

October 27, 2009 CAUCUS MEETING MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOROUGH OF MT. EPHRAIM

MEETING CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Wolk called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

SALUTE TO FLAG:

All present pledged their allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT

ABSENT

Commissioner Gilmore	____x____	_____
Commissioner Greenwald	____x____	_____
Mayor Wolk	____x____	_____

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Borough Solicitor – Joe Marrazzo
Borough Engineers – Joe Federici & Doug Akin
Rich Schwab—Borough Consultant
PW Supervisor – Ken Jones
Sewer Operator—John Wenner
Zoning Officer—Chris Fitzgerald
Police Chief – Ed Dobleman
Marie Darlington –Tax Collector/Deputy Clerk
Rich Holmes—Fire Company President

“OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW” ANNOUNCEMENT:

Mayor Wolk announced this Meeting has been advertised and notices posted in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS:

Administration & Finance—Terry reported on the following:

Election day November 3

Election day is November 3. Polls will open at 6pm and close at 8pm. The sign at Mary Bray has been posted that all districts vote at MEPRI and the police sign board will also be deployed. The fire company will post the sandwich board sign in front of the firehouse as well.

Status of closing on 324 Davis Avenue

There were some issues with the title report involving the IRS that Joe Marrazzo has been working with Steve Rizzo to resolve. He reported that the initial title report had some outstanding issues that have now been modified and he is trying to schedule closing for Friday, October 30 at 10am. He will advise Terry when closing has been scheduled.

Discuss enforcement of non-renewed mercantile licenses—this issue remains unresolved and is a high priority for discussion and resolution

- Joe Federici and Fitz to provide an update as to the outstanding Mt. Ephraim Dodge zoning issues. Fitz reported that they have done their final testing on the lighting. Doug Akin will follow-up to see the results and if this issue has been resolved.

- Sozzi & Spread Eagle (delinquent property taxes)

Marie reported that the Spread Eagle paid the tax lien for 2008 in order to clear the tax sale amount but the 2009 taxes remain delinquent. This business has operated for all of 2009 without a mercantile license and 2010 is rapidly approaching. The situation with Sozzi is a little different in that the business appears not to be operating. However, the Spread Eagle is operating and probably will be in 2010 as well. We need to determine how we are going to handle this. Mayor Wolk said he would speak to the owner and try to resolve.

DOT Letter regarding grant application

We received a letter that the application for funding for the resurfacing of Delaware Avenue has been approved in the amount of \$170,000. Mayor Wolk congratulated our professionals on a job well done. Joe Federici will provide a proposal for their costs so we can set up the capital funding for 2010.

Pasta Café liquor license

The liquor license for Pasta Café/Bubba Dean's has been seized by the NJ Division of Taxation. They will be scheduling an auction to sell the license for back taxes in the next couple of weeks. Between the Division of Taxation and the IRS, about \$65,000 is owed in back taxes. If the license sells for more than is owed in back taxes, the additional proceeds will go back to Pasta Café. After the sale, we will have to do a person to person and probably also a place to place transfer. As soon as the auction is scheduled, I will advise the realtor who represents the party interested in the 710 property.

Bids received for Streetscape Project Phase II

As you are aware, bids were received for this project on October 14. There were five bidders in all (bid results attached). There was a problem with the low bidder (Marandino) as he did not sign the consent of surety.

Eric reviewed the packages and provided the attached opinion as to responsibility of the bid. In addition to the surety not being signed, the amount is incorrect as required in the specs. He deems these defects to be non-curable. Eric also believes that if we do not award to Marandino, he will sue. The next bidder, Bud Concrete, was within budget and provided a responsible bid. We need to make a determination as to award. It was decided that a resolution to award to Bud Concrete will be on the agenda. Joe Federici will also get us the costs for engineering for this project so we can set up the capital funding for 2010.

PSE&G Direct Install Program

PSE&G is offering a program to municipalities where they will perform a free energy audit and a report indicating improvements that can be made that will save energy at all borough owned facilities. If we elect to perform any of the improvements they recommend, they will provide 80% of the funds and the remaining 20% will be paid through the monthly energy bill, interest free, over two years. This program is being funded through the Economic Stimulus Funding. We are having them perform the energy audit of borough hall, the DPW complex, the Lambert Avenue building and the library.

Finance Review—CFO Dean Ciminera provided a budget update

Dean explained that we were under budgeted in health insurance and we are \$40,000 over budget on that line item. He is working on budget transfers and will have a better idea if we will have enough to cancel to cover the deficit. We are doing well in most other areas. It will be tight and he will know more after he completes the budget review and transfers. He also talked about starting to work on the 2010 budget. Spreadsheets will be distributed to the department heads and we will have a budget review meeting with each department head mid-late December. More information will be coming. Department heads were also asked to begin putting their capital requests together. For 2009, all department heads were told to stop purchasing anything that is not essential.

Police—Chief Dobleman reported on the following:

DWI funds—meeting with court

We have not been properly credited for our DWI convictions for the past several years. These funds go into a grant fund that we apply for the following year. The funds cover overtime for DWI checkpoints. For the past several years, we believe our convictions have been credited to Oaklyn. We need to schedule a meeting between the Chiefs, the court employees and the elected officials responsible for these areas.

Chapter 94—Traffic ordinance

Chief Dobleman has the language ready. The DOT said we can adopt the chapter as it is but has to state that it is subject to their approval. We will introduce the ordinance November 5.

Message board

Terry requested deployment of the message board to remind residents about voting at MEPRI. The Chief is looking into the best location.

Installation of phone line for the Alco-test machine

The state police informed us that we needed to have a separate phone line installed dedicated to the Alco-test machine. Magellan Hill, the new phone service vendor, installed the line last week. Verizon has to come in to connect the line and then Magellan Hill will be back to test the line to make sure it is working.

PSE&G project on the Black Horse Pike

They will be replacing all the telephone poles along the Pike. The project will be two-to three months in our town. They will need traffic control during the project which will generate some revenue for us because of the charge for use of the police car. We charge \$10 per hour for use of the car.

Awards to two officers

Chief Dobleman would like to recognize two officers for the actions involving an armed robbery in Runnemedede and a string of burglaries in Mt. Ephraim. He will have proclamations ready for the meeting.

Emergency Management: Nothing to report

Fire—Rich Schwab reported on the following:

Bell Rd. Fire Station project status

The building committee met with the architect on his latest design proposal, reducing the size by 2600 s.f. Along with all the other de-scoping proposals brings the construction budget down to \$2.35 million using standard cost estimating. He points out that recent bidding has shown the possibility of getting prices between 10 and 20 percent lower than the standard cost estimates. This would bring the potential low bid to between \$1.88 and \$2.15 million. The committee directed that the engine room be re-enlarged but reluctantly accepted the rest of the plan. Hopefully, that change won't materially change the estimate. It appears that if we don't get grant funds, this latest plan is the best alternate. We will have to negotiate with the architect on his costs to re-write the plans and specs to go out to bids.

In the meantime, we received bad news on the Federal funding to do the better project. We didn't make the first round approvals and have to wait to hear if any of those projects awarded grants can't go forward as well as

whether we make the second round. We have waited this long so a few months more shouldn't make a difference. However, as the economy heats up and more grant funds are doled out for public construction projects, schools in particular, the competition by contractors might not be as sharp. We can only wait and see.

Joe Federici, Kenny Jones and Mayor Wolk can report on the frustrations in trying to find an acceptable solution at a reasonable price to deal with the drainage problem. Meetings with Conrail appear to have resulted in greater costs than anticipated to use their right of way. We can get an update on the State DOT grant application for grant funding for 50% of the cost of the drainage work and with the County Freeholders on their share of the funds (25%).

TTI Environment was authorized to inspect and report on asbestos and other hazardous items in both the Fire Station and 205 James St. for a total cost of \$1780. They have done their inspection and we await their report. Based on what is reported, we may be able to proceed with demolition of the house at 205 James. We have multiple quotes already with the low quote at \$11,500. I am also putting together a letter application to the Environmental JIF for a grant of up to \$15,000 towards the estimated \$25,000 for removal of the contaminated soil around the leaking underground storage tank. The E-JIF sometimes makes such awards and our Mayor is the Camden County Municipal JIF representative on the E-JIF Executive Committee so maybe it is possible.

Now that everyone has agreed on the concepts for the long term lease, we will work with our Solicitor to draft the language for everyone to review.

Lambert Ave Removal of Architectural Barriers project status

Bids were received for the renovation project on Sept. 29. As you know, we had to throw out the three lowest bids due to technical issues and you awarded the contract for just the base bid to MD Remodeling for \$65,000, to be covered by our CDBG grant. We will work on how to at least get the front doors replaced with the few thousand dollars remaining. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for Thurs. Nov. 5 at 11 am at the property. Work should start shortly thereafter. The goal is to have the work completed by the end of the year, before the Fire Dept has to move everything back there while Bell Rd is demolished.

Public Works, Planning and Zoning:

Camden County Snow Removal Agreement

Ken reviewed the annual snow removal agreement from Camden County and has approved the language. A resolution authorizing the shared service agreement will be on the agenda.

Resolution authorizing salt purchases through the CC Contract

Camden County has negotiated contract pricing for salt and de-icing materials with International Salt Co. Municipalities can avail themselves of this pricing by approving a resolution to participate. Kenny has reviewed the information and stated that it is in the best interest of the Borough to participate. A resolution authorizing participation in the contract negotiated by Camden County with International Salt Co. will be on the agenda.

Labor Contract

Commissioner said he received a letter from the union informing us that it is time to begin negotiating the new contract as the present one expires December 31. They will submit their proposal and we will set up a meeting to review. Ken is suggesting a clothing allowance rather than us providing clothing. The employees can get what they want and the borough could save as much as several thousand dollars per year. This can be included in the discussions.

Request for donation

Commissioners Greenwald and Gilmore attended a Rotary meeting and Paul Bonamossa was there to ask for funds. The troops from Audubon, Audubon Park and Mt. Ephraim have merged and they need funds for new equipment. They are asking for anything we can contribute. The Rotary donated \$250. Joe Marrasso generously said he would make a donation.

Carpeting for construction office

Steve Beach has been requesting carpeting for the downstairs office. He has two proposals but we may need to push to next year. The lowest bid was \$1600.

CDBG Home Buyer Program

Commissioner Greenwald attended the CDBG meeting and a State representative was there talking about the "Live Where You Work" program. This is funding that helps first-time homebuyers buy homes in the town where they work. The program provides down payment assistance. He has paperwork about the program and will get more details.

Engineer: Projects and Grants Updates

Update on stimulus funds projects—we are waiting to hear about the firehouse grant.

Status of Harding Ave. generator project—almost complete –just waiting for completion of punchlist items.

Status of Kingsway Station construction—nothing new to report.

Update on Cedar Avenue project—project is close to completion.

Solicitor:

Status of dealing with remaining outstanding water bills from out of town properties—at the last meeting, Joe was waiting for a trial date. Any update? Nothing new to report—still waiting for date.

Update on ownership of Lumberyard lots—nothing to report.

Question from the Partnership for a Drug-free NJ on whether Mt. Ephraim has adopted P.L. Chap. 33 regarding possession of alcohol on private property by minors. At the last meeting, Joe Marrazzo indicated he was going to discuss with Eric and would provide more information. He reported that it was up to the governing body as to if they want to enact this legislation. The governing body decided they did not want to take any action at this time.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Commissioner Greenwald and seconded by Commissioner Gilmore to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Shannon
Municipal Clerk