

DOWNE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 14, 2023 at 7:00 P.M.

The Downe Township Committee met in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Office on Monday, August 14, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Michael L. Rothman, presided. Deputy Mayor Larry Jordan, Committeemen Edward Bart and Steve Byrne were in attendance. Committeeman Campbell was absent. Municipal Solicitor Rebecca Bertram was present.

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

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

ROLL CALL

Present – Jordan, Bart, Byrne, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 2023	Regular Meeting	July 10, 2023	Regular Meeting
April 10, 2023	Executive Session	May 8, 2023	Executive Session
July 10, 2023	Executive Session		

On a motion by Jordan and seconded by Bart, the previously mentioned meeting minutes were approved as presented.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Mayor Rothman read the Tax Collector and Chief Finance Officer Reports. The Township Committee acknowledged the receipt of the following report:

- Chief Finance Officer July 2023
- Tax Collector July 2023
- Zoning Office May, June & July 2023

MUNICIPAL SOLICITOR’S REPORT

Solicitor Bertram presented her report which consisted of information and updates on matters that should be discussed in the Executive Session.

ORDINANCE INTRODUCTION

Ordinance 2023-05 *An Ordinance Establishing Salaries and Wages for the Officers and Employees of the Township of Downe for the Year 2023*

Motion was made by Byrne and seconded by Jordan to introduce Ordinance 2023-5.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

RESOLUTIONS

- R-82-2023 *Authorizing the Payment of Bills*
- R-83-2023 *Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) Resolution of Gratitude Acceptance*
- R-84-2023 *Authorizing the Sale of Tax Sale Certificate 17-00018*
- R-85-2023 *Authorizing the Sale of Tax Sale Certificate 16-00030*
- R-86-2023 *Resolution Authorizing the Refund of Property Taxes*
- R-87-2023 *Resolution Authorizing the Appointment of Members of the Recreation Committee for the Township of Downe*
- R-88-2023 *Authorizing Executive Session*
- R-89-2023 *Resolution of Support for Operation of Cannabis Business*
- R-90-2023 *Resolution Appointing Environmental Commission Chairperson/Green Team Member*

A motion was made by Bart and seconded by Jordan to adopt Resolution No. R-82-2023 *Authorizing the Payment of Bills* in the total amount of \$348,657.39.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Jordan and seconded by Byrne to adopt Resolution No. R-83-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Byrne and seconded by Jordan to adopt Resolution No. R-84-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Jordan
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Jordan and seconded by Bart to adopt Resolution No. R-85-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Bart and seconded by Jordan to adopt Resolution No. R-86-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Jordan and seconded by Byrne to adopt Resolution No. R-87-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Byrne and seconded by Jordan to adopt Resolution No. R-88-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Jordan and seconded by Bart to adopt Resolution No. R-89-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

A motion was made by Byrne and seconded by Jordan to adopt Resolution No. R-90-2023.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

Mayor Rothman gave the following update: Please keep Committeeman Campbell in your prayers as he was taken to the hospital today. A meeting was held in with the County, local oystermen and NJDOT regarding Money Island Road. It was approved to raise the road about 3 inches to help with the road flooding and causing issues for the oyster industry. There have been a lot of complaints about State Fish and Game Enforcement issues. Be assured we have been in contact with them, and they have agreed to step up their enforcement efforts in the township. They are short-staffed but can be seen in this area checking things out. The tax bills are late and will be going out by the end of the week. The sewer project bids came in almost double what was estimated. We are submitting an additional application to the USDA for more funding. We are strong with the USDA in securing about \$8M in additional funding as a grant. We are in the running for these additional funds. We recently found out about more funding that has become available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

On a motion by Bart and seconded by Jordan, the meeting was opened to the public for comment.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

Kary Wilson of Newport is there anything on the Municipal Solicitors Report to share. In the past John Carr would run down the items on his report briefly so that the public could hear what was on his report. Mrs. Wilson asked for details on R-83-2023. Mayor Rothman answered this grant is part of the sewer project. There was a grant available to help with purchasing support equipment and tools for the facility. The grant is for \$150,000. Mrs. Wilson asked what issues would be discussed in the Executive Session. Mrs. Bertram answered personnel, contracts, Fortescue Sewer and potential litigation/personnel efficiency expert. Mrs. Wilson asked what contracts would be discussed regarding the sewer. Mrs. Bertram answered contract that might need to be negotiated for the sewer project. Mrs. Wilson stated the resolution gives a timeframe of 12 months. Mrs. Wilson continued to question Mrs. Bertram about the timeframes shown on the resolution. Mrs. Wilson was referencing dates from a resolution adopted in July 2023. Mrs. Bertram explained the timeframe that is stated on the resolutions indicates when information about the topic could be released to the public. Mrs. Wilson stated she saw on the bill list from last month that the township purchased a drone for \$9,853 and there was also a resolution R-79-2023 that basically talked about the funds that would be released. Mayor Rothman stated that everything with the drone purchase was from a grant. There was a county grant that came available that we applied for, and we received. We were going to originally use the funds to fix our sign outside, but the pricing exceeded \$30,000. We looked at options before losing the grant and one of the things we thought would be a benefit to the township is a drone program with our OEM department. Mayor Rothman talked about how a drone has been used in recent emergency situations through Cumberland County. The township has four individuals who are being trained and certified to use the drone.

Doc from Gandy Beach stated we are having a lot of problems with B&B rentals in Gandy Beach. What is being done about beach replenishment? Mayor Rothman answered that is a US Army Corp of Engineer project there has been some movement with the project this week. The Federal budget for the Corp of

Engineers for the project was approved. We were told there were some budget issues, and the money was moved to other projects. Doc stated the bulkhead wall is not going to hold up for much longer. The township has done nothing with this project. The township continued to just push sand out of the roadways. Mayor Rothman answered we are waiting for FEMA approval.

Ken Fesser of Gandy Beach stated that FEMA has done nothing for the bulkhead since Hurricane Sandy. We continue to get a song and dance from this committee. Mr. Fesser continued to express that nothing has been done to fix the issues in Gandy Beach. We all continue to hear about work being done on Money Island and the State has taken that island over except for the million-dollar oyster industry. Their road gets raised and this only pushes more water onto Gandy Beach. Mayor Rothman continued we have been working with FEMA because we need those resources to fix our issues. We know FEMA has not done enough for Downe Township. Mr. Fesser stated he understand the FEMA situation, but can the township fix the roadway at least. This committee needs to know that every regular high tide crashes and hits the transformer. We need to push. Let's get something done. Mayor Rothman stated he will make Gandy Beach a priority of the Township Committee. You deserve to have these issues corrected.

Mayor Rothman thanked Liz Cowley of Fortescue for all she does , especially this past weekend with the Green Team. You and your team have brought a lot of good to this community. Mayor Rothman wished Liz good luck in her new position.

Liz Cowley of Fortescue wanted to bring something to the attention of the township committee in reference to B & B Rentals. We lost electricity the other night for about 9 hours. She happened to be one of the people who stopped the cars on Fortescue Road from travelling across the downed wires in the road. The percentage of people who were supposed to be running B & B rentals in Fortescue that night that were trying to get off the island. The renters didn't even have flashlights in the B & B they rented. Liz continued she is not sure of the regulations that are required concerning rentals and B & B's but we should be providing emergency information for their renters. Mayor Rothman stated we are looking into adopting regulations for all B & B rentals. These properties will be required to be inspected more than once a year. There was another issue regarding these B & B rentals and that is who is responsible for the trash removal. There were piles of trash left by the renters that was a mess to deal with.

Michelle Fesser of Gandy Beach asked if the dumpster that is in Gandy Beach is allowed by the township. Mayor Rothman responded yes, they are running a business and all commercial establishments in the township must provide a dumpster for their trash. Mayor Rothman commented that if the residents of Gandy Beach finds that the dumpster is not being emptied weekly, please contact the office.

Liz Cowley welcomed Sean Pignatelli and his family to the Downe Township Recreation Committee. The Green Team has been looking to have the recreation committee back because they get a lot of requests for different activities that the Green Team can't handle. We will definitely be working together. Liz Cowley thanked everyone for their support at the Bounty on the Bay event. It was very well attended, and we believe everyone enjoyed themselves. Thanks to all of the volunteers that helped.

Sean Pignatelli of Fortescue thanked the committee for the appointment of the Recreation Committee. We have a meeting for the committee scheduled for Wednesday, August 23rd at 5pm at the Municipal Building. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. We are excited to have activities for the kids, because you know if they aren't fishermen or crabbers, they are sitting in the house playing video game. We are going to try to get the kids outside doing some physical activities.

There being no further comments, the public comment portion was closed on a motion by Jordan and seconded by Byrne.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

Mayor Rothman stated the speeding issues that were brought up at the last meeting was handled.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Jordan had nothing to report.

Mr. Bart had nothing to report.

Mr. Byrne reported there will be music at Union Hall on August 19th at 7pm. Come out and join us.

Mayor Rothman thanked the State Police Officer in attendance at tonight's meeting. Mayor Rothman offered his condolences on the recent loss of his daughter.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Downe Township Committee will be held on Monday, September 11, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Complex.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On a motion by Jordan and seconded by Byrne, the meeting was closed to the public and the Executive Session was opened with no action to be taken after Executive Session. A contract/personnel/potential litigation issues will be discussed.

Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

On a motion by Jordan and seconded by Bart, the Executive Session portion was closed.

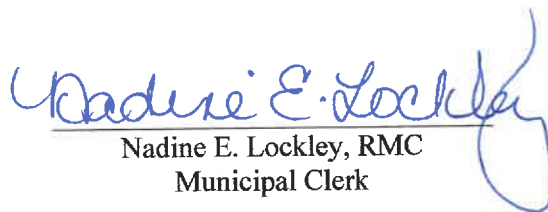
Roll Call: Aye – Bart, Byrne, Jordan, and Rothman
Absent - Campbell
Nay – 0

Vote: All in favor

ADJOURNMENT

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

Vote: All in favor


Nadine E. Lockley, RMC
Municipal Clerk