
**TOWNSHIP OF HARRISON
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
HARRISON TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
114 BRIDGETON PIKE, MULLICA HILL, NJ
FEBRUARY 16, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

OPENING: Mayor Louis Manzo called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m., which was held at the Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL: Diane Malloy, Municipal Clerk, called the roll which resulted in the following: Present: Deputy Mayor Clowney; Committee Member Matthew Diggons, Committee Member Shearer; Mayor Manzo. Absent: Committee Member Heim.

Others present: Carole Rieck, Administrator, Dennis Chambers, Superintendent of Public Works, Sue Champion, Code Enforcement Officer.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT ANNOUNCEMENT: Ms. Malloy read the following statement: "In compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, notice of this meeting was given by way facsimile notice and mailed notice, filed with the Gloucester County Times and the Courier Post newspapers and posted on the bulletin board in the municipal building on February 11, 2011".

FLAG SALUTE: Mayor Manzo called for a moment of recognition for our troops, followed by the flag salute.

Committee Member Heim arrived at 7:10 p.m.

COMMENTS BY MAYOR AND TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE: Mayor Manzo explained that the purpose of this evening's meeting is to provide an update on local improvements, planned initiatives, and the common goal of creating a more business-friendly environment within the Township. He went on to explain that of equal importance is hearing feedback from local business owners and residents, with regard to the Main Street shopping district. Mayor Manzo went on to introduce the Township Committee members, employees and board and commission members

The Mayor explained the role of the Historic Preservation Committee, as well as the importance of the Richwood project, including the benefits of the 'Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)' program. He reported that enhancing the Main Street area is of great importance to Township Committee.

Mayor Manzo discussed the parking issues that visitors face in the downtown are, asking that some merchants consider allowing public parking in their lots. Dennis Chambers provided a prototype of the 'parking' sign intended for Main Street, on which some business owners commented.

Sally Murphy, 53 N. Main Street - complimented the design of the sign

Donna Andreas, 39 S. Main Street - feels the sign may be oversized and could overshadow existing business signs. Ms. Andreas suggested that 'parking' signs be added to the bottom of merchants' existing signs.

Frank Giannone, 35 S. Main - Suggested that the old 'Butlers Pantry' and the property across from the Old Mill be taken via eminent domain and utilized for parking.

Mayor Manzo responded that creating a municipal parking area is something which is being considered.

Rocco Doto, 46 N. Main Street – Feels the area in which Township Committee is considering utilizing for parking is too far away from the business end of town.

Tom Waters, 36 S. Main Street – Suggested that a sign reading ‘Welcome to Historic Mullica Hill’ be posted at the point.

Joe Pacera, 501 Cooper Wood Ct. – Announced that the county has agreed to provide a ‘Welcome to Historic Mullica Hill’ sign across from the Harrison House. The State is also considering providing a sign in the area of the pond.

Mayor Manzo recapped some of the improvements in Richwood, adding that the new Wawa in Richwood is expected to open in May or June. Mayor Manzo went on to provide an update on the second phase of the Rt. 322 bypass project.

Leon Coles, 39 S. Main Street – Pointed out that the light at High Street is yellow, not black. Mayor Manzo explained that the State provided the light and they are not flexible with the color because of safety issues.

Mr. Coles asked about recent changes to the Township’s sign ordinance. Mr. Joe Pacera, 502 Cooper Wood Ct., explained that changes were made during an open public meeting in an attempt to make the Main Street area more business friendly.

Mr. Coles commented on the Butler’s Pantry, noting that several businesses have failed at the corner because of the Township’s restrictions. Mayor Manzo replied that the purpose of this meeting and the intent of the governing body is to embrace a more ‘business friendly’ atmosphere and encourage growth within the historic district. The restrictions that may have existed in the past, no longer exist.

Pat Settar, 24 Washington Ct., Thanked Township Committee for holding this meeting, and went on to provide background on the butlers pantry. Ms. Settar asked what the Township might opt to do differently to encourage business on Main Street, concerning fees.

Donna Andreas, 39 So. Main Street - Feels that the fees from engineers are cost prohibitive to prospective entrepreneurs.

Joe Pacera, 501 Cooper Wood Ct. – Replied to Ms. Andreas, stating that he understands and feels her concerns are valid. He explained that the Township is taking steps to minimize fees for potential small business owners, to the extent of their authority.

Donna Andreas, 39 So. Main Street – Asked if the Township and the Historic Preservation Commission are on the ‘same page’ as far as approvals.

Joe Pacera explained that the Historic Preservation designation is, in itself, restrictive in some ways.

Paul Showers, 1 Stretch Drive - Explained the reasoning behind Historic Preservation Commission’s decision with regard to Ms. Andrea’s application.

Mayor Manzo explained that the governing body cannot go back and change history, but can do anything within their power to minimize future issues and /or expenses.

Mayor Manzo reported that the intersection at the Harrison House is expected to be complete before Memorial Day. The remainder of the bypass is expected to be completed by this time next year. Mayor Manzo explained that the Raccoon Creek Bridge is being replaced. The project will include black light poles and black guide rails.

Mayor Manzo described the level of growth in the Township, but expressed concerns with residents who do not shop in town. He suggested that perhaps residents be educated on what businesses are available in town and where they can shop, to keep our dollars local. Mayor Manzo stated that Township Committee can help to promote local businesses, with the help of the business owner. He suggested that perhaps meetings of this nature be held on a more regular basis.

Judy Salvino, 21 S. Main Street – Asked that something be put on the Website relative to the Antique Street Fair. Ms. Salvino feels that this Committee is working in a more positive direction than those past. Mayor Manzo stated that he supports improving communications between Township Committee and the various boards and commissions.

Committee Member Shearer apologized for the confusion between the Merchants Street Fair and Harrison Township Day.

Elaine Wildrick 26 Colson Lane - Suggested the possibility of hiring a full-time EDC representative to aid local business owners. Mayor Manzo explained that the possibility of having a full-time individual of this nature has been considered, but the Township faces budgetary issues.

Joe Pacera, 502 Cooper Wood Ct. – explained that other local towns which have added enhancements (Collingwood, Haddonfield etc.) have done so at the expense of the taxpayers. He added that the Township is working to improve the area without burdening the taxpayers; through donations from developers, grants, etc.

Mayor Manzo asked Joe Pacera why the lights on Main Street cannot be installed early. Mr. Pacera explained the delay, noting funding for installation of *all* lights, as a key factor.

Mayor Manzo asked for an opinion on the flower pots placed along Main Street. Merchants agreed that they enjoy the flower pots, but feel they are too small.

Tom Waters, 36 S. Main Street stated it is unrealistic for the business owners to be expected to take care of the flowers.

Nancy Kowalik, Coyote Run – Reminded everyone that the flower pots on Main Street were purchased and placed by volunteers.

Mayor Manzo strongly suggested that business owners attend EDC meetings in order to stay informed. He noted that Township Committee is willing to do whatever necessary to improve Harrison Township's Main Street area. He explained that seventeen (17) new street lights will be in on the East side of Main Street this year.

Scott Bergman, 44 S. Main Street – The Women's Club wants to donate benches, it is expected that at least one bench will be in by spring. Mr. Bergman asked that crosswalk signs on Main Street be properly attended to by the police.

Pat Settar, 24 Washington Ct. – The Rotary Club is working to donate bike racks.

(*inaudible*) Asked that Township calendars be given to merchants to draw in customers, to which Ms. Rieck responded.

Paul Showers, 1 Stretch Drive – reminded everyone that Township Committee and others have worked hard to encourage donations by the county, including the continuation of sidewalks, black railings and pedestrian lighting.

Committee Member Heim announced that the Pond Committee will be doing a clean-up, adding that benches and tables will be placed in the pond area.

Jim Salvino, 21 S. Main Street – Asked about the township’s population, and suggested soliciting donations. Mayor Manzo suggested that solicitation of donations come from local residents supporting the Beautification Committee’s fund raising efforts.

Leslie McGeoch, EDC Chair – Events will continue into this year, such as a golf outing, Spring Social, etc.

Mayor Manzo asked the merchants for their opinion on Harrison Township Day.

Tom Waters, 36 S. Main Street – It is not a profitable day for merchants due to the street closure.

Judy Salvino, 21 S. Main Street - Residents do not participate in the parade festivities

Jim Salvino, 21 S. Main Street – The street closure prohibits outside vendors

Mark Gravinese, 718 Malus Ct. - Would like to see the merchants get involved. He feels the parade is key to getting people into town and into the park. He asked what the Parade Commission can do to involve the merchants.

Mayor Manzo suggested the merchants set-up at table at Harrison Township Day.

Mark Gravinese, 718 Malus Ct. - confirmed he has seen substantial increases in parade attendance over the past four years and supports making the parade a combined effort.

Leon Coles, 39 S. Main Street – Asked who determines the parade hours, and asked that the roads not be closed until the start of the parade.

(inaudible) Suggested that a directory of businesses on Main Street be considered.

Mayor Manzo suggested a program entitled ‘Second Saturday’, in which special events are held on the second Saturday of every month.

Tom Waters, 36 S. Main Street – attempts of that nature have been made, but the lack of street lighting has been an issue.

Leslie McGeoch, EDC Chair – Suggested that the attempt be made during daylight hours and during daylight savings time

Jim Malaby, Owner, Blue Plate – Suggested that shops be open during the annual ghost tour and tree lighting.

Mayor Manzo suggested that a Main Street event be held during the daylight hours and local sporting venues be used to advertise the event(s)

Paul Showers, 1 Stretch Drive – Suggested a changeable venue sign to announce any regularly scheduled events, to which the merchants responded favorably.

Warren Fabrizio, 110 Bridgeton Pike – Thought the meeting was being held to improve Main Street, however he feels it sounds like the meeting is being held to push shopping in Richwood. Mr. Fabrizio feels that tax abatement would be good incentive for residents to shop locally.

Mayor Manzo spoke of the Township's existing ordinance allowing abatement for owners who are doing improvements. He explained the abatement would apply to the increased assessed value.

Joe Pacera, 502 Cooper Wood Ct. – Described the plans for the Richwood Town Center and explained that the approved plan is not intended to compete with the Main Street shopping district.

Rocco Doto, 46 N. Main Street – Asked whether the Township intends to open a liquor store in town. Mayor Manzo responded, explaining that the 2009 referendum approved consumption only and does not allow for the sale of packaged goods.

Joe Pacera, 502 Cooper Wood Ct. – Any consideration toward the sale of package goods would have to be placed on the ballot for the voters.

Karen Wisdom, 69 N. Main Street – Asked what latitude the Township has over vacant properties which are not being maintained. Mayor Manzo discussed recent changes to the Township's property maintenance ordinance, which will be helpful in enforcing issues of that nature.

Tom Waters 36 S. Main Street – Stated that the Merchants Association members are here to talk and to move forward, and will do whatever necessary to make the downtown area a success.

Mayor Manzo spoke of the township's intention to continue to shine the spotlight on new and existing businesses through the newsletter and the township website.

Lisa Rysinger – Suggested local HOA's be utilized to encourage residents to shop locally.

Deputy Mayor Clowney discussed the recently implemented discount program for Veterans. He named some of the local merchants who are currently offering discounts to Veterans, and are now being promoted via the county's veterans program.

The merchants and Township Committee expressed mutual appreciation for opening up the lines of communication.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING: Committee Member Diggons made a motion to adjourn at 9:40 p.m., seconded by Committee Member Shearer, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane L. Malloy,
Municipal Clerk