

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

A.) OPENING CEREMONIES

CALL TO ORDER

The Ordinance Committee Meeting of the Township of Monroe was called to order at approximately 7:00 PM by **Ordinance Chairman, Cncl. Donald Heverly** in the Courtroom 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 (*N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 thru 10:4-21*). Notices were placed in the official publications for the Township of Monroe (i.e.: South Jersey Times, Courier Post and The Sentinel of Gloucester County). A copy of that notice is posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex and on the Monroe Township website.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt led the Assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag.

ROLL CALL

Cncl. Denise Adams	Present	
Cncl. Ronald Garbowski		Excused
Cncl. Donald Heverly	Present	
Cncl. Steven McKinney	Present	
Cncl. Patrick O'Reilly	Present	
Cncl. Vice-Pres. Chelsea Valcourt	Present	
Cncl. Pres. Carolann Fox	Present	
Mayor Gregory A. Wolfe	Present	
Deputy Mayor, Joseph Kurz	Present	
Solicitor, Nicholas Sullivan	Present	
Business Administrator, James V. DeHart, III	Present	
Dir. of Code Enforcement, William Sebastian	Present	
Dir. of Parks & Recreation, Brian Cope	Present	
Chief Financial Officer, Lorraine Boyer	Present	
Police Chief Craig Monahan	Present	
Deputy Municipal Clerk, Jennifer Harbison	Present	

B.) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted of the Ordinance Committee Meeting of July 12, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Pres. Fox** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

C.) ORDINANCES FOR REVIEW

- **An Ordinance of the Township Council of the Township of Monroe Providing for the Implementation of the “Five Year Tax Exemption and Abatement Law” Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:21-1 Et Seq. and Approving Property Tax Agreement Between the Township of Monroe and Keith Mayo, 2352 Sunnyhill Avenue, Block 9209, Lot 15**

Cncl. O'Reilly made a motion to move forward the Draft Ordinance regarding the Implementation of the “Five Year Tax Exemption and Abatement Law” between the Township of Monroe and Keith Mayo, 2352 Sunnyhill Avenue, Block 9209, Lot 15 for First Reading at the Council Meeting of September 11, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

- **Bond Ordinance Authorizing the Acquisition of Various Capital Equipment and the completion of Various Capital Improvements in and for the Township of Monroe, County of Gloucester, New Jersey; Appropriating the Sum of \$4,260,000 Therefor; Authorizing the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds or Bond Anticipation Notes of the Township of Monroe, County Of Gloucester, New Jersey, in the Aggregate Principal Amount of up to \$4,047,000; Making Certain Determinations and Covenants; and Authorizing Certain Related Actions in Connection with the Foregoing**

Cncl. Adams made a motion to move forward the Draft Bond Ordinance authorizing the acquisition of various capital equipment and the completion of various capital improvements in and for the Township of Monroe for First Reading at the Council Meeting of September 11, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. O'Reilly** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

- **An Ordinance of the Township Council of the Township of Monroe to Amend Section 175-163.4 of the Code of the Township of Monroe, Entitled “Cannabis”**

Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt made a motion to move forward the Draft Ordinance regarding Chapter 175-163.4 “Land Management” – Cannabis for First Reading at the Council Meeting of September 11, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Pres. Fox** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

- **An Ordinance of the Township Council of the Township of Monroe to Amend Section 175-163.4 of the Code of the Township of Monroe, Entitled “Cannabis”**

Cncl. Pres. Fox made a motion to move forward the Draft Ordinance to repeal Ordinance O:22-2023 for First Reading at the Council Meeting of September 11, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Adams** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

D.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Sale of Cats and Dogs from Pet Shops**

Alan Braslow, 1246 Liberty Bell Drive, Cherry Hill, NJ addressed the Mayor and Council to express his concerns with the sales of dogs and cats from puppy mills and puppy factories. He explained the puppy mill/factory breeding process and asked for the consideration to adopt the proposed Ordinance which would prohibit pet stores from selling commercially bred animals within the Township of Monroe. Mr. Braslow noted, there have been 140 municipalities in New Jersey who have already adopted this proposed Ordinance. He stated that he helped The Pet Stop in Turnersville, after Washington Township adopted the Ordinance, to convert to rescue only. Mr. Braslow spoke regarding the benefits of adopting the Ordinance, noting with the Ordinance in place, a pet store is able to rescue and rehome animals, sell supplies, and perform grooming services. **Cncl. Adams** asked if New Jersey adopted the Pet Protection Act, to which Mr. Braslow explained it was adopted, however it is a matter of the pet stores keeping records that need to be in compliance with the law. Mr. Braslow noted, it is his mission to have the State pass a statewide law banning the sale of commercially bred animals, but in the meantime, he is trying to visit every municipality in New Jersey to encourage the adoption of this Draft Ordinance. **Mayor Wolfe** recommended researching some of the Ordinances from the neighboring towns who have already adopted the Ordinance for Council's review and discussion for consideration at the next scheduled Ordinance Committee Meeting.

Elissa Frank, New Jersey State Director, State Affairs at the Humane Society of the United States addressed the Mayor and Council to request that they consider adopting the Draft Ordinance to protect animals and consumers from the puppy mill to pet store pipeline. Ms. Frank explained, by adopting the Ordinance, it will not close any stores or hurt workers in Monroe Township, in fact, it will support small business pet stores that do not sell animals. Pet stores are a \$77 billion industry and less than 2% come from the sale of puppies. The money that pet stores make is in their products and their services. Ms. Frank noted, the pet stores do not need to sell puppies to remain a thriving and good business. She stated that by adopting this Ordinance, it will provide Monroe Township the opportunity to take a stand against animal abuse and neglect by proactively preventing dogs and cats from being sold at any existing or new pet stores within the Township. She explained that the Ordinance offers a fair pro-business and proactive solution to the issues that have been discussed.

- **Rent Control**

Mayor Wolfe thanked everyone for their attendance, stating that Monroe Township is committed to providing some type of assistance to the residents with regards to the out of control rent charges. He provided some of the highlights of the model ordinance that is on this evening's agenda. Mayor Wolfe stated, he is committed to working on this matter and helping everyone in the Township that has to pay rent. **Solicitor Sullivan** advised, the Ordinance is still in the model template form and he is hoping to have something more comprehensive for everyone to review shortly. The Mayor explained the ordinance adoption process.

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

D.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION (cont'd)

- **Gloucester County 4H Property Donation Return Agreement**

Business Administrator, Jim DeHart explained that the Solicitor's Office has drafted the agreement for the Gloucester County 4H. **Mayor Wolfe** explained, the Township many years ago gave the property to the Gloucester County 4H and it is his understanding that the 4H is in dire need of funding and may lose the property, so it is better for the Township to take back control of the property. **Cncl. O'Reilly** asked if an inspection was done on the property with Public Works to see what the Township is taking back, to which Mr. DeHart noted that he is unaware of any inspection being done, however, there has been some improvements and additions made to the property by the 4H. **Cncl. O'Reilly** asked Mr. DeHart to follow up with Public Works regarding the maintenance plan once the Township retains ownership of the property, to which Mr. DeHart agreed. **Cncl. Pres. Fox** made a motion to approve the agreement with the required changes. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

- **Chapter 4-24 "Administrative Code" Ordinances and Resolutions**

Business Administrator, Jim DeHart spoke regarding the confusion with the current process for approving Ordinances to be placed on Meeting Agendas. The suggested language addresses and clears up the current confusion and ensures that the Township Code coincides with the correct operation of the Township. **Mayor Wolfe** explained, past practice with placing Resolutions and Ordinances on Council Meeting and Ordinance Committee Meeting Agendas. He believes, the only time that an Ordinance should be placed on a Council Meeting Agenda without being presented at an Ordinance Committee Meeting, is if that Ordinance is dealing with a time sensitive matter and vice versa with a Resolution being placed on an Ordinance Committee Meeting.

- **Chapter 162-27 "Housing Standards" – Short Term Rentals**

Housing Official, Dan Kozak stated that the recent changes made to Chapter 162-27 "Housing Standards" – Short Term Rentals did not address the campground on Coles Mill Road. He noted, the campground offers short term rentals and he believes language needs to be added to ensure that they are also abiding by the Code. **Mayor Wolfe** explained, Council adopted an Ordinance to protect the residents and to prevent short-term rentals, houses which were being rented out for less than twenty (20) days and were being used as "party houses". He noted, the property that Mr. Kozak is referencing is a campground that has seasonal summer hours and he believes an exception should be added to the Code to encompass the campground, to which all members of Council in attendance agreed.

- **Handicap Parking along Main Street and Chestnut Street**

Business Administrator, Jim DeHart explained that a few weeks ago, one of the Township's residents came forward to let Council and the Mayor know that he had received a

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

D.) MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION (cont'd)

few parking tickets for parking after the restricted parking hours in front of his residence on Main Street. Mr. DeHart noted, he has spoken with Police Chief Monahan along with Traffic Lieutenant Burton regarding the various options for the resident. This resident is handicap with a state-issued handicap placard and is one of the few residents residing along Main Street that does not have off-street parking. Mr. DeHart provided Council a copy of two (2) sample Ordinances and a sign that can be installed along Main Street. Per Lt. Burton, the Township can create a handicap parking spot that is designated to a specific vehicle or to a placard and it is the recommendation of the Police Department that the parking spot is designated to this resident's vehicle, to ensure only his car can park in the designated spot. He noted, the Township Code will have to be amended to include the parking space along that section of Main Street between the hours of midnight and 8:00 am. Mr. DeHart stated, with Council's approval, he will make the necessary amendments to the Code and have the Ordinance ready to be presented for First Reading at the next scheduled Council Meeting along with, having the sign and parking spot created. **Mayor Wolfe** clarified that the resident is a military veteran who attended a previous Council Meeting, noting he went out to the area in question and the location is across from the Hennessy Funeral Home and there is not an issue of parking on the street other than the restrictions listed in the Township Code.

• **Chapter 280-18 "Animal Control" – Backyard Chicken Pilot Program**

Deputy Municipal Clerk, Jennifer Harbison advised that the Backyard Chicken Pilot Program is scheduled to expire on November 22, 2023 and asked for Council's thoughts on bringing the program out of pilot or keeping it in pilot and just extending the expiration of the pilot. The Backyard Chicken Advisory Board has been performing the re-inspections of the current license holders and some of the license holders have expressed interest in paying their renewal fees. Ms. Harbison noted, no fees have been collected at this point because she wanted to find out Council's thoughts on extending the pilot or bringing it out of pilot. **Mayor Wolfe** asked if the fifty (50) license cap has been reached, to which Ms. Harbison advised there are currently thirty-one (31) licenses issued. He noted, it was previously discussed to leave the program in the pilot program and with no complaints and the maximum allowed number of licenses not being met, he believes it should continue in the pilot stage. **Solicitor Mr. Sullivan** advised, in order to continue the program in pilot, the date would need to be extended. **Cncl. Adams** asked what the benefits are in keeping the program in the pilot stage as opposed to bringing it out of pilot. **Cncl. McKinney** spoke regarding why he believes the program should remain in pilot, noting it provides the flexibility of the Backyard Chicken Advisory Board to continue to do what they are currently doing. Mayor Wolfe stated, he also believes the program should remain in pilot, as it allows Council to continue to review the program, to which all members of Council in attendance agreed. **Cncl. Heverly** suggested the pilot be extended for an additional two (2) years, to which everyone in attendance agreed.

E.) NEW BUSINESS – None

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

F.) UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

G.) PUBLIC PORTION

Cncl. Pres. Fox made a motion to open the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Vice-Pres. Valcourt** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

John Romano, 405 Virginia Place addressed the Mayor and Council to speak on behalf of himself and many of his neighbors to explain why rent control is such a passionate topic for so many residents and thanked the Mayor and Council for establishing a dialogue concerning rent control. He spoke in reference to the Rent Leveling Ordinance which was adopted in Manchester County.

Patricia Rumpf of the Friendly Village Development addressed the Mayor and Council to express her concerns with the timeline of the potential adoption of a Rent Leveling Ordinance and the dates in which Brian Temple will be implementing next year's rent increase. She noted that Mr. Temple adheres to the Philadelphia price index when considering the rent increases.

Mayor Wolfe explained that the proposed Ordinance contains the price index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics United States Department of Labor.

Joe Vacudo of the Friendly Village Development addressed the Mayor and Council to express his concerns with the constant rent increases.

Eric Fooder, 2014 Burlington Court addressed the Mayor and Council to thank them for taking a stand and to express his concerns with the rent charges.

Karen Lilly, 258 Yardley Place addressed the Mayor and Council to express her concerns with the reasons she was provided on her high rent amount and the constant rent increases.

Susan Pace, 233 Urban Lane addressed the Mayor and Council to ask what increases to the 2023 tax bill will she be responsible for, to which **Mayor Wolfe** explained that the Monroe Township tax is comprised of approximately 25% that is controlled by the Council and Administration, 55% that is controlled by the School Board, and 20% that is controlled by the County. This year combined, between the County, the School District and the Township, the average home of \$300,000 located in Monroe Township increased total \$51.00 for the year of 2023. He noted, the Township has held the line on taxes on the municipal side for six (6) years at 0%, with a slight increase this year.

Fran Engel, 570 Homewood Lane addressed the Mayor and Council to express her concerns with the increasing rent costs and the residents need for assistance. **Mayor Wolfe** asked if association fees, such as the pool and club house are included in the rent, to which Ms. Engel replied there is not an association or association fee.

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

G.) PUBLIC PORTION (cont'd)

Marty Zepp of Summerfields West thanked Mayor Wolfe for attending the Summerfields monthly meetings and asked how the construction inspections are handled within the Township, specifically concerning the mobile home parks. **Mayor Wolfe** noted, he is not aware of the specific regulations concerning the inspections of mobile home parks, however, he will research Mr. Zepp's question and report his findings.

Gail Miyetti, 237 Virginia Place addressed the Mayor and Council to provide examples of her elderly neighbors concerns and issues with the constant rent increases.

Rita Casey, 31 Dale Lane addressed the Mayor and Council to request a copy of her new lease as she was never supplied with a copy from her landlord, noting the landlord has yet to provide a copy of any amended leases to her or her neighbors.

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

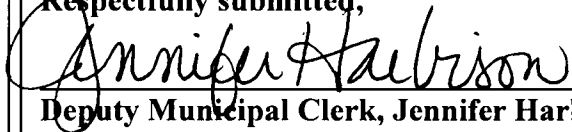
Mayor Wolfe addressed the comment made regarding the timeframe that the residents need the Ordinance adopted by. He suggested working with the Solicitor to have the Ordinance drafted and ready to be presented for First Reading at the September 25th Council Meeting, Second Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption at the October 9th Council Meeting, and with the estoppel period, the Ordinance will be in effect prior to the new year when the residents receive their rent increase. He noted, he does not want to fast track this Ordinance, because he wants to make sure everything is done correctly and protects everyone, however, if it a time sensitive matter, he would like to have done quickly to help the residents. **Solicitor Sullivan** spoke regarding the process of drafting the Ordinance and it being presented for First and Second Readings to be adopted and in full effect prior to the notice of the rent increase. **Business Administrator, Jim DeHart** clarified that the twenty (20) day estoppel period does not begin at the date of adoption but at the date of publication of the adoption of the ordinance, which would be after the November 1st deadline. Solicitor Sullivan stated, if Council decides, he can have the Draft Ordinance prepared for the Monday, September 25th Council Meeting. **Cncl. Valcourt** asked if the landlords are required to provide a certain amount of notice for the rent increase, to which Solicitor Sullivan explained that would be something contained in the language of the lease agreement. A discussion followed regarding the time frame of adoption and the time of notice provided to the residents. Mayor Wolfe asked Solicitor Sullivan if it is possible to have the Ordinance prepared and ready to present for First Reading at the September 11th Council Meeting, to which Solicitor Sullivan agreed. The Mayor asked Council President Fox if the Ordinance could be placed on the September 11th Council Meeting Agenda, to which she agreed. Mayor Wolfe clarified that the Solicitor's Office will be preparing the Draft Ordinance to be presented for First Reading on the September 11th Council Meeting Agenda, Second Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption on the September 25th Council Meeting Agenda, which will allow the Ordinance to be in effect and become law prior to November 1st.

**MINUTES
ORDINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

H.) ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss, **Cncl. Pres. Fox** made a motion to adjourn the Ordinance Committee Meeting of September 6, 2023. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. O'Reilly** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,


Deputy Municipal Clerk, Jennifer Harbison


Presiding Officer

These minutes were prepared from excerpts of the recorded proceedings and hand-written notes taken during the Ordinance Committee Meeting of September 6, 2023 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 _____



Date

2/14/2024

Approved as corrected _____

Date _____