

**TOWNSHIP OF HARDWICK
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17, 2024**

OPENING ROLL CALL:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Jacksic at 7:00 pm. Present was Deputy Mayor Meuse and Committeeman Lovell. Also, present were DPW Supervisor Campbell, Chief Financial Officer Rolef, Township Attorney Igor Bykov, and Municipal Clerk Shippis.

FLAG SALUTE:

SUNSHINE STATEMENT:

“Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, P.L. 1975, Ch. 231 setting forth the time, date, place, and purpose of this Public Meeting through a legal notice published in New Jersey Herald and The Express times following the Township’s Annual Reorganization Meeting at which time the 2024 meeting schedule was adopted.”.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

I-80 DWG update.

Tara Mezzanotte stated that she met with Assemblyman DiMaio and talked about the safety of the I-80 project and that nothing has been done on the design deficiencies of the “s” curve and the speed limit. Assemblyman DiMaio would like a briefing from New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) before receiving resolutions from townships so he can hear both sides. Mrs. Mezzanotte addressed construction safety concerns that are going on right now and requested that a resolution of concern be prepared for the next meeting for review. The Committee agreed and thanked Mrs. Mezzanotte for all her hard work.

DEPARTMENT REPORT:

Tax Assessor Rich Motyka

Tax Assessor Motyka provided information on a reevaluation for Hardwick Township with the cost estimated to be over \$100,000. Maps should be completed by September at the latest.

DPW Supervisor Campbell

DPW Department took care of about 20 Ash trees that fell from the last storm.

Chief Financial Officer Rolef

CFO Rolef reported that the township Auditors will be in the office starting February 20, 2024 to start the annual financial statements. Once it is completed, they will start on the budget process. CFO Rolef will reach out to the Auditors on budget meeting dates.

Fire Tower/Forest Fire Bob Wolf

Mr. Wolf stated that preparation is starting for the forest fire season with annual refreshers.

Bill Hughes-Stillwater Fire Department.

Stated that Dwayne Banghart is the new fire chief and hopes to make it to the next meeting to

introduce himself. Mr. Hughes provided the 2023-year-end report.

MINUTES:

November 1, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

Motion made by Lovell, second by Meuse and carried to approve November 1, 2023, Meeting minutes.

December 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Meuse, second by Jacksic and carried to approve December 6, 2023, meeting minutes. Committeeman Lovell abstained.

ORDINANCE:

Public Hearing/ Adoption

2023-21- Ordinance of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, Amending and Supplementing Sections 5-1.7 “Animal Control Officer” of the Township Code to Allow the Township to Enter into Contract(s) with Other Municipalities Pursuant to Shared Service Agreements.

WHEREAS, the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, has recently experienced a vacancy in the position of the Animal Control Office; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16b, the governing body of the municipality must appoint a certified animal control officer, responsible for animal control within the jurisdiction of the municipality, who shall enforce and abide by the provisions of N.J.S.A. 4:19-15.16; and

WHEREAS the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick wishes to enter into a Shared Service Agreement with the Town of Newton, County of Sussex, for the services of certified Animal Control Officer; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee, in order to clarify Section 5-1.7, governing the appointment of an Animal Control Officer, wishes to expand the list of entity(ies) that can be appointed as such by the Governing Body; and

WHEREAS such amendment to the Township Code will allow the Township to save costs on the service of the Animal Control Office, pursuant to the Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation Act, codified under N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1, et seq., thereby benefiting the Township and its residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that Section 5-1.7 “Animal Control Officer” of the Township Code be amended and supplemented to expand the list of entity(ies) that can be appointed by the Governing Body of the Township to serve as the Township’s Animal Control Officer.

SECTION I:

Insertions to the Section shall be delineated by underlined text thusly.

Deletions to the Section shall be delineated by strikethrough text ~~thusly~~.

§ 5-1.7. Animal Control Officer.

- a. The animal control officer shall be ~~a person~~ a duly certified Animal Control Officer employed by the Township or another municipality, pursuant to a Shared Service Agreement governed by N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1, et seq. entered by and between the Township and the subject municipality, appointed by the Township on an annual basis, who shall be compensated pursuant to a duly adopted salary ordinance. The Township may also appoint a deputy animal control officer on an annual basis, who shall be compensated pursuant to a duly adopted salary ordinance.
- b. The animal control officer and/or deputy animal control officer or other designee shall exercise those powers as set forth in state law and/or regulation and/or provisions of the Township Code, including this Chapter.

SECTION II. Repealer.

Any article, section, paragraph, subsection, clause, or other provision of the Code of the Township of Hardwick inconsistent with the provisions of this Ordinance is hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION III. Severability.

The various parts, sections, and clauses of this Ordinance are hereby declared to be severable. If any part, sentence, paragraph, section, or clause is adjudged to be unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction the remainder of this Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION IV. Effective Date.

This Ordinance shall take effect upon final passage and publication as provided by law.

Motin made by Lovell, second by Meuse and carried to open public comment.

No public comment.

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to close public comment.

Motion made by Lovell, second by Meuse and approved by roll call vote: Lovell—yes, Meuse—yes, Jacksic—yes for adoption of Ordinance 2023-21

CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1. 2024-19-Resolution Authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to Execute the Interlocal Services Agreement Between the Pollution Control Financing Authority of Warren County and the Township of Hardwick.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, do hereby authorize the Mayor and Municipal Clerk to enter into the Interlocal Services Agreement Between the Pollution Control Financing Authority of Warren County and the Township of Hardwick,.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that they are authorized to sign and attest on behalf of the township.

2. 2024-20-Transfer of Funds

3. 2024-21 Approving Payment of Vouchers.

WHEREAS all claims as reviewed and listed on the attached bill list are approved as reasonable and proper claims against the Township of Hardwick to be paid from its current fund; and

WHEREAS, the CFO has certified that funds are available to pay such claims.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey that the bills on the attached bill listed are authorized to be paid.

Consent Agenda item #2 was pulled.

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and approved by roll call vote: Lovell—yes, Meuse—yes, Jacksic—yes January 17, 2024, for Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Spring Valley Rd.

Mayor Jacksic reported that the county is deciding if they are going to handle the project or if it is to be bid out.

RAVE

No update

Township Signs

DPW Supervisor is waiting for quotes.

Voiceover

Up and running with some issues that will be addressed.

Cell Tower Lease

Township Attorney Bykov stated that the lease is still being discussed with Gaelic Communications LLC.

Committee Liaisons

The committee agreed on liaisons.

NEW BUSINESS:

Tree Removal Sample Ordinance-

Attorney Bykov is waiting for a return call from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regarding the tree sample ordinance that all towns are required to pass and stating that most of the ordinance does not apply to a small town like Hardwick.

November 2024 Meeting.

Clerk Shippo addressed the November meeting conflicts with the League of Municipalities. The committee agreed to change the meeting date to November 15, 2024.

Budget Workshop Meeting Date-discussed during Department reports.

ACO 2024 Agreement

Attorney Bykov explained the change that was made to the agreement. The committee agreed to the change. Attorney Bykov will forward the updated agreement to Newton Township.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None at this time.

TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY:

No report.

TOWNSHIP CLERK:

No report.

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Committeeman Lovell spoke to the committee about a few prospects for Risk Management Consultant. Committeeman Lovell requested that the interview process begin at the next meeting which the committee agreed to.

Deputy Mayor Meuse had no report.

Mayor Jacksic stated that a letter was received from New Jersey Department of Transportation on the resurfacing of Route 80 between mile markers .5 and 12.8 including the ramps. The starting date is projected to be the summer of 2024 with completion in the fall of 2024.

Mayor Jacksic reported that all residents are restored with electricity and cable from the last storm which had strong winds.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Smrita Choubey founder and CEO of Veda Farms spoke to the committee with respect to the possibilities of the cultivation and cannabis in Hardwick Township. Veda Farms is a holistic medicine company and they are interested in providing holistic medicine to pharmacies. The company has received a conditional license to cultivate cannabis in the state of new jersey and they are in contract to purchase a property on Millbrook Rd. Veda Farms is working on an agricultural approach to cannabis. Ms. Choubey stated that they are seeking an ordinance change that will allow the cultivation and manufacturing of cannabis. Members of Veda Farms were present and introduces themselves to the committee.

Attorney Bykov will do some do some research on the state's requirements for cultivation of cannabis and manufacturing. The committee agreed to review the proposal prepared by Smrita Choubey and will discuss it at the next meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to go into Executive Session at 8:05 pm.
2024-22 Resolution Authorizing Executive Session

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

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick, in the County of Warren and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from that portion of this meeting.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
Attorney advice

As nearly as can be ascertained, the matter or matters to be discussed at this time will be disclosed to the public when such matters are resolved.

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to close Executive Session at 8:55 pm.

Attorney Bykov stated that the Hardwick Township Committee emerged from Executive Session at 8:55 pm where one matter was discussed regarding Attorney Privilege no action will be taken and copies of the minutes will be available as such time as the committee determines there is no harm to the public interest.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Meuse, second by Jacksic and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:86 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kristin Shipps, RMC