

**December 22, 2009, CAUCUS MEETING MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOROUGH OF MT. EPHRAIM**

**MEETING CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Wolk called the meeting to order at 3:22pm.

**SALUTE TO FLAG:**

All present pledged their allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT**

**ABSENT**

Commissioner Gilmore	_____x_____	_____
Commissioner Greenwald	_____x_____	_____
Mayor Wolk	_____x_____	_____

**OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Borough Solicitor – Joe Marrasso  
Borough Engineers – Joe Federici & Doug Akin  
Rich Schwab—Borough Consultant  
Police Chief – Ed Dobleman  
Marie Darlington –Tax Collector/Deputy Clerk

**“OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW” ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Mayor Wolk announced this Meeting has been advertised and notices posted in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.”

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

None

**DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS**

**Administration & Finance: The Clerk**

**1. Pasta Café liquor license**

The Division of Taxation canceled the auction of this liquor license as Pasta Café/Staliga settled their outstanding taxes with the State.

However, the IRS is now going to seize the license so this process will start all over again. The Clerk will keep the Governing Body apprised.

**2. Contract award for Streetscape Project Phase II**

We did receive written approval from the DOT to award the contract to Bud. The documents they requested have all been sent and we are now waiting on the amended grant agreement. I notified Bud of the award and also asked Federici and Akin to go ahead and prepare the contracts.

**3. PSE&G Direct Install Program**

The energy auditor completed an audit of borough hall on December 9. He explained that they do one facility initially, submit a report and the borough can then decide if they choose to move forward with the program. If we decide to move forward, they will return and perform energy audits of our remaining facilities. When the report is received, it will be forwarded to the governing body and Ken Jones for their review.

**4. Feral cat problem in the Borough**

As you are aware, representatives from the Gloucester City TNR (trap/neuter/release) program were present at the last commission meeting to advocate the benefits of such a program. In order to consider such a program, we would first need to establish a committee of town volunteers who would be willing to run the program. In the next Messenger, we will discuss this program and ask for volunteers. This whole program will have to be put on hold as trapping below 40 degrees is not permitted. We can work over the winter to try and establish a volunteer committee and then move forward with establishing the TNR program to begin in the spring.

**5. December 29 meeting/Appointment of new CFO**

The resolution appointing Dave McPeak as the new CFO effective January 1 will be on the December 29 agenda. The December 29 meeting will be a regular commission meeting starting at 3pm. This will be a short meeting and will be primarily for year-end business and any other business that needs to be completed prior to the January 7 regular meeting.

**6. The Messenger**

Colleen will be present to discuss the Messenger and how to get organizations to better utilize the newsletter so the information we are getting to the residents is fresh and timely. She frequently has to send numerous requests and is not getting the level of participation that would make the newsletter more informative and efficient. The Governing Body suggested that we come up with the four deadlines for the year in advance including the dates that we want it in the homes and send it out to all the organizations then try to push them to use the messenger. It was also suggested that we encourage people to submit more photos, especially of kids.

Rich Schwab reported that he met with Dave McPeak today to go over the outline of duties and his schedule. Dave also met with Pat and Marie. He needs to learn the Edmunds system and will reach out to them for training. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, following the commission meeting, Rich, Dave and Dean will meet so Dean can explain what he will complete and where Dave will pickup. Also, on the agenda will be the resolutions authorizing the

agreements for Rich's services as well as the shared services agreement for Terry's services. He outlined what the costs for 2010 will be. CFO will get \$12,000, First Jersey (Rich's services) will be \$20,000 and Terry's proposal is based on twelve hours per week for a total of roughly \$25,000. The total for all three will be roughly the same as in 2009 due to a reduction in the CFO salary and a reduction in Rich's hours. If everyone is in agreement, the resolutions approving the First Jersey agreement and the Barrington shared service agreement will be on the 29<sup>th</sup>'s agenda. Mayor and the Commissioners were in agreement and the resolutions will be approved.

## **7. 2009 Tax Collections**

Marie reported on the status of collections for 2009. She reported that foreclosures have increased dramatically from the previous year. She has been calling residents who are delinquent and encouraging them to come in and pay anything they can. In many cases, residents are behind for the whole year but she is trying to get them to pay something. Our collection rate for this year will not be what it has been in the past. It is not because people just don't care. She has been finding that in many cases, these folks are out of work and just don't have the money. Rich explained that the reserve for uncollected taxes is based on the prior year's collection rate so there will be a budget impact for 2010. Marie added that last year we collected 98% but so far we are at about 97.32% for this year. The Clerk added that Marie is one of the best collectors in Camden County as is really on top of her collection situation. There are not many tax collectors who make phone calls like she does and she is to be commended for the job she does.

## **Fire: Richard Schwab reported on the following items**

Mayor Wolk indicated he heard from Ben Connors (Andrews' office) that the funding for the Bell Road drainage project for seven hundred and some thousand is a "done deal". We are supposed to get official word from the DOT. Commissioner Gilmore added that they had met today with representatives from the DOT to show them the problem that originates with the Black Horse Pike. Hopefully we will get official word soon.

### **1. Bell Rd. Fire Station project status**

We do not expect to be successful in getting Federal grant funds for the new building. Therefore, we should finalize things with our architect on the alternate plans and try to get out to bids by the end of January. If we get the \$800,000 for the drainage, the project would be 2.2 to 2.5 million. The architect wants \$30,000 to re-draw the plans. There is enough evidence to support that the architect was fully aware of the budget when the first set of plans were drawn and they should not have prepared plans for a building

that cost three million. If they don't move off the \$30,000 price, we will have to decide what action we want to take or if we just want to pay it and move on.

It has been suggested that we proceed with the demolition of the James Street property by getting quotes. We will have to have TTI Environmental write a work plan for the asbestos removal and include it in the quote request. We believe the cost will be around \$16,000 (about \$4000 more due to the asbestos removal). Mayor and the Commissioners approved moving forward with the demolition.

We are going to finalize the question of remediating the contaminated soil around the previously removed leaking underground storage tank adjacent to the James St. side of the Fire House. The question is whether the excavation will have any negative impact on the stability of the existing building. That will determine if we can do the work prior to the building demolition vs. including it in the demolition specs for when we go out to bid for the new building. In either case, the E-JIF has guaranteed the \$10,000 grant towards the estimated \$25,000 for remediation.

Our Solicitor was to review the language of the proposed Bell Rd lease agreement and advised of any recommended changes. A decision needs to be made on the effective date. Should it be January 1 so the 2010 budget is based on paying the utility bills vs. paying the Fire Dept or make it effective when the building is abandoned prior to demolition (Feb or March)?

2. Lambert Ave Removal of Architectural Barriers project status  
MD Remodeling has started work on the \$65,000 project. Rich Holmes and I have a job meeting there Tuesday morning so we can provide a verbal update.

At this point, Colleen arrived to discuss the Messenger. She understood that there was concern that the Messenger was not out early enough prior to the parade. She frequently gets items at this last minute or has to chase individuals and organizations to get items in. This particular issue also had a printing problem that delayed it. She said the printer usually turns the Messenger around in about a week but they had an issue this past time that caused additional delay. But the fire department never submitted anything to her at all and they were running the parade. Commissioner Gilmore indicated they are in transition and some contact information would be changing. He added that foremost, they hear nothing but great things about the Messenger and Commissioner Greenwald and Mayor Wolk concurred. They greatly appreciate her efforts. The Clerk added that they can go through the contact list and try to get more current information

and/or changes. Marie added that this has been a recurring problem in that we are dealing with volunteers but we can provide the most current contact information we have. There was discussion about setting the calendar annually and the governing body said they would try to get the word out to clubs and organizations. Mayor Wolk closed by stating how many positive comments he hears about the Messenger and that it is a tribute to the job Colleen does. Colleen also established that the deadline for the spring issue would be February 26.

## **Other Public Safety Issues**

### **1. Possible shared service for EMS services**

Barbara Willson, Chief of the Barrington Ambulance Squad, would like to come to the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> to discuss a proposed shared service for EMS services. The Governing Body agreed they would be happy to talk to her.

## **Public Works, Planning and Zoning:**

### **Engineer: Projects and Grants Updates**

#### **1. Streetscape Phase II**

Joe Federici reported that he has to coordinate with Salim at the DOT to make sure all the ARRA required paperwork is submitted and procedures followed. The forms have been changing so you have to go online to make sure you have the latest versions.

#### **2. Railroad crossing-Kings Highway**

Joe also reported that his office did send a letter requesting that the repairs to the crossing be addressed.

#### **3. NJDOT Municipal Aid 2010- Delaware Ave—will be included in the 2010 budget.**

#### **4. USDA Rural Development Program**

Joe's office sent a pre-application letter requesting funds for the "Muffin Monster".

#### **5. Discretionary Aid-NJDOT-Bell Road drainage improvements—discussed under Fire Dept.**

#### **6. Route 295/42 project**

Ken received information from the DOT. Their engineering firm is working on the utility side of the project. They requested contact information for the Borough's engineer and an estimate for our review. He completed their questionnaire and answered that they will be responsible for design and all construction and we will just review for impact to our sewer utility. Then we received preliminary plans and he and Bob Henry went out and reviewed their plans. However, they indicated they may have to lower Kings Highway near the senior complex. This will have an impact on our sewer system at the very least. Then he received a contract they want us to sign. The agreement needs to be reviewed by the solicitor. Now the concern is will we be reimbursed for these costs. Reviews by the engineer

and the solicitor should be covered by the DOT. Joe Marrazzo will review the agreement before we sign anything. Joe Federici will call Ryan at the DOT to confirm if all these costs will be reimbursed.

Mayor Wolk reported that he received a request from the County for support of the privatization and relocation of the jail. He is not ready to provide support until more information is available. The CC Mayor's Association decided they would review and any support will come through their organization.

Commissioner Gilmore reported about an issue with a resident who put a two foot extension on top of a six foot fence creating a violation. Steve Beach, Building Inspector, notified the homeowner that the two foot extension needed to be removed. The resident refused. Steve told Fitz to address it as the Zoning Officer. Fitz questioned whether he has the authority to do this. Bruce asked Joe Marrazzo to discuss with Fitz.

Marie asked about parking enforcement during a snowstorm. We had several streets where residents did not move their cars to the odd side creating a problem for snowplows. Commissioner Gilmore directed Chief Dobleman to try warning notices first. If that does not work, we will have to start issuing tickets.

Commissioner Gilmore then received a call from Rich Holmes confirming that he has written confirmation that we have been awarded \$750,000 for the Bell Road drainage project. Hooray! Mayor Wolk added that the design work will need to be done as a collaboration between Federick and Akin and CSE.

At 4:55, on a motion by Commissioner Greenwald, second by Commissioner Gilmore, the caucus meeting was adjourned for an Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of labor contract negotiations and the firehouse lease.

At 5:47, on a motion by Commissioner Gilmore and Mayor Wolk, open session was reconvened.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by Commissioners Greenwald and Gilmore, the meeting was finally adjourned at 5:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Shannon  
Municipal Clerk