

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
OCTOBER 24, 2016**

A.) OPENING CEREMONIES & ROLL CALL

The regular scheduled Work Session Meeting of the Monroe Township Council was called to order by **Council Vice-President, Bart McIlvaine** at approximately **7:03 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. Bryson** led the Assembly in the Salute to Our Flag.

ROLL CALL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Cncl. Walter Bryson	Present	
Cncl. Frank Caligiuri	Present	
Cncl. Marvin Dilks		Excused
Cncl. Rich DiLucia	Present	
Cncl. Bob Heffner	Present	
Cncl. Bart McIlvaine	Present	
Cncl. Pres., Cody D. Miller		Excused
Mayor, Daniel Teefy	Present	<i>(Arrived 7:13PM)</i>
Business Admin., Kevin Heydel	Present	<i>(Arrived 7:13PM)</i>
Solicitor, Charles Fiore	Present	
Engineer, Kathryn Cornforth, ARH	Present	
Dir. of Public Safety, Jim Smart	Present	
Dir. of Code Enforcement, George Reitz	Present	
Dir. of Public Works, Mike Calvello	Present	
Dir. of Community Dev., Rosemary Flaherty	Present	
Deputy Mayor, Andy Potopchuk	Present	
Municipal Clerk, Susan McCormick	Present	

B.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION - None

C.) PUBLIC PORTION

Cncl. DiLucia made a motion to open the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Caligiuri** and unanimously approved by all members of council in attendance.

Jack Luby – 1664 Silver Birch Road approached council with regard to the gas lights in the Forest Hills development, adding that he would prefer to address this issue at the public portion of the Regular Council Meeting.

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C.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

Cncl. Caligiuri then addressed Mr. Luby noting that he was kind of empathetic to the fact that the Forest Hills community was developed with those gas lights. By the same token I have an issue with it because if it actually costs the township more to accommodate the community, this seems kind of unfair too. His question was, if there was some determination between the difference in costs to accommodate a community with electric lights versus gas lights would the community be willing to foot the difference in the bill. Mr. Luby advised that he did understand and we are going to address this further. We used to have a civic association when we first started out, the problem is that the civic association is not like a HOA as you don't have to belong to it. The reason that association was banned is because as people were moving out we didn't know who was moving in and we couldn't keep track of that. In addition, we ran into some trouble/problems with that as well as the swimming pool, some people who were moving out were on the board and they were moving out with more than just their belongings and because of that people were very sour on joining a civic association. Mr. Luby continued and noted he was not sure that **Cncl. Caligiuri's** suggestion would be feasible. **Cncl. Caligiuri** advised the same thing happened in Victory Lakes, nobody wanted to pay \$1 million dollars for the dam. By the same token they didn't want the lake to go away as that was the centerpiece of the community. So they signed a petition and there was some reference made to something called an assessment of benefit or benefit of assessment, he was unsure of the terminology used, and that the community as a whole would benefit from this lake being there. Therefore, a majority voted in favor of everyone maintaining some level of responsibility for the dam in the event that Friends of Victory Lakes Association would belly up. Mr. Luby noted he would be willing to look at that if he had an opportunity because I am open for anything. Again, he noted it left a very sour taste in everyone's mouth because of the fact that we had an alleged embezzlement (*two of them*). He then reminded council that the 300 homes provide approximately \$2 million dollars in property taxes. So, it's not as if it is an organization asking for a freebie. **Cncl. Caligiuri** noted he knew what Mr. Luby was saying but we offer lighting to all the communities and all of them pay taxes. I agree that gas lighting does add character, there is no question about it. It really makes that community what it is but is it fair for the municipality to take more of a responsibility. Mr. Luby responded it is .0001% of the budget, in other words, it is statistically zero. In addition, you have a \$37 million dollar budget and of that you collect \$24 million so there is other residual income (*you might say*) that would offset that. So there isn't an impact on any other development however there is a serious impact, in my view, on Forest Hills. When we moved in (*1969*) you paid more for your house to go into Forest Hills because you had the gas lights. It makes it unique and he felt that was important. The same reason why we put lights in and spend a lot of money on Main Street, so there is a specialty type of thing. Mr. Luby continued, you have 38,000 residents but once you get past Public Safety, Public Works and Administration everything else is discretionary and that is what you can do to better help the community. In other words, we had a great Halloween Parade but theoretically we did not need to have it. For individual groups, for their betterment, we spend money and a lot of money in some cases. With 300 homes paying property taxes close to \$2 million dollars it is not as if we are getting it for free. He continued Forest Hills, especially in that part, is an old development and we have to compete with the newer communities. We do not have underground utilities, we have overhead utilities although the back portion of the development does have underground

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C.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

utilities. The decision was made by the builder, Esposito & Katz, to put the gas lights in there so there would be more of an attractive inducement for people to move in there, especially now because we don't have that much more to offer and people move in there because of the gas lights. Mr. Luby noted he would more than happy to sit down and discuss this to see if there is some type of assessment adding he wasn't sure if you can have a special assessment. He then stressed we really want to keep the lights. Solicitor Fiore advised he was not sure if you can have a special assessment for utilities, you are talking about paying for a utility bill.

Mr. Luby then noted back in November of last year he made a proposal where you could save a lot of money. Perhaps if you had the assessment for the material and labor portion and not the utility bill which by the way I think we pay about \$1.00 per therm and the average is around \$.64 per therm and that is a big difference. By the way, I would be more than willing to do foot work. **Cncl. Caligiuri** then noted, I am one vote here and I would like you to present a case that is fair for the community and for the rest of the township, while dealing with the fact the community has gas lights and it is very attractive and something unique. The township by the same token has some obligation to provide lighting for safe transportation and safe movement at night. The lighting that the township normally provides is electric lighting which requires very little maintenance. So, your community for the same amount of tax dollars per assessed value is getting a little bit of an advantage over other communities. Mr. Luby had an exception to that as he felt the price of the houses are higher, except for the last debacle in 2008, then if you brought a similarly situated house somewhere else. If you can't assess for the utilities I think we can save \$35,000.00 right off the top from the suggestions I made previously. He went on to speak on the figures involved and how we (*township*) could hire a full time employee and get this whole thing in public works where it belongs. It may take one (1) day a month for the maintenance and even if it took three (3) or four (4) days you will still have three (3) weeks of that person doing something else positive for the township. We can get the materials at half to at least one-third of the price. In addition to that we can buy the hard mantels that will last much longer. He did not believe that the globes being used now are as good as the ones we had before.

Cncl. Bryson noted that gas lamps are really a nice thing as they add to the aesthetics and make it a pleasurable within Forest Hills and I agree it was an attributable factor when the homes were purchased. I also agree that in other places in town we spend money, we spend money down the lakes for dams, we spend money for ball fields, for roads, etc. He then noted the gas lamps are, in some respects, not a very safe thing and he questioned the possibility of putting in electric lights that look very much like a gas lamp, that would help to keep the aesthetics. There was then a discussion back and forth with regard to gas versus electric, the costs involved and retrofitting for such. Mr. Luby then added that Forest Hills is a relatively safe community, I have been there for 47 years and we've had very little problem. He noted that he would walk around Forest Hills all night long before I would walk down Main Street and take any of the side streets and you have plenty of lighting there. He then referred to a stabbing that took place along Main Street some seven (7) months ago. I did some homework and I have a report here from the American Medical Association (*AMA*) with an article on doctors issuing warnings about street lights.

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C.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

Cncl. Bryson then added that he brought this issue up at the last meeting and how certain street lights can interfere with a persons' circadian rhythm.

Chief of Police, John McKeown advised of some crash statistics over the past 2½ years where we compared Forest Hills, Scotland Run, and Hunter Woods as each of these developments have, at least, 2 major roadways for access so they can be seen as a throughway. In 2013 – Forest Hills had four (4) crashes, Scotland Run had five (5) and Hunter Woods had two (2). In 2014 – each development had six (6) crashes. In the first half of 2015 – Forest Hills had four (4), Scotland Run had zero (0) and Hunter Woods had two (2).

Mayor Teefy then advised for clarification we know we had a stabbing on the corner of Main Street & Library Street and it was not seven (7) months ago, it was about four (4) years ago. **Chief McKeown** noted that it took place in his first year as Chief, sometime in 2013.

Troy Sterling – 1032 Huntingdon Drive approached council with questions regarding the backyard chicken pilot program. Mr. Sterling was advised this matter was scheduled for discussion at the Wednesday, November 2nd Ordinance Committee Meeting, 7:00PM second floor conference room. Mr. Sterling then spoke of a pilot program in Merchantville which he emailed information on.

Cncl. Caligiuri made a motion to close the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Heffner** and unanimously approved by all members of council in attendance.

D.) NEW BUSINESS

Cncl. Bryson then spoke on an article that appeared in the Courier Post at this time last year regarding taxes in New Jersey and how high they were. They asked our legislators to pledge to look to find a 10% reduction on taxes. It was never done. A year later more people have left the state and the overall loss to the state is approximately 22,000 people and still the legislators have done nothing, in particular the leader of the senate and the leader of the house never signed the agreement. What he proposed as new business is what we did as a council when we provided all the other municipalities throughout the state with a resolution to take a look at the funding mechanism for the school districts known as Abbott Burke (*R:105-2007 Resolution of the Township Council of the Township of Monroe in Support of State Legislation To Amend Abbott-Burke Funding to Streamline Administration of a More Thorough and Efficient Education Throughout the State of New Jersey*). **Cncl. Bryson** then noted the council members at that time were very successful in getting Abbott Burke knocked down. What he suggested was to generate a resolution requesting all of our legislators in the state to sign a petition that will lower our taxes with an alternate plan to convene a constitutional convention. According to the Courier Post we now have the highest real estate taxes in the nation and he felt that was a disgrace. To add to that our legislators now passed an additional \$.23 tax increase in the gasoline tax which will hurt even more residents who work. He then went on to speak at length on the gasoline tax. Initially, he would like to see a resolution going after the 10% reduction.

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D.) NEW BUSINESS *(cont'd)*

Cncl. Bryson made a motion to draw up a resolution requesting our legislators in the senate and assembly and also our governor to take a serious look at reducing taxes either by a percentage or by a constitutional convention. There was no second.

Cncl. DiLucia noted the problem is we can't get a consensus from the legislators on what the approach should be in order to do that. The last time this was brought up there was a petition that was signed by a couple hundred thousand people asking that there be a discussion on the tax issue. In other words, the legislators signed off that they would begin a discussion around the issue of taxation and there was a pledge to do that. Well, that has never been done and it appears the reason it wasn't done is because everybody is all over the lot with an approach to it. One approach is consolidation of services which is predominant in the southern portion of the state, the other addresses school funding. I don't have a problem with drafting a resolution but I think the resolution ought to merely ask that the legislators hold a forum to begin the process of addressing a way and means that we can go towards a reduction in taxes. Because if we don't have a plan that resolution would mean nothing. **Cncl. DiLucia** added he really felt the most logical thing would be to ask them to get together for that purpose. I have a problem right now with the elections going on, none of these campaigns either on a national or state level address the issue of taxes. He then noted something that just happened recently that being the government identified what the increase in Social Security benefits will be effective January 1st. The increase will amount to \$.003, which is 3/10 of 1%. The average senior citizen's social security check (*as being publicized*) is at \$1,500.00 per month and if that is true that means that senior citizens are going to get a \$4.50 increase on the average. He went on to elaborate on how taxes continue to increase on a federal, state and local level and income continues to be stagnant. He then added he would be in favor of a resolution that would ask the legislators with other municipalities joining in that we demand this issue be addressed. **Cncl. Bryson** noted in addition, our people have started something here (*at least the ones on council now and those that are joining them*) and have pledged to have a zero increase in taxes. If we can do it on a local level than there is no reason there can't be a pledge made at the state level. There was discussion back and forth on the approach to be used. **Cncl. Bryson** continued to speak on the issue of taxes and urged that legislators actually make a commitment to do something about lowering taxes and added some suggestions. Again, **Cncl. McIlvaine** questioned **Cncl. Bryson** on how he would like to push this forward and how he would like this resolution to read. **Cncl. Bryson** responded when sending this out that we ask the legislators (*senate, assembly, governor*) to sign a pledge that they will lower taxes with something concrete they have to work on. He offered to put something in writing as he felt the time for discussion was over and a time of action is what we need. **Cncl. DiLucia** stressed the point he was trying to make is that they haven't even started a discussion on this. Again, there was discussion back and forth. **Cncl. McIlvaine** indicated that **Cncl. Calgiuri** had an idea and that was to appoint a committee to draw up a draft resolution. **Mayor Teefy** then noted when we did the resolution with respect to Abbott Burke it was very detailed and there just can't be an open plan to reduce taxes you have to give specifics. If you want to go after the convention be specific and leave it at that. The Abbott Burke was effective for two (2) years and after that it went back to what they are doing now.

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D.) NEW BUSINESS (cont'd)

He also advised that both the governor and Senator Sweeney have a plan with respect to the schools and we will see where that falls (*more equal distribution*).

E.) OLD BUSINESS – None

F.) COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

G.) QUESTIONS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS SCHEDULED

Cncl. McIlvaine indicated that Resolution R:210-2016 *Resolution Approving The Bill List For The Council Meeting Of October 24, 2016* was being removed from the agenda as the actual list was not received prior to the meeting. This will be rescheduled for approval at the November 14th meeting.

H.) QUESTIONS REGARDING ORDINANCES SCHEDULED - None

I.) ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further for discussion, **Cncl. Caligiuri** made a motion to adjourn the Council Work Session of October 24, 2016. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Heffner** 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 October 24, 2016 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 _____ *SM* _____
Approved as corrected _____

Date 11/14/16
Date _____