

FORKS TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
Board of Supervisors

1-21-2021

Regular Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Forks Township Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at the Forks Township Municipal Building, Easton, PA, and was also held virtually through ZOOM. Chairman O'Neil opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members:

John O'Neil, Chairman
Dan Martyak, Vice Chairman
Tim Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer
Kelly Keegan, Member
Ty Corallo, Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Pereira, Twp. Solicitor
Sean Policelli, Twp. Engineer - virtual
Donna M. Asure, Township Manager
Chief Greg Dorney
Steve Kramer, Public Works Director
Rachel Sulzbach, Parks & Recreation Director
Tim Weis, Building & Zoning Officer
Jevin Russo, Fire Chief
Dean Turner, Chairman, Planning Commission

Supervisors Comments:

Chairman O'Neil -

J. O'Neil spoke to the closing of the Dixie Plant in Forks Township. He stated that our hearts go out to those losing their jobs. Dixie has been a great partner for many years.

D. Martyak –

D. Martyak thanked Steve Kramer for the successful webcam system and setting us ZOOM. It is a great tool.

T. Hughes – none

T. Corallo – none

K. Keegan – none

Announcements: An executive session for personnel issues was held on January 4, 2021 and January 21, 2021. No decisions or actions were taken in executive session.

Public Comment:

Representatives of the fire company, Chuck Gallagher, Neil Shurgot and Jevin Russo thanked the board for the purchase of the ladder truck and presented them with a picture from the truck dedication.

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Hearings:

Conditional Use Hearing - 600 Kuebler Road – J. O’Neil opened the hearing at 7:06pm. Testimony was given on a 213,900 square foot warehouse. The Forks Township Planning Commission reviewed the application and has recommended approval of the conditional use. J. O’Neil closed the hearing at 7:35pm.

T. Corallo made a motion, seconded by D. Martyak to grant the conditional use application for 600 Kuebler Road. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O’Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Presentations: none

Invited Guest Reports:

Planning Commission – D. Turner, Chairman of the Planning Commission stated that the planning commission has several plans coming before them. The joint work session with the board of supervisors is scheduled for February 23rd and currently there are several things on the agenda such as the Braden Airpark and the Dietzler property request for rezoning. The PC will be discussing, at their upcoming work session on January 26th, the comp plan and associated survey, the conditions that could be used for warehouse conditional use hearings and the traffic study.

Recreation Board – R. Sulzbach reported that the Rec Board held a virtual meeting on January 18, 2021.

FBA –

T. Hughes reported to the board about the most current meeting held on ZOOM on Wednesday, January 13th at 8am. T. Corallo also attended.

They introduced a new board member who is also a resident of Forks Township. They spoke about the upcoming virtual workshops for kids and adults, the food truck festival, and Forks Business Week which will be April 25 – May 1st. The state of the township is still scheduled for April 14th and will be virtual. Discussion was held on the hopes to be able to have Community Days this year.

The meet the manager event has been postponed until the gathering limits have been lifted and more people can attend in person.

The State of the township scheduled for April 14th will be held virtually. Plans and coordination for that event will be forthcoming. The Chamber of Commerce has street scape grants. Information will be forwarded.

Treasurer’s Report –

Secretary/Treasurer T. Hughes reported that the township’s outstanding debt is \$5,760,000.00.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to ratify vouchers payable received through January 7, 2021 in the amounts of General Fund \$ 62,654.37; Real Estate Tax Fund – 26,235.32; Utility Fund - \$ 298,555.37; State Liquid Fuel Fund - \$ 8,024.02. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O’Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to ratify vouchers payable received through January 11, 2021 in the amounts of General Fund \$ 36,642.02; Utility Fund - \$ 18,022.51. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O’Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to ratify a special payroll prepared on January 14, 2021 in the amount of \$ 12,919.04. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O’Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

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T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to approve vouchers payable received through January 20, 2021 in the amounts of General Fund \$ 87,220.59; Utility Fund - \$ 67,747.61; State Liquid Fuel Fund - \$ 6,733.65; Escrow Fund \$ 46,832.16. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to ratify the gross payroll for pay period ending December 20, 2020 in the amount of \$ 149,179.20; the gross payroll for pay period ending January 3, 2021 in the amount of \$ 151,328.66 and the gross payroll for pay period ending January 17, 2021 in the amount of \$156,985.48. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by T. Corallo to ratify the acceptance of proposal from Susquehanna Accounting & Consulting Solutions, Inc to provide fiscal assistance, two days per week, at a cost of \$190.00 per hour. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by T. Hughes to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2020 regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Traffic Impact Study Advisory Committee

L. Pereira reported that a seventh member for the committee, that meets the criteria has volunteered. T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by D. Martyak to adopt Resolution 2021-01-21 a resolution of the Township of Forks, Northampton County, Pennsylvania establishing an Impact Fee Advisory Committee and authorizing the preparation and public advertisement of the Township of Forks notice of intention to adopt an Impact Fee Ordinance pursuant to Act 209 of 1990. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Tax Certification Increase

The Board of Supervisors discussed the request from Anne Bennett-Morse, Forks Township Tax Collector to raise the fee for tax certifications from \$20.00 to \$25.00.

D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by T. Corallo to have the solicitor create the ordinance stating a base fee of \$16,500.00; tax certifications at \$20.00 and tax duplicates at \$5.00. Under discussion, D. Martyak stated that he appreciated the discussion and education on the processes. He believes the fees currently paid are reasonable and appropriate. J. O'Neil stated that the amount of fees collected fluctuates, it is a personal choice to buy a home or refinance and then to pay the certification fee. He stated that the tax collector works longer hours and more than we realize. T. Hughes commented that he agrees with the comments made by Mr. O'Neil. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, no; T. Hughes, no; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Noise Ordinance

Discussion was held on the drafted Noise Ordinance. Chief Dorney stated the police officers were given the opportunity to review and comment twice and he received nothing negative back. J. O'Neil stated that if the ordinance passes it will be very important to make sure the residents are aware of the new ordinance. There was discussion surrounding township sponsored events and how this ordinance would affect those programs. D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to authorize the township solicitor to advertise for a hearing for the Noise Ordinance and to include an exemption in the ordinance

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for township sponsored events. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Fireworks Ordinance

Discussion was held on the drafted Fireworks Ordinance. Chief Dorney stated that this would be a tool to be used to gain voluntary compliance and he believed a positive thing.

T. Corallo made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to authorize the solicitor to advertise for a hearing for the Fireworks Ordinance and to include an exemption in the ordinance for township sponsored events.

Under discussion the topic of graduation parties and family gatherings came up. It was stated that there will be challenges with both new ordinances. J. O'Neil requested that the board be updated if there are issues with either new ordinance to discuss the need for updates. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, no; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Political/Business Yard signs -

T. Corallo stated that he asked for this to be placed on the agenda as he sees throughout the township yard signs advertising businesses for long periods of time. T. Weis stated that they are constantly taking the signs down and they go back up. Political signs on private property are not regulated. If the business gets a permit, they know they are allowed seven signs throughout the township for a certain period of time. Some signs go up for the weekend and are done on Monday. There was discussion that the signs are a violation of our ordinance and they could be sited. T. Weis stated that he normally attempts to talk to the people and sends a letter otherwise it would be civil enforcement through the courts. The board asked that this be looked into with the options available to enforce the illegal signs.

Blighted Properties/Property Maintenance -

Supervisor Corallo asked that this topic be placed on the agenda. He thought that Northampton County had begun an initiative on blighted properties and asked T. Weis if there was an update. T. Weis stated that the county attempted to get funding for these properties. The board asked about the property maintenance ordinance and it was reported that the planning commission did review this topic, but it was the consensus of the planning commission that more specific ordinances were needed such as junk. We currently have a grass ordinance which needs to be enforced.

Purchase Orders -

D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by T. Hughes to approve the purchase of a Roll off leaf vac truck - 25 cu. Yd Truck mount with chassis and accessories from Stephenson Equipment, co-stars vendor in the amount of \$269,264.90 to be paid from the utility capital fund. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by T. Corallo to approve the purchase of a 2021 Ford F-350 from Manderbach Ford, co-stars vendor, in the amount of \$33,639.00 (truck only) from the Utility Capital Fund. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

Personnel

D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by T. Hughes to ratify the hiring of Matin Zia as part-time Community Center Monitor effective January 4, 2021 at a rate of \$13.00 per hour with no benefits. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, yes; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

D. Martyak made a motion, seconded by T. Hughes to ratify the hiring of Jhon Montero, temporary public works laborer 1, effective January 20, 2021 at a rate as set forth in the CBA of \$21.12 per hour with no

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benefits. Roll Call Vote: T. Corallo, yes; D. Martyak, yes; J. O'Neil, abstain; T. Hughes, yes; K. Keegan, yes. Motion carried.

It was acknowledged for the record, Dennis Knesz resigned effective close of business on January 8, 2021.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

A. Township Manager –

D. Asure reported the township received a check from Stockertown Borough in the amount of \$869,325.00, to purchase the agreed upon EDU's. It was deposited into the Tap In Fund.

D. Asure also thanked all the staff for their help in getting everything done.

The board was informed that the purchase of extra broadband is being researched but so far, we have received a quote from RCN for \$950.00 per month.

B. Police

- Chief Dorney stated he has a report on the drive.
- The officers have received their first COVID vaccines with the second round scheduled for next week.

C. Parks & Recreation

- R. Sulzbach reported that her report is on the management drive

D. Public Works

- S. Kramer stated his report is on the drive
- The resident with the streetlight on Winchester was addressed. The light across the street was updated but Met-Ed is not cooperative when it comes to lights being out.
- T. Hughes asked about trucks using Newlins Road and is there a possibility of posting no trucks allowed. Discussion followed on doing a study and enforcing through the vehicle code.

E. Zoning Dept.

- T. Weis stated his report is on the management drive
- They issued 70 single family home permits and 3 buildings of ten apartments
- D. Martyak asked T. Weis to look into how registering tenants would relate to the collection of our EIT tax.

F. Solicitor – Lisa Pereira- nothing additional

G. Engineer – Sean Policelli –

- S. Policelli reported that the township had received a Growing Greener grant for the MS-4 work to be completed on the Ramblewood Basin in the amount of \$163,180.00. It was stated that the original quote was approximately \$300,000.00. The grant has a 15% match which could be in kind work. S. Policelli stated that though it is a very rough estimate, and cost will not be known until permitting is complete, but the estimate is now between \$150,000 and \$2000,000 with work being done by Public Works. The board requested that every effort be made to complete this work with the amount of money received by the grant.

H. Fire –

- J. Russo reported that they have responded to 15 calls so far in 2021

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- The company has started receiving COVID vaccines
- There was an issue with the ladder truck. It was found about a week and a half ago that the ladder was bent on the new ladder truck. It had to be taken back to Wisconsin for testing, repair, and re-certification. There are two possible causes – hydraulic failure or human error. Either way the transportation costs must be paid out of pocket. Cost of transport is estimated at \$3000 each way. J. O’Neil asked about a warranty and how driving the vehicle back to Wisconsin is going to affect the mileage. The truck will have to be re-certified whether a warranty covered repair or other. If it is found to be a failure in the hydraulics the repairs will be covered under warranty. If it is found to be human error, there will be no coverage. J. Russo was asked when the damage occurred and when the township was notified. He stated the township was not notified immediately. It was stated that S. Kramer heard about the damage on January 5th but was not officially notified until January 14th. Mr. Russo stated that they were checking chain saws for the trucks and noticed the ladder was bent. The board instructed J. Russo that any incident should be reported to the township manager and director of public works immediately. Our township mechanic should be the first person to look at any damage before an outside agency is contacted. Much discussion followed on making sure we are provided weekly updates from the company, the training that the firemen receive to operate this vehicle and equipment, are there data recorders in the vehicle and the cameras within the truck. J. Russo stated that they believed the cost to repair, if not under warranty will be \$5,000 to \$8,000. Glick, the fire truck company, stated they have had two incidents with this type of issue in the last ten years and both have been operator error. The board asked to be kept up to date with information as we received from the company.
- J. Russo was asked about the meeting the fire company requested with the township concerning their 501c3 status and the budget. J. Russo stated that the attorney has reached out to their treasurer to get more information.

Public Comment-

D. Martyak asked S. Policelli about the opportunity for grants that he read about in the Gilmore newsletter. S. Policelli stated there are a lot of grants out there and he can bring someone in to discuss with the board.

T. Hughes made a motion, seconded by K. Keegan to adjourn the meeting at 9:12pm. Motion carried.