

WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
March 20, 2024
Regular Meeting – 7:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER AND STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

The regularly scheduled meeting of the West Amwell Township Committee was called to order at 7:30 PM. Present were Mayor James Cally, Deputy Mayor Gary Hoyer, Committee Members Stephen Bergenfeld, Meghan Hudson and Bob Balaam along with Township Clerk Maria Andrews and Attorney Andrew Kinsey covering for Township Attorney Mark Peck.

Mayor Cally announced that this meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was faxed to the Hunterdon County Democrat and Trenton Times on January 11, 2024, was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on that date and has remained continuously posted as required under the Statute. A copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Township Clerk.

FLAG SALUTE

Mayor Cally led those in attendance in the pledge to the nation's flag.

AGENDA REVIEW BY TOWNSHIP CLERK

Clerk Andrews noted the following amendment to the posted agenda:

Under New Business – Authorization to hire Merry Maids as the cleaning service for the municipal offices.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made:

- Primary Petition Filing Deadline is 4 PM on Monday 3/25/24
- Municipal Offices will be CLOSED Friday 3/29/24 – Good Friday
- Kindly Turn Cell Phones Off During the Meeting

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

A motion by Balaam, seconded by Hoyer to approve the Committee's 3/6/24 regular session minutes as revised and closed session minutes with no revisions noted was approved by voice vote with Committeeman Bergenfeld abstaining.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC/TOPICS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Mayor Cally opened the floor to public comment.

Dave Beaumont of 205 Rock Road West came forward and requested the Committee address the "No Left Turn" signage on the GMNJ site which was a condition in the Planning Board's Resolution of Approval. He remarked there may also need to be an ordinance in place so it is enforceable. Next, he commented on the Rock Road Extension needing a stop sign in order to be compliant with the code.

Tony Sabidussi of 122 Rock Road West came forward and commented on the terrible odor coming from the GMNJ site. He stated the smell is obnoxious and asked the Committee what they are doing about it. Deputy Mayor Hoyer said the Committee is looking into the matter and has spoken with the Township Engineer and Zoning Official. Mr. Sabidussi asked why their TCO couldn't be pulled until the smell is resolved. He also asked how long the Committee intends to allow the issue to go on.

Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and suggested GMNJ reach out to the cannabis business in Readington, Verano, and ask who installed their HVAC system noting they had the same odor issues. She also noted complaints can be made to the NJDEP air quality enforcement unit regarding the smell.

Minutes: 3/20/24

Dave Beaumont of 205 Rock Road West came forward again and confirmed the odor at the GMNJ property was on the 518 side of the building most of the day on Sunday. Mr. Beaumont also noted that Pamela Bland of 121 Rock Road West is having issues with the noise coming from the east side of the GMNJ building. He indicated Ms. Bland has sent emails to the Zoning Official regarding the matter. Mr. Beaumont noted that according to the app on his phone, the noise exceeds 60 decibels.

Seeing no other members of the public who wished to speak, Mayor Cally closed the floor to public comment.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Proclamation: April is Child Abuse Awareness Month

Mayor Cally noted the following Proclamation:

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the Township of West Amwell, in Hunterdon County, New Jersey recognizes the problem of child abuse and neglect and is committed to helping it's victims; and

WHEREAS, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties recruits, screen trains, supports and supervises community volunteers as advocates for children who have been removed for their homes due to neglect and abuse; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences and trauma, such as those caused by child abuse or neglect, can have long-lasting effects on a child's health, well being and success; and

WHEREAS, survivors of child abuse need people in their lives that will consider their best interests; and

WHEREAS, the Court Appointed Special Advocate programs have a record of public service, helping protect the safety and well being of West Amwell Township's abused and neglected children; and

WHEREAS, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are assigned by family court judges to champion the needs of child abuse victims; and

WHEREAS, CASAs are everyday people, with diverse backgrounds and professions, that go through very specialized training to be a volunteer voice for children in the child welfare system; and

WHEREAS, CASA volunteers serve as the court's eyes and ears in a child's life, helping to improve the quality of information presented to the court and child welfare systems; and

WHEREAS, April is National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month, an observance that reflects the purpose of CASA programs;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, James Cally, Mayor of West Amwell Township, do hereby proclaim APRIL 2024 as CASA Child Advocate Month.

By Order of the Township Committee

James Cally, Mayor

Reports by Department Heads

John Cronce, Chairman of the Open Space Committee came forward and noted they held their re-organization meeting on 3/12/24. He indicated the hunting and Green Acres signage had been stolen from Woodens Lane and said he is working with DPW Supervisor Chris Gabel to get it replaced. Mr. Cronce also updated the Committee on the preservation of the Sneddon property, Block 7 Lot 14.02 which will likely take several years to finalize.

Minutes: 3/20/24

INTRODUCTION/PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES

It was noted for the record that there were no ordinances listed on the agenda for action.

RESOLUTIONS

It was noted for the record that there were no resolutions listed on the agenda for approval.

NEW BUSINESS/OTHER

Authorization: Clean-up Day – Saturday 4/27/24

It was noted for the record that the Committee supported a Clean-up Day to be held on 4/27/24.

Approval of Road Restoration Agreement with VEOLA Water, re: Stymiest Road

Deputy Mayor Hoyer provided a status update noting the agreement is in the hands of VEOLIA Representative John Hildabrant. He indicated that once it is approved the Engineers will design a restoration plan. OEM Director Harry Heller noted that FEMA will also need to approve the plan before any funding is released. Director Heller commented that the project is supposed to be completed by June 2024 but believed he could seek an extension.

Authorization: Cleaning Services for the Municipal Offices

Clerk Andrews noted Merry Maids of Hamilton, NJ had provided a quote that is \$25 dollars more monthly than the previous cleaning service and indicated since this is a company they will be able to provide service uninterrupted, unlike the previous cleaning person who often had scheduling issues.

A motion was made by Balaam and seconded by Hudson authorizing Merry Maids be hired as the new cleaning service for the municipal offices. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Balaam: Yes, Bergenfeld: Yes, Hoyer: Yes, Hudson: Yes, Cally: Yes

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

It was noted for the record that there were no unfinished business matters listed on the agenda.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Open Space: The Committee authorized the 3/12/24 minutes be posted on the website.
- B. Environmental: Committeewoman Hudson provided the following updates:
 - 1. A representative from the Watershed gave a presentation at their last meeting on stormwater management
 - 2. The Committee walked Hewitt Park seeking potential projects and noted how beautifully maintained the park is, but suggested the dead ash trees by the soccer field benches be removed for safety. Mayor Cally noted he would speak with DPW Supervisor Gabel about the trees. Porter Little spoke up from the public and stated the scouts are always interested in helping with projects if needed
 - 3. She reminded the Committee about the \$75,000 Stormwater Grant money and noted the Township has received \$25,000 so far but needs to complete some items prior to the \$50,000 balance being released. Mayor Cally suggested the Environmental Committee work with the Special Engineer from Morgan Engineering on this matter
- C. Ag Advisory: No report given.
- D. Finance Committee: No report given.

ADMINISTRATIVE

A motion was made by Bergenfeld and seconded by Hudson approving the 3/5/24 bill list. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Balaam: Yes, Bergenfeld: Yes, Hoyer: Yes, Hudson: Yes, Cally: Yes

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A motion by Hudson, seconded by Hoyer to open the floor to public comment was unanimously approved by voice vote.

OEM Director Harry Heller provided some history on the township street names noting Rock Road Extension used to be Hunter Road and the “s” curve end was supposed to be Rock Road Extension.

Minutes: 3/20/24

Dave Beaumont of 205 Rock Road West referred to the land preservation Mr. Cronce mentioned and reminded the Committee of the lien on the property with the dam. He wondered who would be liable for the dam if the property is preserved. Mayor Cally noted this matter would need to be researched by legal counsel.

Linda Meier of 228 Rock Road West suggested the minutes identify the properties Mr. Cronce referred to by Block and Lot regarding the preservation.

Anthony Sabidussi of 122 Rock Road West followed up on his previous comments regarding GMNJ and stated that several residents have contacted NJDEP's air quality enforcement unit and remarked that if the Committee also contacted them it would show good faith and support for the residents that the Township is trying to remedy the situation.

Bruce Meier of 228 Rock Road West commented that it is the Township's responsibility to solve the problem at the GMNJ site, not to help the property owner figure out what's causing the odor. He also asked if the Township had an odor ordinance.

Seeing no other members of the public who wished to speak, a motion was made by Bergenfeld and seconded by Hudson to close the floor to public comment. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

OTHER

Resolution #41-2024: Closed Session – Personnel/Contracts – Litigation/Affordable Housing and Matters Falling Under Attorney Client Privilege

A motion was made by Hoyer and seconded by Hudson to approve Resolution #41-2024 and enter into closed session. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Resolution #41-2024

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Committee of West Amwell Township, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from the expected 30 minute discussion of and action upon the hereinafter specified subject matter.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows: Personnel/Contracts – Litigation/Affordable Housing and matters falling under attorney client privilege. Action may be taken.
3. As nearly as can be ascertained, the matter or matters to be discussed during this closed session will be disclosed to the public when such matters are resolved.
4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

Maria Andrews, Township Clerk, RMC

It was noted for the record that the Committee was in closed session from 8:41 PM – 9:20 PM.

Upon returning to Open Session the following action was taken:

A motion was made by Cally and seconded by Balaam providing for a \$4000 salary adjustment increase for Land Use Board Secretary Maria Andrews. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Balaam: Yes, Bergenfeld: Yes, Hoyer: Yes, Hudson: Yes, Cally: Yes

Minutes: 3/20/24

It was noted that the Zoning Board salary has been eliminated and the \$4000 will be added to the former Planning Board salary now that the Boards have combined as one Land Use Board. The resolution will be added to the Committee's next agenda for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion by Bergenfeld, seconded by Balaam to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 PM.

Maria Andrews, Township Clerk, RMC

Approved: 4/3/24