

JUNE 15, 2009

On the above date, the Township Committee of the Township of Mantua held its monthly Regular Meeting in the Mantua Township Municipal Building, 401 Main Street, Mantua, NJ 08051.

Deputy Mayor Pete Scirrotto called the meeting to order. The time was 7:30 p.m. Deputy Mayor Scirrotto asked for everyone to rise for the flag salute and remain standing for a moment of silence.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto then read aloud the Statement of the Presiding Officer: "As required by the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by adopting a schedule of regular meetings for the year 2009. The schedule was posted on the bulletin board of the Municipal Building and mailed to the Gloucester County Times and Courier-Post newspapers on January 2, 2009."

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto called on Township Clerk Shawn Menzies to perform a roll call of present officials. Present were Committeeman Robert Zimmerman, Committeewoman Lorraine Beckett, Committeewoman Sharon Lawrence, Deputy Mayor Scirrotto, Marie DeTitto, Esquire, Township Solicitor, Michael Datz, Township Administrator and Shawn G. Menzies, Township Clerk. Also present were Police Chief Rodney Sawyer, Chief Financial Officer Gayle Tschopp and Michael Welding, CPA, the Township Auditor. Mayor Timothy W. Chell was absent.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve the June 1, 2009 Workshop Meeting minutes, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman. All were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence read a loud a proclamation honoring Erin Kain, a Mantua Township resident and senior at Clearview Regional High School, who is the recipient of a Comcast Leaders and Achievers Scholarship.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto announced that a change in the agenda was going to occur for Resolution R-119-2009 being moved to the top of the agenda.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-119-2009, seconded by Zimmerman.

**RESOLUTION R-119-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION APPOINTING BRUCE SHAW AS A
SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER CLASS II WITHIN
THE MANTUA TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT**

All were in favor.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto administered the Oath of Office to SLEO II Shaw.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to open the meeting to the public, seconded by Committeewoman Beckett. All were in favor.

Marcy Gunning, 37 Bear Creek Drive, issued a prepared statement which is attached here and made part of these meeting minutes:

“My name is Marcy Gunning, and I live at 37 bear Creek drive in the Spring Valley 55 + development. For those of you who may not know, it’s located off of Harrison Avenue. I point this out, because the development has been there for four years and has not been turned over to the Township because all of the homes have not yet been sold. Despite this, our taxes have been raised over \$600.00 since we moved in three years ago. I also believe that’s one of the reasons that this development is not sold out- because no senior citizen can afford the high taxes.

As you may have guessed, my concern is about your vote this evening to raise our taxes yet again. When you live in an age-restricted community, it means exactly that. It is against our covenant with the state that we cannot have young, school-age children living under our roof. I truly believe that we should pay taxes, but why are the seniors who live in these communities being taxed at the fullest assessment because they are new construction? Mantua has not had a re-evaluation of property taxes since 1992. is our assessment fair, when the people who live in older homes actually have children who are attending the schools are paying at a much lower rate? Why are my neighbors, most who are living on social security and small pensions, paying the lion’s share?

I work with two couples that live in the age restricted development of the Reserve at Academy Walk in Clayton and they both own homes that are over 3, 000 square feet. They also have three bedrooms and three bathrooms. Respectively, their taxes are frozen at \$5,200.00 per year and \$5,700.00 per year for the next 20 years. I realize that you can’t compare Mantua to Clayton, but I can compare that we are both living in age-restricted developments in Gloucester County and that we in Spring Valley and any other age-restricted development in Mantua should also be afforded some type of tax abatement. The home that I live in is less than 2,000 square feet. We have two bedrooms and two baths and our taxes are over \$7,800.00 and going up.

Now, I am not that naïve to believe that by speaking up this evening and asking for some relief that you will automatically do it. What I do ask though is that you consider my request to look into our situation. I know the age-restricted development in Glassboro gave their residents a tax abatement after-the-fact and refunded some monies to the residents who had already moved in. Spring Valley is a quiet, beautiful development that I would like to spend the rest of my life in. Unfortunately, if things don’t change, I’m afraid that I won’t be able to afford to live there, and neither will my neighbors. Thank you for listening.”

Lou Seeler, 10 Willingboro Road, said he picked up a copy of the municipal budget and he wants to know the breakdown or what are listed under salaries when it lists expenses or other expenses.

Mrs. Tschopp explained they are operating expenses for each department. Mr. Seeler said it seemed to be excessive. Mrs. Tschopp said it is printed in which how the State mandates it to be done.

Mr. Seeler said he believes if he prepared his records like this the State would not be happy.

Lisa Nole, 478 Boody's Mill Road, said she was here tonight because she saw the article in the paper about the budget increase and salaries discussed. She added that in today's economic climate taxes are going up and so are salaries when people are being laid off, not getting raises or having to give back. Her husband has been laid off and she had to move from a career she has done for two decades and believes the government should share in the pain.

Mrs. Nole said she has had a problem for some time now about overgrown vegetation along Boody's Mill Road, which she has called public works about but no action has taken place even when she pays a lot in taxes. She recalled years ago the Township of Mantua did cut the vegetation back, but do not any more. The overgrown vegetation is also only allowing one vehicle at a time to pass along the street and she is concerned about if any emergency vehicles would need to get down the road and could not. She also stated this issue caused her son to miss the bus.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said he will have the matter reviewed and have something done soon. Mrs. Nole said she was told the Township of Mantua does not have the proper equipment to handle the matter and she suggested bringing in the County to do the work

Committeeman Zimmerman said someone will go out to assess if the vegetation is on either public or private property. Mrs. Nole said a lot of it is in the right of way.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said in regards to her first questions about salary and wages, its increase in the budget is due to contractual obligations, which sometimes go back three to four years prior. Mrs. Nole asked if the Township of Mantua could go back, to which Committeeman Zimmerman said it is hard to have completed.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said they Township of Mantua has done a lot, for example in the construction office where all inspectors are now part time only, in streets and roads where positions are being eliminated through attrition and the Township of Mantua cut all operating expenses for all departments by 10 percent. He added that growth has slowed and with that the catch up of providing services is here and bills must be paid for street lights, police protection, trash pick up. He also added the town has lost over \$40,000.00 in State aid and decided to not defer pension contributions to 2010 and not pay a higher rate.

Mrs. Nole said some people might not be able to catch up and have to move. Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said he, like everyone here in the room and on the Committee pays taxes and wished for a zero increase but he wanted all to know the Township of Mantua is running as lean as it can.

James Slemph, 536 Mount Royal Road, asked why don't some departments, if they need for instance, spray paint, go buy it locally instead of spending more out of town and using fuel. And how can the Township of Mantua better get the Property Tax Rebate/Senior Freeze program information to its seniors.

Committeewoman Beckett said she is only one person and has done a lot to get the word out through fliers, newspaper ads and on the Township of Mantua web site and she is helping many, many people and wants to focus on Mantua, but others come to her for help as well.

Mr. Slemph asked once a new revaluation goes through the homeowners in Centre City and the Heights will get socked with the increase and cannot afford to move. He added that he would like to see red flags raised when bills could be lower by buying locally.

Ken Defay, 456 Pitman Road, said he has lived in the town for 30 years and has seen both the good and the bad, and the bad recently is why is the County buying the houses near the golf courses and knocking them down as the homes are a source of ratable. Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said the County, he believes, is interested in keeping the area adjacent to the Pitman Golf Course more open space areas.

Mr. DeFay said he read in the budget plans to knock down the public works building and build a new one. Mr. Datz said no municipal buildings are being knocked down, but a garage is something they would like to have built. He added if Mr. DeFay is speaking about the line item for demolition work, there are abandoned houses on Township of Mantua property which are a liability and should be razed.

Mr. DeFay questioned the cost in the line item. Mr. Datz explained they have to budget for the projects but it does not mean all of the funds will be used. Mr. DeFay asked if the public works could do it to save money, Mr. Datz responded that some work could be done, but if there is a need for asbestos removal a company would need to be brought in for example.

Mr. DeFay asked about the digital speed signs, to which Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said the Township of Mantua purchased and are using them around town to use in informing drivers to slow down and also track areas in need of more speed enforcement.

Mr. DeFay asked about the disposal fee at the County Landfill, to which he said a business in town has been using the Township of Mantua carts to dispose of sand and mud. Deputy Mayor Scirrotto asked if he could provide the name of the business to the Township of Mantua to have the matter taken care of.

As no one else wished to speak, Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to close the public portion, seconded by Committeewoman Beckett. All were in favor.

Committeeman Zimmerman made a motion to Table Ordinance O-07-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence.

ORDINANCE O-07-2009
AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE "CODE OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA," CHAPTER 82 FIXING AND
ESTABLISHING SALARIES AND COMPENSATION OF OFFICERS AND
EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA FOR THE YEAR 2009

All members voted in the affirmative to a roll call vote to Table Ordinance O-07-2009, 4-0.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to open for a public hearing on the 2009 Municipal Budget, Resolution R-110-2009, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman. All were in favor.

Lou Seeler said his son works for Sony and lost about \$10,000.00, and wanted to know why 70 percent of his pay goes to some type of tax and that means people are left with just 25 percent of their pay which is unfair.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said unfortunately the taxes are to rise under the spending plan, an increase of 5.5 cents per \$100.00 of assessed property value, which for the average home assessed at \$120,000.00 is about \$68.00 more than last year the average homeowner will pay in taxes. Mr. Seeler said he could live with that increase.

As no one else wished to speak on Resolution R-110-2009, Committeeman Zimmerman made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence. All were in favor.

Committeeman Zimmerman made a motion to adopt Resolution R-110-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence.

RESOLUTION R- 110 -2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: THE 2009 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

All members voted in the affirmative to a roll call vote, 4-0.

Committeewoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve Resolution R-111-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Beckett.

RESOLUTION R-111-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: AUTHORIZING THE RE-ISSUANCE OF LIQUOR LICENSES IN THE
TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA FOR THE PERIOD OF ONE YEAR
COMMENCING JULY 1, 2009 UNTIL JUNE 30, 2010

All members were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-112-2009, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman.

RESOLUTION R-112-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE RETAINING AND EXECUTION OF
A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA AND MICHAEL S.
SAPIO TO PERFORM EXPERT APPRAISAL SERVICES IN
CONNECTION WITH A NEW JERSEY STATE TAX COURT APPEAL

All were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-113-2009, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman.

RESOLUTION R-113-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE LOWEST BID FOR THE PROJECT
KNOWN AS THE EVERGREEN AVENUE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT TO
MARANDINO CONCRETE CO. INC., 1820 VINE ROAD, VINELAND, NEW
JERSEY 08361 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$227, 157.42 AND AUTHORIZE THE
EXECUTION OF THE CONTRACT

All members voted in the affirmative to a roll call vote to approve, 4-0.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-114-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Beckett.

RESOLUTION R-114 -2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CLOSED
SESSION MEETING TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL

All were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-115-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Beckett.

RESOLUTION R-115-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE REFUNDING
OF TAXES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,170.15 TO WELLS FARGO
REAL ESTATE TAX SERVICES LLC. FOR A DUPLICATE TAX
PAYMENT FOR BLOCK 61, LOT 1, QUALIFIER C0217

All were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-116-2009, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman.

RESOLUTION R-116-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING A
LIEN ON REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 870 MANTUA
BOULEVARD, BLOCK 208, LOT 10 OF THE OFFICIAL TAX
MAP OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA FOR MAINTENANCE
WORK PERFORMED BY THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA

All were in favor.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to approve Resolution R-117-2009, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman.

RESOLUTION R-117-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING A
LIEN ON REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 29 MARTEL STREET,
BLOCK 89, LOT 4.02 OF THE OFFICIAL TAX MAP OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA FOR MAINTENANCE WORK
PERFORMED BY THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA

All were in favor.

Committeewoman Beckett made a motion to approve Resolution R-118-2009, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence.

RESOLUTION R-118-2009
A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA
RE: A RESOLUTION APPROVING A LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE TOWNSHIP OF MANTUA AND TRI STATE OFFICE SOLUTIONS
FOR THE LEASING OF COPIER MACHINES FOR THE MUNICIPAL
BUILDING AT THE RATE OF \$468.00 FOR A TERM OF 60 MONTHS

All members voted in the affirmative to a roll call vote to approve, 4-0.

Under remarks from the Township Committee, Committeewoman Beckett said sign up sheets are available in the Clerk's Office for the annual Last Day of School Campout in the Park which will be held Saturday, June 13, 2009. She added PTR deadline is extended and to contact the Clerk's Office for more information.

Deputy Mayor Scirrotto said we are living in tough times, but to not forget the most important thing is family.

Committeewoman Lawrence made a motion to pay all duly authorized bills, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman. All were in favor.

It was at this time did the Township Committee enter into Closed Session. Committeeman Zimmerman made the motion to enter into closed session, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence. All were in favor. The time was 8:20 p.m.

Committeewoman Beckett made a motion to reenter the meeting, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence. All were in favor. The time was 9:05 p.m.

Committeewoman Beckett made a motion to approve a Family Medical Leave Act for an employee, seconded by Committeewoman Lawrence. All were in favor.

Committeewoman Law made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Committeeman Zimmerman. The time was 9:15 p.m.