

**MINUTES
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANUARY 31, 2024**

A.) OPENING CEREMONIES

CALL TO ORDER

The Special Council Meeting of the Township of Monroe was called to order at 6 p.m. by **Cncl. Pres., Chelsea Valcourt** in the Courtroom of the Municipal Complex, located at 125 Virginia Avenue, Williamstown, New Jersey.

This Special Meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. Notices of this meeting were sent to the Courier-Post and The Sentinel of Gloucester County on January 17, 2024. In addition, copies of the notices were posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building and filed in the office of the Municipal Clerk on aforementioned date. Notices on the bulletin board have remained continuously posted at the Municipal Complex and on the Monroe Township website.

Cncl. Pres., Chelsea Valcourt stated, the Clerk has placed a sign-in sheet in the rear of the meeting room. If anyone would like to address Council, please sign-in and raise your hand and you will be asked to come forward to the microphone. Kindly state your name and address for the record.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Cncl. Garbowski led the Assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to Our Flag.

ROLL CALL

Cncl. Denise Adams	Present	
Cncl. Carolann Fox	Present	
Cncl. Ronald Garbowski	Present	
Cncl. Vice-Pres. Donald Heverly		Excused
Cncl. Steven McKinney	Present	
Cncl. Patrick O'Reilly	Present	
Cncl. Pres. Chelsea Valcourt	Present	
Mayor Gregory A. Wolfe	Present	
Deputy Mayor, Joseph Kurz		Excused
Solicitor, Sandra Graise	Present	
Business Administrator, James V. DeHart, III	Present	
Dir. of Code Enforcement, William Sebastian		Excused
Dir. of Community Affairs, Donna Park	Present	
Dir. of Community Development, Joseph Marino		Excused
Dir. of Parks & Recreation, Brian Cope	Present	
Dir. of Public Safety, Jon Rumpf		Excused
Dir. of Public Works, Marvin Dilks		Excused
Dir. of Real Estate, Jennifer Pesotski		Excused
Chief Financial Officer, Lorraine Boyer		Excused
Police Chief Craig Monahan		Excused
Municipal Clerk, Aileen Chiselko	Present	

**PUBLIC HEARING
GREEN ACRES GRANT - JAKE'S LAW PLAYGROUND
AT THE PFEIFFER COMMUNITY CENTER**

Cncl. Pres. Valcourt asked for a motion to open the Public Hearing relating to the Green Acres Grant, Jake's Law Playground. **Cncl. Garbowski** made a motion to open the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. McKinney** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

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Anthony Iovino, 694 Jones Road, a resident of over 40 years and founder of Finn's Friends, a non-profit for autism awareness, approached the podium to speak to the Mayor and Council. He thanked the Mayor and Council for this opportunity to do something special for the community's children. His son, Finn, was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2. His son's strength and abilities that he witnesses everyday are inspiring, which inspired him to found Finn's Friends, so that he can help other families and children who struggle with autism. Mr. Iovino informed the Mayor and Council that playing is the most important type of therapy for children who struggle with special needs. Playing provides the sensory feedback they need every day and also makes them feel included. He brought the idea of Finn's Friends Park to the Director of Community Affairs, Donna Park approximately 6 months ago. As soon as he mentioned this idea to Mrs. Park, she started scheduling meetings with the Mayor and his team, and he'll forever be grateful for that. Mr. Iovino informed the Mayor and Council that there are a lot of parks in South Jersey that claim they have equipment that are specific for special needs, but he has visited most of these parks and they have only 1 or 2 pieces of equipment. While working tirelessly for the past 4-5 months on the design of this park, he tried to include the components he thought was missing from the other parks, so that this park can stand-out from the rest, and Monroe Township can be the leader of actually having a park for special needs children. The colors in the park that he incorporated in the design will spark the imagination of any child or adult. He thinks one of the most important parts of the park is the surfacing, so that the children will be safe, and also have flexibility of maneuvering around the park with concrete sidewalks for everyone. Mr. Iovino said that a lot of thought and love went into this park and he does not doubt this would be a huge addition to the community. He informed the Mayor and Council that every municipality has ball fields, soccer fields, pickleball courts, a dog park, etc.; however, according to the CDC and the National Institute of Mental Health, 1 in 36 children are affected by autism. He feels this speaks for itself and that this park is a necessity to have in this town. Mr. Iovino thanked the Mayor and Council for their time.

Joseph Barbadaro, Remington & Vernick Engineers addressed the Mayor and Council, presenting the Concept Plan for Pfeiffer Community Center Park Improvements at 301 Blue Bell Road, Williamstown, NJ 08094, Block 11701, Lot 19. He has been working on the grant application with Todd Noon of Triad Associates and Business Administrator, Jim DeHart. He explained that the park would be constructed behind the community center, in a vacant field, which will have an access path leading to the parking lot, a safety fence around the playground, and a small retention basin. He informed the Mayor and Council that the Township would be applying for \$1,251,626.00 for this Green Acres grant.

Cncl. O'Reilly asked what the square footage is, length and width, approximately. Mr. Barbadaro believes it is 150'x80'. Cncl. O'Reilly also asked if the small basin is going to be fenced-off or wide-open. Mr. Barbadaro replied, it can be fenced-off, depending on the depth of the basin, if it is required. Cncl. O'Reilly recommended fencing for the safety of the children.

Cncl. Fox asked if there will be a fence around the park itself. Mr. Barbadaro confirmed there would be a fence around the park. Cncl. Fox also asked if there will be certain hours that the park will be open/closed. It is Mr. Barbadaro's understanding that it will be open during normal park hours. **Cncl. O'Reilly** said that he believes that Green Acres has its own policies regarding lights in their parks while they're open/closed and believes they would have to follow the same standard. He then asked if lighting is proposed for this park. Mr. Barbadaro explained that lighting is not being proposed as part of the Green Acres application, as Green Acres is very specific as to what they will fund and not fund. This application is geared toward the playground itself. Cncl. O'Reilly said that the Township could always look into the lighting later down the line.

Cncl. Garbowski asked if any trees will be removed in this area, which Mr. Barbadaro confirmed that no trees will be removed and **Mayor Wolfe** explained there were 2 tee-ball fields in this area, which were removed a couple of years ago. Cncl. Garbowski would like security to be looked into for after hours. Mayor Wolfe said, that's the nice thing about the fence, as it can be locked-up.

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

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B.) GENERAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Cncl. Fox made a motion to open the General Public Discussion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. Garbowski** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Sherrie Kennedy, 375 Bryn Mawr Drive approached the podium to address her concern regarding Verizon knocking on doors at residences who are registered under the "Do Not Knock Registry". She said that she read on Facebook that Verizon claims they are exempt from the Township's Peddling and Soliciting Ordinance/Do Not Knock Registry, because Verizon is a utility company. She would like to know if this is true or not. **Mayor Wolfe** said that Verizon should not be excluded. **Solicitor Graise** confirmed that it has already been brought to the Township's attention and that we are in the process of looking into it, as there is nothing specific that the Township is aware of that gives them that exemption; however, the Township is in the process of reviewing and potentially taking action, if deemed necessary.

With no one else wishing to speak, **Cncl. McKinney** made a motion to close the General Public Discussion. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. O'Reilly** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

At this time, **Mayor Wolfe** informed all the residents in attendance to sign-in to record attendance of this Public Hearing/Special Council Meeting. He also reminded everyone to complete and share the survey link on the Township's Facebook page regarding the application to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres program.

C.) ADJOURNMENT

With nothing further to discuss, **Cncl. Garbowski** made a motion to adjourn the Special Council Meeting of January 31, 2024. The motion was seconded by **Cncl. O'Reilly** and unanimously approved by all members of Council in attendance.

Aileen Chiselko
Aileen Chiselko
Municipal Clerk

Chelsea Valcourt
Presiding Officer

These minutes were prepared from excerpts of the recorded proceedings, as well as hand-written notes taken, of the Special Council Meeting of January 31, 2024 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 Act.

Approved as submitted *asc*
Approved as corrected _____

Date *2/28/2024*
Date _____