

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JULY 2, 2014**

A.) CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

The Ordinance Committee Meeting of the Township of Monroe was called to order at 7:36 PM by **Cncl. Pres., Ronald Garbowski** in the Second Floor Meeting Room of the Municipal Complex located at 125 Virginia Avenue, Williamstown, New Jersey.

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

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Cncl. Caligiuri led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag.

ROLL CALL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Cncl. Walter Bryson	Present	
Cncl. Frank Caligiuri	Present	
Cncl. Marvin Dilks	Present	
Cncl. Rich DiLucia	Present	
Cncl. Ronald Garbowski	Present	
Cncl. Daniel Teefy	Present	
Ord. Chairman, William Sebastian		Excused
Business Administrator, Kevin Heydel	Present	
Solicitor, Charles Fiore	Present	
Engineer, Chris Rehmann	Present	
Deputy Clerk, Sharon Wright	Present	

B.) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Cncl. Bryson made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted of the Ordinance Committee Meeting of June 5, 2014. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Dilks** and approved by all members of Council in attendance.

C.) PUBLIC PORTION

Cncl. DiLucia made a motion to open the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Teefy** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance. With no one from the public wishing to speak **Cncl. DiLucia** made a motion to close the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Dilks** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

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D.) ORDINANCES FOR REVIEW

- **Chapter 175-135 Sign Ordinance - Pineland Commission Recommendations**

Solicitor Fiore explained the Pinelands held a public hearing and conditionally certified Ordinance O:19-2014 (*Sign Ordinance*). The Pinelands requested revisions be made to the ordinance before fully certifying it and gave the township until October 10, 2014 to adopt those revisions. Council agreed to the revisions and requested the Ordinance be forwarded to the Planning Board for review and then to the Planning Board Solicitor to draft the amendment for First Reading at the July 28, 2014 Regular Council Meeting.

E.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Property Maintenance Code/Vacant Properties - Sample Ordinances**

Solicitor Fiore spoke of Council previously discussing amending our ordinance to deal with vacant properties to avoid issues like the one in Newbury Farms. Mr. Fiore provided sample ordinances from various municipalities for Council to review and explained the Cherry Hill Ordinance deals with banks being required to register properties and each year the registration fee increases putting the burden upon the bank to maintain the property. Our problem deals with properties that are not bank owned such as the one where the owner passed away without heirs for the township to contact and ones that are awaiting foreclosure after the owners walk away from them. Our Property Maintenance Code (*Chapter 104*) is basically called the blight ordinance. If a property in the mind of the Zoning Code or Housing Official appears to become blighted/problematic the township has the ability to send a notice to that individual and if they don't abate the problem they can be taken to municipal court and fined. That may be harsh because they probably don't have money to make repairs but we do have a tool in place to notify residents when their properties become in disrepair. **Cncl. DiLucia** noted there are also issues when banks sublet the maintenance responsibility to a company. He spoke of being called to a house where the interior was totally destroyed with walls ripped out and things thrown all around the house and the only thing the township could do about it was cut the grass and clean up the exterior of the home. He questioned whether we could develop an ordinance that addresses the interior of homes as that also affects property values in the neighborhood and we have no way to address that unless there are rodents living in the home. **Solicitor Fiore** explained the Cherry Hill ordinance holds the bank responsible and the municipal court judge could fine them. **Cncl. Pres., Garbowski** spoke of a house in Forest Hills that looks fine from the outside but the interior is the issue. All the pipes have been stolen and squirrels and other rodents are living in it, which is causing other property values to go down. The neighbors have tried to contact the bank in California that owns the property but the bank has done nothing to resolve the problem. **Cncl. Bryson** suggested requiring houses to be registered as soon as the township is made aware it is vacant so the condition of the house can be monitored. He also suggested installing a webcam in vacant houses so the township, the neighbors or the bank could monitor it. **Cncl. Dilks** questioned whether the ordinance could require banks to provide the township with a maintenance program at the time they register the property. Mr. Fiore advised that could be required during the registration process. **Cncl. Teefy** noted the Cherry Hill ordinance requires

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the interior as well as exterior to meet code and requires registration every year so by the fifth year they are paying \$5,000.00, which is an incentive to sell the property. The issue we have is enforcement, as we may not have enough staff to enforce the ordinance. Mr. Rehmann noted Hammonton just adopted an ordinance to deal with this same issue and he will send Council a copy of that to review. Cncl. Bryson spoke of the number of foreclosures going down in 2011 and 2012 but now they are beginning to increase again and that causes a decrease in revenue. He suggested decreasing the registration fee to \$500.00 if the banks install a monitoring device in vacant properties. Council agreed the Cherry Hill ordinance was good and requested Mr. Fiore to draft an ordinance for review at the next Ordinance Committee Meeting.

- Chapter 262 - Towing Ordinance - Committee Update

Cncl. DiLucia noted Cncl. Sebastian chaired the Towing Committee Meeting held Thursday, June 26th and requested him to update Council on what had transpired. In attendance at the committee meeting was Cncl. Sebastian, Dilks, DiLucia, Solicitor Fiore and a number of towers. The most recent draft ordinance was distributed and discussed. Everyone was asked to review the ordinance and come back to the next Towing Committee Meeting to recommend changes. The committee will consider those recommendations and bring them back to the full Council for consideration. The committee made no changes to the draft in order to give the towers the opportunity to review it and make their suggestions. Cncl. Sebastian will be scheduling another Towing Committee Meeting when he returns from vacation.

F.) NEW BUSINESS - None

G.) OLD BUSINESS

Business Administrator, Kevin Heydel reported the tax rate was received and it is 3.298, which amounts to a 5.39% net average increase. He explained if 3.22% is taken out from the loss of ratables it comes down to 2.17%. The municipality's increase is 1.7%, the school's is 1.8/1.9% and the county is 4% because they are compensating for last year when they had no increase. When looking at the municipality's performance taking away the effects of the appeals and loss of ratables our average increase was 1.5% over the last five years. Last year we did not have a tax increase because we had a flat budget from the year before and over the last five years we have been well below the 2% budget cap.

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H.) ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss **Cncl. Bryson** made a motion to adjourn the Ordinance Committee Meeting of July 2, 2014. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Caligiuri** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,


Deputy Clerk Sharon Wright, RMC


Presiding Officer

These minutes were prepared from excerpts of the recorded proceedings and hand written notes taken during the Ordinance Committee Meeting of July 2, 2014 and serve only as a synopsis of the proceedings. The official recording may be heard in the Office of the Township Clerk upon proper notification pursuant to the Open Public Records Law.

Approved as submitted *fw* Date *8/6/14*
Approved as corrected _____ Date _____