands, pinelands, etc. **Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri** noted that actually the set of recommendations before us tonight is the same set of recommendations that was presented to council last year and there was no response at the end of last year but they were looking into buying properties adjacent to existing Open Space and properties in close proximity to walking paths and acquire those properties to expand those facilities. He was familiar with some of the properties listed on the *Recommended Block and Lot Identifiers* included in the correspondence sent by the committee. He suggested requesting the Open Space Advisory Committee send a representative to come in before council to offer an explanation as to what their justification is for recommending said properties. **Cncl. McIlvaine** noted some of this ground (*if it was to be purchased*) may not even be useable for anything, such as the issue we have with Duffy field. By all means, we want to move forward we would just like to be very careful with what we purchase so that we can utilize it properly.

Engineer, Chris Rehmann advised that he could take the list (*Recommended Block and Lot Identifiers*) and provide council members with a plan. There is what is called the "ROSI" (*Recreation and Open Space Inventory Plan*) where we have all of the land owned by the township that has been dedicated to Open Space and we can provide that map and on top of that put these Blocks and Lots (*colored differently*) so that you could see at least the relationship to where they are with what we already own. Then we could take an aerial view of the township and overlay these with the wetlands maps so it could give you some way to evaluate which ones are critical and those to prioritize that would provide more active or passive recreation. Council members were in agreement with having the plan provided.

Solicitor Charles Fiore advised when the legislature allowed us to place this question on the ballot, he thought one of the main focuses of allowing voters to vote on this was to earmark prime pieces of property that were potentially going to be residential, which could then be acquired for the purposes of Open Space Preservation. He noted at one point in time there was a discussion of using Open Space money to purchase a parcel located next to the high school and Owens field that had been approved for a subdivision, which is a high and dry prime piece of property. Adding he felt that may have been part of the philosophy behind allowing the voters to take a look at that. There also may be other valuable pieces that are contiguous to parks, etc.

Cncl. McIlvaine felt the information to be provided by the engineer would be extremely helpful as it perhaps would be able to wipe certain properties off the list so we can begin to prioritize pieces that are high and dry and that will do us the most good.

MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015

B.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION (cont'd)

Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri questioned whether Council members still wanted to bring Len Fritz in to hear some justification for his recommendations. All members of Council agreed that Mr. Fritz should attend the next Council Meeting.

C.) PUBLIC PORTION

Cncl. Miller made a motion to open the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Dilks** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Timothy Brown, 327 Holly Parkway explained he was in attendance to address his concerns regarding a number of vacant or abandoned homes in the Forest Hills Development. Mr. Brown submitted a list of ten homes within a couple of block radius from his home and noted one house on the list is in the process of being rehabbed but since it is not finished he left it on the list. **Cncl. McIlvaine** questioned whether the mortgage companies are taking care of any of the properties. Mr. Brown noted some are owned by banks, some by mortgage companies and some the owners tried to sell but when they didn't sell the owners vacated them and now they are also owned by a bank or mortgage company. Some of the houses have been empty for a couple of years but some have been empty for five years or more. Mr. Brown felt it was incumbent that the township take advantage of that and fine the banks. **Cncl. Miller** noted the State passed legislation regarding this and he questioned if the township is in the process of getting a list of those properties because there is a set scale for fines that the State collects a portion of and the municipality collects some as well. **Solicitor Fiore** replied towards the end of last year Council discussed adopting an ordinance that would mirror State Statute but that matter did not move forward so it should be placed on the Ordinance Committee Meeting agenda. **Cncl. DiLucia** noted during that discussion Council even included an amount of money for the fine. Mr. Fiore explained it was discussed and then sent to the Zoning Official for review and we are waiting for his comments on the ordinance. **Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri** explained to Mr. Brown that what Council can do is check to see if the property taxes are paid, if the property is secure and in the summer if the grass is over ten inches high the owner can be fined. He noted he will send the list to Dan Kozak to see if these homes are in compliance with the regulations as they stand right now. The township has no grounds to take a property that people just walk away from but if taxes are not paid or the property is in ill repair or not secured then that is a different story and there are violations for which they can be cited on. **Cncl. DiLucia** noted Council had a discussion about this matter six months ago when there were vacant houses in his district. At that time the legal advice Council received was that regardless of what condition the interior of the house is in we can't do anything but the exterior of the house, which could create a danger to the public, can be addressed by notice to the bank/mortgage company that holds the deed. If they don't take care of it then we can maintain it and charge them a pretty hefty fee to try to give them an incentive to sell the house. We cannot do anything about the interior unless there are rodents or things like that. Mr. Brown noted he understands that he just wanted to find out where the State Statute

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

C.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

ends, the local statute begins and if State law supersedes anything being done on the municipal level. Mr. Fiore explained as he recalls we need to have local enabling legislation for enforcement purposes and we were at the point in time of adopting an ordinance to do that. He went on to explain homeowners that walk away from the property the penalty is worthless because most likely the people who abandon their homes are filing for bankruptcy and it is dischargeable in bankruptcy. What is creative about the law is that it actually forces the banks to move properties because the first year registration is \$1,000.00, if it goes two years it is a \$5,000.00 registration fee so there is a premium put on the property the longer it sits off the market. This gives banks the incentive to move properties as well as maintain them because areas in the State law can penalize them more than just a local ordinance. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri requested Ordinance Chairman Cncl. Dilks place this matter on the Ordinance Meeting agenda.

Cncl. McIlvaine noted the Mayor has in mind to do a shared services agreement with other towns because every town is having issues with vacant properties. The Mayor would like to have someone that would strictly handle these issues and be responsible to deal with the banks to make sure properties are maintained because these vacant properties are bringing down the values of all properties. Mr. Brown noted the list of ten homes is within two blocks of his home and he felt if he covered all of Forest Hills there would probably be about 100 vacant homes out of the 700 in the development. He noted he is concerned because that is a lot of revenue the township could be taking advantage of and at the same time we could be forcing the owners to fix them up. **Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri** noted Council was looking at legislation similar to that of Cherry Hill and if Mr. Brown had any interest he could attend the Ordinance Committee Meeting to watch the crafting of that ordinance because it is probably what he is looking for. Mr. Brown noted if it is like the one from Evesham Township he is familiar with it.

Robert DiRienzi addressed Council to express concerns regarding a vacant property next to his home that is being overrun by rodents and cats. He explained he contacted the County to resolve the problem but it takes a month to get on their rotation schedule. The County process is to set traps for a week, trap as many cats as possible and then they remove you from the rotation schedule for two weeks and you have to call them to get put back on the schedule. Within two years about 100 cats have been trapped but the ones there are breeding so there are still about 100 in the neighborhood. Mr. DiRienzi noted according to the County some homes in the County have 500 and 600 so they feel 100 in the neighborhood is not a lot but these cats are a problem because they go on everyone's property and they stink. He questioned if there was something that could be done on a local level or would he need to continue dealing with the County. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri noted the County does capture cats, puts them in the shelter and then up for adoption. The township does not have the facilities or equipment to trap the cats but we may be able to talk to a freeholder about it. **Cncl. Heffner** questioned whether the house is boarded up or is it wide open for these animals to be getting in and out. Mr. DiRienzi stated the crawl space is open so they have

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

C.) PUBLIC PORTION *(cont'd)*

some place to live, eat and breed and according to the County all we can do is trap them. Cncl. Heffner noted as a town why can't we hire a professional company to rid ourselves of these animals and then place a lien on the property. Then we can get township employees to board up the property and bill the property owner for what was done. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri requested Mr. DiRienzi to give the address of the property to the Clerk so we can call the County and see if there is anything they can do to accelerate trapping the cats and then if it is still a problem we can investigate other options. Mr. DiRienzi noted he was told the property was banked owned but is now owned by a corporation. It has changed hands four or five times in five years and because it was not maintained in the past he cut the grass but now the township has been cutting it for the last couple years. He explained he has lived on this cul-d-sac in Chelsea Farms for thirty years and most of the homes are owned by the original owners and this house effects all their property values. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri explained we will go through all the channels first to make sure the property is in conformance with the law and if it's not we will issue the proper fine and go back to the County to find out if we can accelerate their extermination process and if they can't, then we will investigate other options. This would be the logical path to follow so if Mr. DiRienzi could give the Clerk the address or block and lot we will interact with the County to see what we can do. Cncl. Heffner questioned who is going to contact the County once the Clerk has the information. The Clerk stated the information will be forwarded to the Board of Health, as that is the department that should handle it.

Mr. Brown noted Mayor Teefy and Cncl. Miller have been at his home and he invited the other members of Council to visit his home when the weather gets warm so they can see what he is dealing with.

With no one else wishing to speak Cncl. Miller made a motion to close the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by Cncl. McIlvaine and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

At this time Len Fritz of the Open Space Committee came into the meeting and Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri updated him on the discussion that had taken place at the beginning of the meeting regarding the Open Space Committee's recommendations. He requested Mr. Fritz to attend the next Work Session Meeting to give Council some justification for each property the Committee was recommending. At the same time the Township Engineer is going to identify those properties and give Council an overlay that will show where they are in proximity to our current open space. Mr. Fritz noted he would attend the next Work Session Meeting. Mr. Fritz spoke of a resolution the Open Space Committee had requested regarding the 20% funding and he questioned how that was proceeding. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri noted that change will be made by ordinance. Solicitor Fiore indicated he had not been given any direction in that regard and he thought Council would first discuss the available properties and then move forward with the ordinance. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri noted the last Council members agreed to the 20% funding but pushed the issue forward to the new Council since it would be done in 2015. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri requested Cncl. Dilks place that issue on the Ordinance Committee Meeting agenda for discussion.

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

C.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

Mayor Teefy noted he met with Len and the Open Space Advisory Committee and the recommendations they made in 2015 are almost the same as those submitted for 2014. The committee prioritized it with number one being located by Hunter Woods, as their goal is to purchase those properties so the bike path can be expanded over to Scotland Run Park. Mr. Fritz added the County has also expanded the bike trails on Clayton Road and a few other roads in that vicinity so the Commission thought it would be great to make a connection to those parcels. Ken Atkins, the Preservation Officer of Gloucester County informed him the County is very interested in the properties listed as priorities to expand the bike path because they want to expand the park. Mayor Teefy noted he sent the Director of Real Estate a list of properties to get the value from his end and also to the engineer so he can look at the properties from an engineering standpoint, as he understands wetlands and flood plains. He added we need to lay everything out to see how it flows because we don't want to buy property and then find out we can't put a path on it because of wetlands. Mr. Fritz noted he spoke to the owner of a property that was already subdivided regarding a possible easement or an additional subdivision for the piece needed for our project. If that can't be done then we could possibly take the whole property and utilize only the portion needed. Mayor Teefy noted there is \$1.1 million in the account so we can start being aggressive to spend this money for the township. Council questioned whether 20% of that would be spent. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri noted 20% would be the minimum, we could spend more if needed but at least that. **Engineer Chris Rehmann** noted last year we applied and received a grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. The purpose of the grant is to determine the suitability of roads and areas for bike and pedestrian pathways. What we suggested was to take the Township's GIS and put on those properties on the open space recreation map to show all the properties the township now has committed to open space. With that grant not only are we going to look at where pedestrian and bike paths would be but we have talked to the Economic Development Committee to see whether we should make Main Street pedestrian/bike path friendly and where paths need to be for transportation to the major parks for recreation. All of this is going to be part of this plan. In the interim Council will be given a map showing what we already have as recreation and where the Open Space Committee's recommendations fall. A current township aerial and wetland areas will be an overlay on top of that so they can see what portion of these properties they want to evaluate. We thought the opportunities and goals for 2015 would be to integrate the committees and the residents of the township involved in this process. The Planning Board and the Township Council have to set the goals but with input from everyone we thought this could be an exciting program to start to coordinate all of that. The Green Acres people were impressed about how the high school, the middle school, Owens Park, Genova Park and the Mary Duffy Park were starting to interconnect with each other, as it shows the money being spent was accomplishing something. What we want to do is to go back to them if we need more money to purchase something. We could take the 20% from the Open Space Fund and leverage that with 80% from the Green Acres Fund so we can buy more property with less expense to the township.

D.) NEW BUSINESS

Cncl. Miller noted he spoke to a couple members of council and the Mayor about using Dropbox to review meeting information as it will make viewing the packets much easier

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

D.) NEW BUSINESS (cont'd)

and after the meeting he will try to get everyone acclimated to using it. He explained the Clerk's Office will download meeting documents to Dropbox where everything will be listed simplifying the process for Council. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri questioned whether you can download from Dropbox. Cncl. Miller advised you can and if you want to back up the files from your tablets or computers you can download the App on your desktop, tablet and phone, which makes it easy to view documents on the go as well. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri questioned whether the Clerk scans the documents first that she sends to Council. She indicated she did. He then explained to Solicitor Fiore that he would show him how to save those documents as a PDF, which makes the file a fraction of the size it is when she just scans it. The Clerk explained if Mr. Fiore sends the documents as a PDF document if it needs tweaking her office would not be able to do that so we like him to send documents in Word format so we can go in and make changes. When Aileen scans it then she can put it in a PDF form. Cncl. Miller thanked the Clerk for allowing him to come into the office and go over the process with Aileen.

E.) OLD BUSINESS

Engineer Chris Rehmann referred to the parking issues at the Amberleigh Project and explained that the Planning Board approved the original project under "The Residential Site Improvement Standards", which is a standard established by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The RSIS is supposed to be applied throughout every town in the State so the roads in projects with a certain number of homes have a certain distance/width between curbs. Most towns were saying that distance should be 30 to 35 feet but the RSIS brought that down to 26/27 feet, which has caused problems because emergency vehicles/services cannot get down the street when cars are parked on both sides of the roadway. We are having a meeting on January 21st with the Police Chief, the homeowner's association and the professional who is running the homeowner's association to try to resolve issues and Kathryn Cornforth has made some recommendations where they can gain more off-street parking. Kathryn added "No Parking" signs are supposed to be installed on both sides of the roadway but the last time she checked, which was a few weeks ago, that had not been done yet. Solicitor Fiore noted he thought we withheld putting up the signs until the off-street parking was resolved because it would have created havoc if there was no place to park. Mr. Rehmann agreed and noted right now there seems to be no enthusiasm to spend any money to create off-street parking areas. Council questioned whether it was possible to allow parking on one side of the street. Kathryn explained the dilemma in the townhouse area is that there is very little to no space in between driveways and units. People backing out of driveways get close to hitting other vehicles, school buses can't get to bus stops and emergency vehicles and trash trucks cannot get down the street when vehicles are parked there. This is only a problem in the townhouse areas, the apartment section has plenty of parking. Mr. Rehmann noted he just wanted Council to be aware of the upcoming meeting

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

E.) OLD BUSINESS (cont'd)

with the Police Chief and Mark Burton of the Traffic Bureau. They have been firm and said they don't want to ticket people but this is an issue and they want the ability to get an ambulance or fire truck through the area. Kathryn added the Property Management Company, the Homeowner's Association president and the members of the board will be in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Fiore spoke of a meeting that was held where Chris and Kathryn presented the solution of creating cutout areas by reducing a number of handicapped parking spots. In the event additional handicapped spots were needed more could be added. The last word we heard from the HOA was that they were reluctant to spend the money and give up the additional space but they may change their mind when they find no parking signs on both sides of the street. **Cncl. Dilks** questioned whether the residents would be given notice a month or two in advance because the way the weather is they will not be able to create any parking areas until April. Mr. Fiore noted having the homeowner's association giving advance notice was discussed. He explained under the RSIS there are 2.1 parking spaces per townhouse, which has three/four bedrooms. There is a requirement in that development that the trashcans must be kept in the garage but when they are in there you would be lucky to park a Ugo in the garage. In a perfect world school buses don't go down streets but in reality people want convenience, they don't want to walk to Bluebell Road for their five year old to get the bus and they don't want to walk a distance to over flow parking areas. **Cncl. Heffner** questioned whether people read the manual before they buy in those developments. He noted as a Planning Board member that is the project that drove him crazy so with Blaze Mill the last thing the Board did was to make sure there was no on street parking in that development. Solicitor Fiore noted in Holiday City they give a manual that says what you can and can't do but at the age of 25 people don't read those documents until they find out they can't do something and then they say they didn't know about it. Mr. Rehmann noted he just wanted Council to be aware of what was going on and he will report back as to the contents and results of the meeting.

F.) COMMITTEE REPORTS - None

G.) QUESTIONS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS SCHEDULED - None

H.) QUESTIONS REGARDING ORDINANCE SCHEULED

Business Administrator, Kevin Heydel advised on the agenda this evening was an ordinance for the purchase of land on the Black Horse Pike for \$707,500.00. The ordinance is on the agenda for first reading and Auditor Nick Petroni has been requested to prepare the Supplemental Debt Statement which will be filed with the State so approval can be granted prior to second reading of the ordinance at the next Council Meeting. Mr. Heydel noted at the next Council Meeting he will also have a resolution for a temporary budget for the down payment for the bond ordinance. The amount will be approximately \$37,000. **Cncl. Pres.,**

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANAURY 12, 2015**

H.) QUESTIONS REGARDING ORDINANCE SCHEULED


Caligiuri noted in the past when we went out for bonding we consolidated other debt and he questioned if this would be an appropriate time to do that. Mr. Heydel replied not at the moment because we really don't have enough debt to consolidate. We only have \$700,000 from last year, this \$700,000 plus whatever capital plan is implemented this year. Once we have all that we can take a look at it. When we did the \$700,000 last year we got a short term note for that at .75% so next year the interest is \$6,000, which is pretty cheap. Once we see what the capital plan looks like, what the rates are going to be, what the amortization schedule will be we can look at it again but he would recommend a bond for no longer than ten years. Cncl. Pres., Caligiuri asked what about the emergency vehicles. Mr. Heydel explained they were in the 2012 bond, which was for ten years and when you look at the interest in that compared to the bonds we have done in the past it cuts the cost right in half.

Cncl. Miller made a motion to move Ordinance O:01-2015 and O:02-2015 forward for First Reading at the Regular Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Heffner** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

I.) ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further for discussion, **Cncl. Dilks** made a motion to adjourn the Council Work Session of January 12, 2015. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Miller** and was unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan McCormick, RMC
Municipal Clerk



Presiding Officer

These minutes were prepared from the tape-recorded proceedings and the hand written notes of the Council Work Session of January 12, 2015 and serves only as a synopsis of the proceedings. Portions of the official tape may be heard in the Office of the Township Clerk upon proper notification pursuant to the Open Public Records Law.

Approved as submitted *SMJ*
Approved as corrected _____

Date 1/26/15
Date _____