

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP COUNCIL

Special/Regular Meeting

December 4, 2013

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Roll Call

Present

Mr. Dunham

Mrs. Merz

Mr. Birmingham

Vice President Sanchelli

Lawrence Cohen, Township Attorney

Lori Harvin, Township Clerk

Absent

President Yocum

Arrived at 7:00 p.m.

Mrs. Harvin said, "Let the record show that Mayor Felter and Administrator James Leach are present. Also present is the Jefferson Township Board of Education.

Dora Zeno, Board Business Administrator read the Roll Call:

Matthew Millar, Vice President

Stacey Poulas

Edward Quigley

Melissa Senatore

Michael Stewart

Joseph Kramer, Superintendent

Salute to the Flag

Council Vice President Sanchelli asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Notice of Presiding Officer

Council Vice President Sanchelli said, "This Special/Regular Council meeting for December 4, 2013, commencing at 6:00 p.m. has been properly noticed in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by notice to the official newspapers of the Township on November 27, 2013."

Matthew Millar, Board of Education Vice President read the Board of Education's Notice of Meeting.

Discussion of Shared Services with Jefferson Township Board of Education

Sanchelli opened the meeting up for a discussion of shared services between the Jefferson Township Board of Education and the Township of Jefferson. Zeno said that the Board is very grateful for all the services that the Township has provided during the past year. Zeno said she would also like to highlight a few of the services and thank Elam and Poggi for being there every step of the way. The services provided by the Township have been a savings. Zeno said thousands of dollars were saved with the repair of the seepage pits at the Briggs School. Last year drainage problems were worked on at the Cozy Lake School. The High School paving project was also completed this year along with the ongoing management of the sewerage treatment plants by the Township.

Sanchelli said it is very nice to see the School Board and the Township sit down and work together. Birmingham said that everyone is here either directly or indirectly for the children. Birmingham said that property values will be enhanced with an improving educational environment. Birmingham said that Student Government Day went on each year for over 30 years. Birmingham asked if the program can be turned over to someone and restarted. Birmingham commented that it was a record year for attendance at Camp Jefferson this summer. Birmingham said in the future more educational programs can be added to help alleviate the summer slump.

Leach said the town now has 4 busses, 3 mini busses and a regular school bus that the Board gave to the Township. The Board is maintaining the busses and this saves the town money. Leach said that especially over the last 4 years, the town and the Board have increased their cooperation and joint projects. Leach explained the use of grant money for the repair of a sewer plant.

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Kramer said that the schools continue to receive incredible services from the Police and the Office of Emergency Management. The School Resource Officers have wonderful involvement with the students and the assistance and support from Ed Mangold is exceptional when there is a weather event and it is greatly appreciated.

Dunham asked if the population is decreasing and Kramer said there are approximately 3300 students. Dunham asked what the budget percentage came in at and Zeno said it was 2 percent. Dunham asked when the \$40 million loan for the construction will be paid off. Zeno said 2021 and recently the loan was refinanced at a much lower rate with a significant savings. Dunham thanked the Board for the dial-a-ride vehicles. Dunham asked about the labor contracts and when they come due. Kramer said that the teachers, custodians and aides are all part of one association. The Administrators and Supervisors are part of another association. Then there are the at wills are the non-union. The Supervisors have another 2 years on their contract and the at wills are annual.

Merz commented that it is difficult to think of a department that does not interact with the Board of Education. Merz said that when budgeting is done and grants are looked at, the savings on in-kind services are a huge savings. Merz said that as the budgeting process goes on, everyone realizes that things are going to continue to get tighter for everyone. Merz said that an open dialogue is what really helps and it all comes down to professionals that really care about the community.

Felter said that it is a pleasure to deal with the Board offices. Whenever there is an issue with fields or busses, everything gets taken care of in a professional manner. Felter commented on the large amount of cooperation that the town receives from the schools and the teachers. During Hurricane Sandy the town worked with the Administration on getting the schools open and the teachers all volunteered at the Township warming centers.

Stewart commented that the closer the Board and the Township work the better since the Township is relatively isolated. The Library now has a generator and can be used as a warming station.

The Board and Council continued discussion of the benefits of the School Resource Officers; the shared wash rack in the DPW facility; future cooperative projects; including first responders; drug testing; unfunded mandates; bullying.

Sanchelli thanked the Board members for attending this meeting and said the Township Council is here anytime the Board would like to communicate. Kramer thanked the Council and Administration.

Recess

The Council adjourned at 6:42 p.m. and reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

Larry Cohen arrived at 7:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting

Reassessment vs. Compliance Plan

(105-A)

Shawn Hopkins, Tax Assessor, came forward and said that he provided the Council with a memo explaining the statistics regarding Reassessment versus Compliance. Hopkins said that since 2009, they have been talking about annual reassessments and one was done in 2010. Under the statute, the Council and Mayor must be notified that either a reassessment or a compliance plan will be done. A reassessment is where a sampling of inspections is completed and all the assessments are compared against the market data where up to 100 percent of the properties can be changed. Hopkins said that there are advantages of both. In 2010, the advantage was that the market had changed and there was a lot of evidence to change the assessments at once. The disadvantage was that the State wanted all the properties inspected and the cost outweighed the gain. Hopkins said that the compliance plan, which was done for 2012 and 2013 was a bifurcated reassessment. Half the town was

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done in 2012 and the other half in 2013. Residents have to look at this as a 2 year change in taxes and average the change over the 2 years. Hopkins said he has broken down the savings for the Township and on page 3, it can be seen on the memo. ¹⁰⁶

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
County Budget	201,365,440.00	209,993,183.00	213,967,397.00
County Appropt.	7,272,456.17	7,191,194.00	7,054,892.00
Library	1,067,962.24	1,048,291.00	991,716.00
Total	8,340,418.41	8,239,485.00	8,046,608.00

Hopkins explained that by doing the reassessment in 2010, the exterior costs to the County and Library were reduced by \$100,000. The State and the County average the town's values. The advantage of a compliance plan is that there is a race to the bottom. In 2012, the costs were reduced by another \$362,000 and in 2013 another \$299,000. The benefit since 2010 by doing an annual reassessment, was the annual savings compared to not doing anything, work to \$955,000 in direct savings.

Hopkins spoke about tax appeals and said that since managing the assessments according to the trends of the market, the town is averaging \$30,000 in refunds every year.

Hopkins spoke about inspections that are required for reassessment at the State level and said that 25 percent are required per year. Hopkins said that there have been some really good results by doing these outside inspections. This year 1,850 inspections were completed with probably another 300 to 400 by the end of December. Another \$1.8 million in assessment value has been added which equates to \$48,000 in new taxes. This is above and beyond the added assessment from permits. These are items that were not assessed when the reval went through or changes people made and unclosed permits.

Sanchelli asked Hopkins if he needs approval from the Council. Hopkins said he applied and received approval from the State for a reassessment based on the inspection history for the last 2 years and that a compliance plan has been done. Hopkins said he is also thinking about putting in for a compliance plan for this year. This would give the option of taking advantage of the best fiscal policy for the town. If the total assessment is going to be reduced further this year, which it may be slightly, a compliance plan may benefit the town because then the town will go directly to that value. If the ratable base is declining, it is in the best interest to go directly to that number right away. With a reassessment, the number is averaged with this year's number and we only get half way to that point. Leach said he discussed this with Eagen today and Hopkins has taken a very proactive approach since 2009. Many towns have been hit with massive tax appeals. Sanchelli said that it would be a dis-service to the residents to not continue this process. Cohen said that the amount paid to the County is based on the total assessed ratables. Hopkins said that it is \$2.5 billion right now. Cohen said that as the assessment is lowered, that is money in every resident's pocket. Cohen said the assessments are based on market value and Hopkins receives a report on every sale within the municipality. Hopkins said that the expectation is that over the next 2 to 3 years the market will come back to a normal appreciation of 2 to 3 percent per year. Merz asked if this will involve using the current employees with no additional hours or workload. Hopkins said that any costs were incurred in 2010. Leach asked what the equalized rate is for 2014 and Hopkins said it is close to 100 percent. Sanchelli polled the Council and all were in agreement with the compliance plan.

Hopkins said he will put in the application for a compliance plan next week. Hopkins said that when he has the final numbers, he will choose the one that will provide the most beneficial outcome.

Hopkins advised that next year he will be requesting an Ordinance for a continuation of occupancy on every sale of a home. Many towns do this already and this is a good way to keep better information on properties and insight into sales without having to send out the inspector.

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Hopkins left the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

November 13, 2013 Regular All Members Present

Motion: Dunham, second Merz

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Public Hearing Upon Adoption For Ordinances on Second Reading and Final Hearing:

ORDINANCE #16-13: ORDINANCE CREATING CHAPTER 295 OF THE CODE BOOK OF JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP, COUNTY OF MORRIS AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY, ENTITLED "INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES" IS OFFERED FOR ADOPTION ON SECOND READING AND FINAL HEARING

Sanchelli opened the meeting up to the public for questions or comments specific to proposed Ordinance 16-13 and seeing no one come forward, he closed the public portion of the meeting.

Motion: Dunham, second Birmingham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

ORDINANCE #18-13: ORDINANCE VACATING A PORTION OF HILL STREET, IN THE TOWNSHIP OF JEFFERSON, COUNTY OF MORRIS AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY IS OFFERED FOR ADOPTION ON SECOND READING AND FINAL HEARING

Sanchelli opened the meeting up to the public for questions or comments specific to proposed Ordinance 18-13 and seeing no one come forward, he closed the public portion of the meeting.

Motion: Merz, second Dunham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Council Reports

- **Motion:** Change Start Time of December 18, 2013 Council Meeting to 6:00 p.m.

Motion: Dunham, second Birmingham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Birmingham reported that the last night there was a nice Festival of Lights celebration at the Municipal Complex. Rhinesmith did a great job organizing the event. He enjoyed reading the stories and it was a nice turnout.

Merz reported that the League of Municipalities Convention was a good event with very worthwhile vendors and conferences. Merz said that she met with a few

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vendors that had products that are worth discussing to streamline things and are cost effective and environmentally sensitive. ¹⁰⁸

Merz said she had a meeting with a few Freeholders and she asked the Council to think about possibly rotating the Presidential position in the same manner that the Vice President position is rotated. Merz said that is something that could be discussed and perhaps adopted as a policy.

Merz said that this coming weekend is the Christmas in the Village event which is sponsored by the Arts Committee, the Recreation Department and Jefferson Connect, the Mental Health Project. Merz said there is surely an activity for everyone. Merz commented that the Luminary Lighting this year is being extended this year to all loved ones lost.

Dunham reported that the League of Municipalities was very informative and he found the seminars very worthwhile. He was said he learned about taxes, ratables and how the equations are computed for the value of the town and the assessment. Dunham said the vendors were very interesting and there are a couple items such as a speed limit sign which can be installed on a pole and a multilevel water fountain for parks. Dunham reported that he was able to attend the Hanukkah celebration last night which was very well attended.

Dunham complimented the Police on their crack down and enforcement of illegal drug activity and cell phone use while driving.

Sanchelli reported on the Christmas in the Village Event. Sanchelli announced that the First Aid Squads need volunteers.

Administrative Report of Mayor and Administrator

Leach reported that out of 19 outfalls by Lake Hopatcong that needed to be dredged, the DPW has completed 15.

Leach reported that the John Street Water Tank was completed along with the water main connect into the Winona System a few years ago. Pine Street is having an issue with wells. A water main will have to be run on Pine Street. Part will be done now and the other half in the Spring. There is a \$2400 capacity fee and a water meter fee. The Council was in agreement and Cohen was asked to draw up the agreement to allow a 4 year payment.

Miscellaneous/Public Portion

Sanchelli opened the meeting up to the public for any questions or comments.

John Luciano of 22 East Birch Road came forward and said his son Tim has made Eagle Scout this past summer. His reception will be January 4 and he would like to invite the Council and Mayor.

Sanchelli closed the public portion of the meeting.

New Business

- **Review Highlands Master Plan Conformance Documents**

Elam came forward and said that in 2004 the State passed the Highlands Regulations. New Jersey and Jefferson Township is greatly affected by these Regulations. Elam said that in order to conform the Township's zoning code to certain stipulations of those regulations, these documents are necessary. Elam said this is the second to last step in order to bring everything into compliance. There are seven different items that are under consideration between now and early next year, including:

- 1) Draft Element of the Municipal Master Plan;
- 2) Draft Environmental Resources Inventory;
- 3) Draft Highlands Council Consistency Review Report;
- 4) Draft Highlands Landuse Checklist;
- 5) Steep Slope Ordinance;

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- 6) Riparian Buffer Ordinance; and
- 7) Ordinance to Allow Township to review single family home applications and provide exemption within the municipality

Elam explained that he is collecting comments and questions from the Council, Planning Board and the public on any of these documents. Comments will be submitted to the Highlands Council and which any changes and/or comments will be sent back to the Township. Elam said that in January or February the final documents will be presented to the Highlands Council for consideration. After that a Petition for Highlands Plan Conformance will be approved by the Highlands Council. Elam said that at that point, the Council will do final approval and adoption on the Ordinances, Master Plan and Landuse Checklist. Elam explained that this is only applicable to those properties that are in the Highlands Preservation area, not the Planning area. The Council would have to make a conscious decision to place the Planning area into the Preservation area.

Merz asked about the impact on residents. Elam said the Highland Checklist provides guidelines for residents. Cohen said that right now there are 2 sets of regulations; the Township's zoning ordinance and the Highlands Regulations. Cohen said the Highlands Regulations trump the Town's local zoning. The change of this is not to impose more regulation upon the homeowners but to put the local regulation together so there is one set of zoning.

Leach said that Morris County has decided that Morris County should have one Wastewater Management Plan, each town in the County will be a chapter. Leach said that the town wants to do some changes to our municipal sewer system. This cannot be done until the Wastewater Management Plan is approved and in order to do that the Highlands Conformance Plan must be done.

Sanchelli asked the Council to forward any comments or suggestions, to Elam as soon as possible. Cohen said to remember that the Council is not placing new restrictions on the residents, they are only making it easier to comply with the State's requirements.

- **Request:** FIRE PREVENTION, Section 256-9: Access to the key box in an emergency – Addition of OEM

Sanchelli said a request has been made by OEM for an amendment to this Ordinance to add OEM. This item will be placed on the January 2 Agenda.

Resolutions:

Resolution #13-91: Approval of Bills

(109-A)

Motion: Dunham, second Birmingham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Motion to Approve:

P O No. 13-03655 Headley Lumber Co. - \$28.74

P O No. 13-03670 Headley Lumber Co. - \$127.49

Motion: Birmingham, second Sanchelli

Mr. Dunham	Not Voting
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Resolution #13-92: Authorize Passage of Consent Agenda

(109-B)

Item No. 4 Removed

Motion: Dunham, second Birmingham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
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Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Resolution #13-89: Executive Session: Personnel/Board Of Adjustment **(110-A)**

Motion: Sanchelli, second Dunham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Cohen left the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

Recess

Council adjourned into Executive Session at 8:17 p.m. and reconvened into Open Session at 8:28 p.m.

Miscellaneous/Public Portion

No one came forward.

Adjournment at 8:29 p.m.

Motion: Birmingham, second Dunham

Mr. Dunham	Aye
Mrs. Merz	Aye
Mr. Birmingham	Aye
Vice President Sanchelli	Aye
President Yocum	Absent

Dated: December 4, 2013

Attested:

Approved:

Lori Harvin, Township Clerk

Richard W. Yocum, Council President