

## MINUTES OF WORK/BUDGET MEETING OF MARCH 13, 2024

The budget meeting of the Frelinghuysen Township Committee was held in the Municipal Building, 210 Main Street, Johnsonburg, New Jersey on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, and was called to order at 3:00 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, Auditor Anthony Ardito, and Municipal Clerk Donna Zilberfarb.

### MINUTES:

- Regular meeting minutes of February 21, 2024 were approved as amended on a motion by Mr. Stracco, seconded by Mr. McPeek. All were in favor.

### 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 let the committee know that the township was awarded the Firefighter grant in the amount of \$34,000 for turnout gear and CBA's. Mr. Ramos let the public know that this was the 2<sup>nd</sup> grant the fire department has received to date and thanked Mr. Stock for all his work on this grant.
- Municipal Clerk Zilberfarb – nothing to report

### OLD BUSINESS:

### NEW BUSINESS:

- Anthony Ardito, Auditor, explained the budget and explained the increase in debt payment to \$920,000 for BAN debt and discussed the tax increase that the committee chose to do was approximately \$18.00 per average household. He also discussed surplus and how the town has replaced and regenerated the surplus and stating underspending the budget will go directly to the surplus next year. He was pleased with budget and felt it was a good budget and paying down debt and having fully funded capital ordinance is a plus. He stated that introduction could be on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. Mr. Ramos explained last years tax rate per household for municipal was \$81-\$84. He explained the balloon payment due this year and that the committee started looking at all finances in August. He discussed how they cleaned up old ordinances, the increase in debt service is covered, a fully funded capital ordinance for this year, able to allocate a 3% increase, and bringing debt down from 1.8 million to \$900,000. Mr. Stracco explained that debt service interest rate will increase each year. Mr. Stracco also stated that this tax increase of \$18.00 per average household (a little over .05%) is for municipal taxes only. Mr. Ramos also explained allocating monies for tax maps to be revised and spoke of reval for the town and tax map revisions was the first step. Mr. Ramos explained the increase for emergency services. Allamuchy/Green (\$9,500) and Blairstown (\$6,500). He also explained that these are donations and is very thankful for their service. Mr. Stock discussed speaking with Mr. Drislane and now has a better understanding of billing for residents. He also explained looking at the comprehensive budget for the ambulance squads and discussed wants over needs. Ms. Natyzak explained how functions work and that donations cover the actual operations of the squad. Mr. Ramos explained that he understands and that by her being the treasurer of the ambulance squad, she should recuse herself. Mr. Stracco asked how much the Allamuchy Green squad requested. They requested \$12,000. Mr. Stracco thanked the finance committee for their work on the budget. Ms. Natyzak asked about grants that come in and how they get into the budget. Mr. Ardito let her know that a chapter 159 would be completed to have them added to the budget.
- Doreen Rutherford spoke regarding Muller Road and that was always nice to drive on. She explained that about 4 years ago it started getting bad and now the potholes are very bad and the road itself is narrowing on each side. She explained that there are now 7 residents that utilize the road. She asked if there was any plans for fixing at this time. Mr. Ramos explained the roads within the township and not being kept up. He let her know that Muller road will be looked at and work on fixing it. He also stated the 1.4 million on the sale of the property is benefiting the entire town. Mr. McPeek let her know that tar and chip pricing has increased. Ms. Rutherford also explained that there is no turn around for trucks etc. and that people use her driveway, which she does not mind, but has had to add crushed concrete every spring as the plows push it into the woods when plowing. She also inquired about the new owners of the property on Route 94 and that they are utilizing Muller road to access. Mr. Ramos asked her to send an email to the Clerk so this could be addressed and that he will send the dpw out to address the issues on Muller Road.

### 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:

- Marty Connor asked about Lincoln Laurel Road and when they work on that road, if they will also look into the driveway for the rec center as it needs work as well. Mr. Ramos let him know that yes it will be looked into and taken care of at that time.
- Dan Kohuth asked about the budget and the donation to the Allamuchy/Green ambulance squad spoke of the committee asking for justification for the amount asked for and felt that after looking at their numbers

that were given it was fair. Mr. Ramos explained that they disagreed and using those numbers that were given would actually give a lower donation. After discussion, Mr. Kohuth appreciates going forward and increasing the donation.

- Dan Kohuth asked the Mayor why Ms. Natyzak would need to recuse herself from discussion of the Green/Allamuchy ambulance squad and asked that 3 members of the committee are fire fighters. Mr. Ramos explained that the attorney has advised that and it covers herself and the Township committee members and explained how committee members have to recuse themselves for certain variances on the land use board. He also explained that there were 2 members on the board that would recuse themselves and that he is not a fireman his son is.
- Dan Kohuth asked about the fire marshal visiting the fire department today and asked if everything was ok. Mr. Ramos explained that everything was ok and that it was due to letters being sent to the State Fire Captain. He stated that these letters contained blatant lies and it situation is being dealt with.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, motion was made by Mr. Stracco, seconded by Mr. Stock to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Zilberfarb, RMC