

+DOWNE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING & WORK SESSION
APRIL 19, 2016 – 7:00 PM

The Downe Township Committee met in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Complex on Tuesday, April 19, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Robert G. Campbell presided. Committee members present were Larry Jordan, Sr. (Deputy Mayor), Stephen Byrne, Dennis Cook and Edward Bart. Municipal Solicitor, John Carr, was also present.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / STATEMENT
REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Campbell called the meeting to order; led the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

ROLL CALL

Present – Jordan, Byrne, Bart, Cook, Campbell

Absent - 0

Mayor Campbell stated that no formal action will be taken at this meeting.

WORK SHOP SESSION –

FLOOD ELEVATION ORDINANCE

Mayor Campbell stated the Flood Elevation Maps have been finalized. Once we build dunes in Fortescue we can go back to FEMA and have the maps amended. Right now we have to pass an ordinance accepting the revised maps.

FORTESCUE PROPOSED SEWER PLANT

Mayor Campbell stated we have residents that are putting off moving into their new home for this proposed plant, because of a septic issue for them that will cost \$30,000 to correct. The pre-application meeting for the sewer plant was held a couple of weeks ago. There were a number of agencies present at this meeting that were all positive about the proposed sewer system. The timeline was projected to be 24 months. Mr. Cook stated it is critical to keep the County Health Department at bay. They have been the most uncooperative. Mayor Campbell stated he received a tip there are more violation letters coming to the residents of Money Island. Mr. Cook stated we need our solicitor to tell us what the legal ramifications are about receiving those violation letters. There is a feeling amongst our residents for the need for action. They are intimidated. We don't have an understanding of what the Health Department is doing. We need to respond as a township to these letters. Mayor Campbell stated funding for the proposed sewer can be obtained from the USDA and the NJEIT. They are both willing to work with us on this project. The proposed price is a little over \$8 Million. USDA can fund up to 75% of the project as a grant because of our economic status of our township and our population. The big question is what the proposed cost to the end user will be. We have estimates for \$80-\$100 per month. That coincides with how much grant funding we can secure. The County wants to build their sewer main extension. They are saying we can't do our plant without them because they have more borrowing power. Our Bond Counsel is looking

into how much Downe Township can bond for if necessary. Mayor Campbell continues the biggest issue is the 6-month water quality testing program from the discharge pipe. Mr. Bart asked who is responsible for the cost of the testing. Downe Township is responsible for the costs. We are out of funds from the \$30,000 Search Grant. Our Grant Consultant is reaching out to USDA for additional funding. USDA can provide funding for the testing, application fees and just about everything going forward. There is a consultant, agencies and engineer progress meeting scheduled for May 9th. I have been informed that the County would like Downe Township to participate in funding an aerial flyover for the County Sewer Extension project at a cost of \$21,500. I directed Mr. Knoop to call Ken Mecouch for the funds because Downe Township does not have money for their project.

LOSS OF RATABLES

Mr. Cook stated in 2010 we were up to 82% of our land as tax exempt. We know that in the last 6 years there have been a number of additional parcels added to this 2010 figure. We have had a number of conversations about taking action. We have an excellent opportunity to go public with this information. Our township is becoming unsustainable in supporting our school and county government and our township. We need to take that conversation to another level in terms of what bases we want to touch. We have a good legal case, a good procedural case and a good public relations case. Mr. Jordan stated we have talked about doing something publically with some sort of declaration to get some press. Mayor Campbell stated we will be like Atlantic City if we don't do something. Rick Brown of the DEP has done an examination of tax exempt properties of Downe Township from the State perspective. He says we are at 77% and his figure excluded certain environmental groups that are purchasing land in Downe. Mayor Campbell stated we can move forward with that statement in the newspaper mentioning how Downe Township is under siege, how blue acres is taking over, etc., but at the end of the day the people will read it and it will go away after a few days.

BLUE ACRES

Mayor Campbell stated he has been informed that a couple of residents in Fortescue have put in applications with Blue Acres. Discussions continued on the properties that are being sold to Green Acres and the Blue Acres buyout. Mr. Jordan stated as a committee we need to make a statement. We need to do something. We all feel the same and don't want this to continue to happen. Mr. Cook stated there is a round two buyout being proposed in Money Island by Blue Acres. Mr. Jordan stated a second appraisal is being done on the Marvi Property (about 600 acres). The house on the property is being subdivided out and we have been talking about increasing the house lot size. It should be a six acre lot with a farmhouse. Hopefully things will work out that way. We need to get in contact with Blue Acres because it is my understanding that Blue Acres will not purchase any property in our town without the approval of the township committee. The township committee has not agreed to this buyout and we did not sign their Memorandum of Understanding. Mr. Bart commented we need to make our resident aware of this buyout status and let them know if this continues we are going to have a problem. We need the public's help to go after these agencies. We need to evaluation our situation and find a way to fix it. One way would be to go after the school board budget. Mayor Campbell stated he attended a meeting where school budgets were talked about. One case was how Atlantic City's school went from \$11,000-\$12,000 per student up to \$27,000 per student. They are in the same boat as Downe and they have been talking

about not funding the school budget. When do we say we are unable to fund the school? Mayor Campbell stated that everyone doesn't agree with politics but unfortunately politics is in the middle of all of the things that are going on. We need to do everything we can do. Mayor Campbell stated he would find out if Blue Acres can proceed without the MOU signed by the Township Committee. Mr. Jordan continued we need an avenue to make our statement. I want the residents of the community to know that the township committee is not in agreement with what Blue Acres is doing. The public perception looks like we are doing nothing about this situation. Mr. Cook asked about passing a resolution that states we are opposed to any Blue Acres/Green Acres Buyout. We can make a statement in the resolution about the Pilot Funding. Doing this will put us on record historically and this is something the Governor and Lt. Governor can address right now. We can put three points in the resolution that will help support other positions that we have been consistent in. Mr. Jordan asked if a resolution is a possibility. Mayor Campbell stated everything helps. Mr. Jordan continued there is nothing that says this committee is opposed to what's happening. The distribution of this resolution would mean a lot. We have to make sure that all five villages understand how it has to be one for all and all for one. Mr. Bart asked if we are utilizing all alternatives. Mayor Campbell stated he wants to do an OPRA request to the school requesting the check registrar for the past 12 months. Mr. Jordan stated he doesn't know how much longer we can support a school that has only has 150 children for the amount of money we pay to the school. Mayor Campbell stated he spoke to the superintendent of the school about their budget. The superintendent described where money is being spent and stated we are spending only \$12,000 per child. Mr. Jordan stated once we start that battle we are going to have to fight it. It is going to be big. We don't want to send our kids to another district we need the school. But before I lose my home and I consider looking at the school budget. Mr. Bart asked how the resolution will be distributed. Mayor Campbell stated the resolution will go to whoever we want to send it to in Trenton. Can this resolution be drafted for the May meeting? Mayor Campbell stated he would speak to the solicitor and get it drafted.

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER POSITION

Tabled for later date

EMPLOYEE MANUAL

Tabled for later date

RFP FOR WEBSITE DESIGN SERVICES

Mr. Jordan stated our website needs major attention. We need to move forward with putting this matter out to bid. The RFP was prepared by our Solicitor. The committee will review the draft RFP and make comments and vote to advertise for bids at our May meeting.

PROPERTY SALE OFFERS

It was decided to put together all property sale offers for discussion at next Township Committee meeting and move forward.

ABANDONED PROPERTY ORDINANCE

Tabled for later date

WINTER STORM JONAS UPDATE

Mayor Campbell reported six projects have been identified. Next step is for a FEMA tour of the identified projects. Afterwards the PW (project worksheets) will be written and submitted to FEMA to determine funds obligated for each project.

SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH COUNTY OEM FOR GENERATOR

Mr. Jordan stated the County OEM has been trying to get a generator for this building for a couple of years. The generator will allow residents of this township to be brought to our building instead of being transported to other areas in Cumberland County in an emergency on a temporary basis. The building will not be considered a shelter. The County OEM is asking Downe Township to share in 10 percent (10%) of the cost over two years through an agreement. The cost is about \$10,000. There may be a way to offset the cost as the project moves forward. We will be required to maintain the unit once it is installed. We will also need to notify our insurance carrier of the new generator.

OEM WEATHER STATION

Mayor Campbell stated the new weather station has been installed in Fortescue. The only thing not one the weather station is the camera. If we want a camera on the weather station we will need to purchase. The estimated cost is \$2,500. Mr. Jordan asked about a maintenance fee and carrier fee. Mayor Campbell answered we will look into it. The Public Works Dept. will be putting up fencing to keep everyone out of the area.

JOHN GILLIGAN PROPERTY

Mayor Campbell explained the situation with the alleyway. It was agreed to place a resolution on the next meeting agenda to approve.

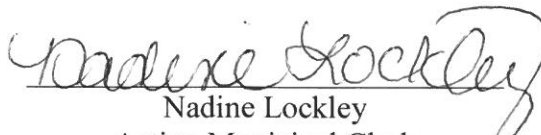
NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Downe Township Committee will be held on Monday, May 2, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Complex.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Byrne and seconded by Jordan.

Vote: All in favor


Nadine Lockley
Acting Municipal Clerk