

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 17, 2024

The regular meeting of the Frelinghuysen Township Committee was held in the Municipal Building, 210 Main Street, Johnsonburg, New Jersey on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Ramos.

SUNSHINE LAW STATEMENT:

Under the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this meeting was provided by posting notice on the Township bulletin board and by emailing notice to the New Jersey Herald and The Express-Times.

ROLL CALL:

Those present were: Mayor Ramos, Deputy Mayor Stracco, Committeeman McPeek, Committeewoman Natyzak Osadca, Committeeman Stock, Attorney Rich Beilin, and Municipal Clerk Donna Zilberfarb.

MINUTES:

- Minutes of the December 20, 2023, regular meeting were approved on a Motion by Mr. Stock, seconded by Mr. Mcpeek. All were in favor.
- Minutes of the January 3, 2024 reorganization session meeting were approved as amended on a motion by Mr. Stock, seconded by Mr. McPeek. All were in favor.

RESOLUTIONS:

#2024-17 TOWNSHIP OF FRELINGHUYSEN WARREN COUNTY, NJ WHEREAS, the Tax Assessor granted a **100% disabled veteran exemption** to **Edward Remia, effective June 8th, 2023**. The Tax Collector is therefore relieved of collecting taxes in the amount of **\$ 5,856.60** (this amount is for pro-rated 2nd, 3rd & 4th qtr **2023** taxes). WHEREAS, the Tax Collector advises of the payment of taxes for the year 2023. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarter taxes were paid as billed. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this 17th day of January, 2024 by the Mayor and Township Committee that the Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized to issue a refund of the taxes paid (pro-rated), as listed below: **Block 1301 Lot 17.02 Remia, Edward & Leanne \$ 3,013.60** I, Donna M. Zilberfarb, Clerk of the Township of Frelinghuysen, do hereby certify the foregoing Resolution to be a true and accurate copy adopted by the Township Committee on January 17th, 2024. Donna M. Zilberfarb, RMC Municipal Clerk

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Mr. McPeek	X		X			
Ms. Natyzak			X			
Mr. Ramos			X			
Mr. Stock		X	X			
Mr. Stracco			X			

#2024-18 RESOLUTION APPROVING PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR MONTH OF JANUARY 2024 WHEREAS, the Finance Committee of the Township of Frelinghuysen have reviewed the bills submitted by the Municipal Clerk to the Frelinghuysen Township Committee for the month of JANUARY 2024; and WHEREAS, the Finance Committee find the bills to be in order and recommend to the Township Committee that they be paid by the Chief Finance Officer. NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Frelinghuysen Township Committee that all bills submitted for the above named date are reasonable and proper and are to be paid from their appropriate account. Donna M. Zilberfarb, RMC

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Mr. McPeek	X		X			
Ms. Natyzak			X			
Mr. Ramos			X			
Mr. Stock		X	X			
Mr. Stracco			X			

#2024-19 SETTING EXECUTIVE SESSION WHEREAS, it is necessary to discuss items dealing with matters falling within the attorney-client privilege WHEREAS, under the Open Public Meetings Act (number ___ of the permitted exceptions to the requirements that a public body hold its meetings in public) it is permissible that such matters be discussed in executive or private session. NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on January 17, 2024 that the Township Committee of the Township of Frelinghuysen will adjourn to private or executive session to discuss the above mentioned and results or portions of that discussion will be made known in reasonable length of time Donna M. Zilberfarb, RMC

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Mr. McPeek	X		X			
Ms. Natyzak			X			
Mr. Ramos			X			
Mr. Stock		X	X			
Mr. Stracco			X			

ORDINANCES:

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Mayor Ramos – nothing to report
- Deputy Mayor Stracco – nothing to report
- Committeeman Boynton – nothing to report
- Committeeman McPeek – nothing to report
- Committeeman Stock – nothing to report
- Attorney Rich Beilin – nothing to report
- Municipal Clerk Zilberfarb – nothing to report

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business discussed

NEW BUSINESS:

- Motion was made by Mr. Stock to accept Dan Carson's resignation from the Open Space/Farmland board with regrets, seconded by Mr. McPeek. All were in favor.
- Motion was made by Mr. McPeek to concur to the appointments of Frankie Giordano and Christian Rodriguez to the FTVFC, seconded by Mr. Stock. All were in favor.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Motion was made by Mr. Stracco for a consent agenda for department reports 1-16, seconded by Mr. Stock. All present were in favor.

OPEN MEETING TO THE PUBLIC:

Motion was made by Mr. McPeek, seconded by Mr. Stock limiting it to 20 minutes to open meeting to the public. All were in favor. Spoke were:

- Jim Burns congratulated Ms. Natyzak on her win in the elections. He discussed different operating costs with different fire departments and asked Ms. Natyzak about running a fire department, costs involved and asked about supporting the FTVFC. He handed out numbers from Washington Township, Morris County and numbers for running their fire department. Ms. Natyzak stated \$150,000 was reasonable but that you can't compare each fire department. She asked about a 5 year plan for an operation study.
- Anthony Alleyne and Jaime Alleyne spoke to the Committee and asked who oversees the zoning officer and Mr. Ramos explained the Township Committee. Mr. Alleyne discussed a civil dispute regarding part of his property and asked the recourse he had for the easement. Their case was dismissed by the Judge. Ms. Alleyne discussed the concern for emergency vehicles being able to access and currently they could not because of trees planted. After their discussion, Mr. Beilin asked to see the transcripts from the Judge and asked for them to send to his attention. Mr. Stracco asked if they filed an appeal and Mr. Alleyne stated they did not. Mr. Alleyne will forward information to Mr. Beilin.
- Bob Berthold asked why the Frelinghuysen Fire Department did not respond to the barn fire on Bear Creek Road. Mr. Ramos explained that the fire department is still under the Department of Fire and Safety (DFS).
- Dawn McPeek asked if there was no fire coverage for 72 hours beginning in January. Mr. Ramos explained that there has never been a time that there was no fire coverage for the town. Ms. McPeek asked if it was a bigger concern that Blairstown didn't have enough coverage for an incident. Mr. Ramos explained that Blairstown is a phenomenal station and is a volunteer service and explained mutual aid.
- Sharon Drylie discussed a shared service agreement with Blairstown signed on January 3rd and felt there was no fire coverage for 72 hours. She also discussed a Faulkner Act town having strong council, weak Mayor. She discussed social media and the Mayor choosing what to answer, anonymous posts and pot stirring. Ms. Drylie stated she was appalled at how 1st responders have been treated and asked for an apology. Mr. Ramos thanked her for her opinion.
- Dale Durling, Sr. asked about facebook and why the township committee is on it and asked if there was a legal obligation to answer or be on it. Mr. Beilin stated no legal obligation. Mr. Ramos explained his view on facebook and that he'd rather not be on it and would rather sit and discuss issues with people. Mr. Durling asked why he didn't stay off of it then. Mr. Beilin reminded of the 20 minute open session and explained that facebook is not an official page for the Township of Frelinghuysen and is not affiliated with the town in anyway.
- Bennett Bean asked how he could obtain executive session meeting minutes. Mr. Beilin explained that by state statute, there are rules for executive session. All matters discussed in executive session would be released once the matter is completed.
- Captain Richie Mlecz asked why not place the fire department on the ballot as a referendum item. Mr. Ramos explained that it was way passed that now. Mr. Mlecz asked what kind of membership and experience this fire department has. The Chief, Deputy Chief and a firefighter gave their years of experience and it was stated there are 14 members in FTVFC.

- Dave Togno asked to have a community night and have discussion of anything the community needs/wants to know with the township committee and felt facebook is not the proper way to go. Mr. Ramos thanked him for his suggestion.
- Dan Kohuth spoke of the committee encouraging residents to come out to the meetings and felt it's the township committees duty to hear them and to keep the open public comment open longer.
- Kim Mantz spoke of costs for fire departments equipment, gear, the trucks being scrap metal from other towns and only having 2 bays for the trucks. She spoke about a 3 year benchmark budget. She discussed costs for Blirstown and Green Townships fire departments. Mr. Ramos thanked her.
- Ben Perez let the committee and public know that he would be graduating from the fire academy after 4 months of schooling. He discussed his background and let the committee and public know that he is a volunteer and putting himself in harms way for everyone at the meeting and outside of the meeting to go into a burning structure to save it if needed. He explained that it is a thankless job but is ok with it. He was thanked for his service.
- Bob Stock spoke and wanted to clear up any misinformation and let the public know that it was not the Mayor but the entire committee that voted for the fire department and made that decision to start our own. He stated it is fiscally responsible for the committee to move forward and discussed the disrespect that has happened. He explained that he has applied for 4 grants and that the fire department has a plan and will get funding moving forward and that they will build the community support that is needed. Keith Ramos discussed the debt within the township and explained the plan to be debt free sooner than the 10 year previous plan. He also spoke of the Mayor's position and what his responsibilities are with it being no more power than any other committee member. He discussed cutting the debt for the town and that they aren't looking to keep adding debt each year.
- Dale Durling, Sr. stated it was time that the community support this fire department and that we all need to work together.
- Belinda Perez explained that she grew up in a large community and loves her community now. She asked that all try to stand behind things that are happening within the town and support each other instead of wishing for failure.
- Cheryl Towey discussed the barn fire on Bear Creek Road and how scary it was and thanked everyone for doing what they do and that she appreciates it all and stated it is not about the fire fighters/first responders.
- Sharon Drylie thanked the firemen and stated her biggest fear is the taxes going up.
- Susan Marques asked about the tax increase this year. Mr. Ramos explained how the taxes work and that it is not always the town but the schools and county raise taxes as well. He explained that this year North Warren raised taxes and the impact was felt by the residents. He discussed the conversation with Dr. Dutt and recommended that she reach out and speak to her as well. Mr. Stracco also explained that schools need to raise their taxes as the school aide gets cut each year.

Motion was made by Mr. Stracco, seconded by Mr. McPeek to close to the public. All were in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Hope Township – Ordinance 2023-16 and 2023-17
- Green Township Fire Department – December monthly
- Blirstown Hose Company – April 2023 and December 2023 monthly
- Hope Township – November monthly
- Blirstown Hose Company – July monthly

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, motion was made by Mr. Stracco, seconded by Mr. Stock to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Zilberfarb, RMC