

WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING
7:00 PM Regular Meeting Minutes
September 19, 2023

The meeting was called to order and opened at 7:00 PM by Mayor Sandy Henley. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 6, 2023. This meeting was held in person in the Westampton Township Municipal Building Courtroom. The flag was saluted and there was a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Committeewoman Burkley	Present
Committeeman Carr	Present
Mayor Henley	Present
Committeewoman Mungo	Present
Committeewoman Wright	Present

Township Administrator Wendy Gibson, Township Solicitor Robert Wright, Acting Chief of Police Brian Ferguson and Fire/EMS Chief Craig Farnsworth were also present.

Presentation:

- a. Presentation of Kickball Tournament Trophy, Ms. Tara Astor on

Presentation Resolution:

- a. 140-23 Resolution Appointing Chief of Police

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Ms. Burkley.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Presentation: Oath of Office for Chief of Police Brian Ferguson

Approval of Minutes:

- a. September 5, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Ms. Wright.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

- b. September 5, 2023 Executive Session Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Monthly Reports

- a. Construction
- b. Police
- c. Public Works
- d. Tax Collector
- e. Court

Open Meeting for Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:

None.

All in favor to close public comment.

Resolutions:

- a. 141-23 Payment of Vouchers – this resolution approves the payment of bills through 09/19/2023.

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

- b. 142-23 Resolution Appointing Municipal Clerk

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Ms. Burkley motioned to amend the resolution to either remove the salary amount or have it changed. There was no second.

Mayor Henley motioned to enter into Executive Session to discuss the resolution; seconded by Mr. Carr.

All Ayes.

Motion to approve Resolution 142-23 carried 4-1.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: Burkley

Abstain: none

c. 143-23 Resolution Approving Tax Refund

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Ms. Burkley.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comment:

Township Solicitor Robert Wright addressed the audience regarding comments on the pending warehouse application. He stated that the Committee could not comment, as the application is still pending with the Land Development Board, and that any public comment should be directed to the Land Development Board going forward.

Vernita Jones, 20 Amara Lane, Commander of American Legion Post 509, wanted to let everyone know that September is National Suicide Prevention Month. She stated that between seventeen and twenty-two service veterans take their own lives each day. The rate is more than fifty percent higher than non-veteran adults. The American Legion is launching a campaign called "Be the One" to destigmatize people for asking for mental health support. She requests that people reach out to veterans to help them when they are struggling.

She also wanted to ask Public Works to assist with covering exposed pipes at the back of the building, and help with concrete issues on the handicap ramp.

Michelle Miller, 8 Steinway Court, came to ask the Committee about further funding for repairs to the American Legion building. She stated that they were moving along with the grant funded repairs.

Roger Randall, 200 Olive Street, wanted to comment on the warehouses in the township. He stated he had a petition signed by residents who do not want warehouses in the township. He stated that there were more houses in the Rancocas Village that produced more tax revenue than the warehouses. He stated that the Committee should represent the people of the community.

Kristina Goetz, 109 W. Maple Tree Drive, wanted to state that in Pemberton Township, a Resolution was enacted to pause any new applications for warehouses while they review their Master Plan. She requested that the Township consider enacting the same.

Jeff Savoy, 105 Wills Avenue, commented that he was concerned about the safety issue of traffic from warehouses and new development. He also stated that he was unhappy with the light pollution from the sports complex. He wanted to ask for more buffering along Rancocas Road.

Jeff Scozzafava, 110 Main Street, commented that he brought photos of tree cutting by PSE&G on 3rd Street. He wanted accountability on the instructions for clear cutting live trees.

He also commented that he was concerned about the traffic safety issue on Main Street, showing pictures of tractor trailer trucks and recreational vehicles entering the Rancocas Village.

Tanya Ray, 20 Westwind Way, commented that she was not a fan of the warehouses or ATV riders, and was curious if there was an update on the fence Ordinance for Spring Meadows.

Kelly Gehin-Scott, 3 Valley Farm Road, thanked the Mayor and Administrator for holding a meeting with residents and an expert Arborist to discuss the cutting of trees in the Rancocas Village.

She stated she understood that the Committee Meeting was not the proper forum to discuss the warehouses, but she wanted to comment that she's had to educate herself on land use laws to understand the applications. She wanted to know if the Committee was able to assist with rules and guidelines along with the Land Development Board. She stated that if certain applications are approved, the Township will need to do damage control for the safety and traffic issues that will arise.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson and Township Clerk Wendy Gibson. He also noted that he spoke about the property located on the corner of Springside and Rancocas a few meetings prior, and that it is being treated as a storage lot for parking tractor trailers. He requested that the Township reach out to the property owner to enforce the land use Ordinance.

Donald Cherici, 210 Bridge Street, commented that the traffic through the Rancocas Village is dangerous. He requested that the Committee consider the historic value of the area. He noted the noise and vibration of the traffic through the area.

Angela Zollner, 105 Wills Avenue, commented that she won't reiterate what was already said by other residents, but she stated that the historic nature of the Rancocas Village was what attracted her to it. Since she moved in, she's seen development just like other overcrowded towns. She stated that residents will speak up and requested that the Committee consider the value of the area with regard to safety, traffic and crime.

Cynthia Luongo, 122 Bridge Street, commented that she loved Westampton and the Rancocas Village, noting that it was special and not like other areas.

Rebecca McGrath, 226 Main Street, commented that she will be able to see the new warehouse from her bedroom window and will be able to hear the trucks. She wanted the Committee to follow the guidelines and maintain the buffer area but stated that safety was her main issue. She said that she helped her neighbor with a fallen tree while tractor trailer trucks were passing them on the street. She also stated that there are no sidewalks in the Village, and there is no where to avoid traffic coming down the street. She is concerned that the traffic will impede school functions and the safety of the students as well as the residents.

Robert Thorpe, 222 Olive Street, thanked the Mayor, Administrator and Public Works for coming out to handle the tree issue. He stated that he is the Chair for the Historic Preservation Commission, and that he spoke to Mayor Henley to make changes to the Historic Preservation Ordinance to change the commission from an Advisory Commission to a Strong Commission, which would make future projects in the buffer zone need approval before they go to the Land Development Board for approval.

Trina Wakely, 200 Main Street, stated that she lives in the oldest house in the Village. She stated that she inquired about traffic to Burlington County, who passed it back to the Township Committee. She stated there are no stop signs on Main Street and requested a four-way stop by the Post Office. She said that the revenue collected from ticketing could fund the police officer hired to patrol.

David Fisher, 227 Main Street, stated that there were trucks coming through the Village, and the streets were not able to accommodate the weight of the trucks. He also stated that it vibrated the homes, which would not be able to be restored properly. He stated there are no signs to stop the trucks from entering. He asked what could be done. He also thanked the Police Department for ticketing an illegal turn on Rancocas Road.

Gil Gehin-Scott, 3 Valley Farm Road, commented that he would like the warehouse to be as visually historic as possible, or make it more visually appealing. He requested that the Land Development Board enact visual guidelines for the developer to adhere to.

Victoria Stevenson, 210 Main Street, commented that there are very old buildings, and that the area is very congested. She stated that the warehouse and Laurel Run will cause more traffic congestion.

Diego Minacapelli, 211 Bridge Street, thanked the Mayor and Administrator for the meeting regarding tree cutting on 3rd Street. He stated he reached out regarding trash in the Village, and it was handled. He noted that communication was the key to accomplishing goals. He stated he was the President of the Rancocas Civic Association and also the President of the Westampton Historical Society and offered assistance with any questions about the associations or the Community Center.

He also commented about the traffic between Main and Bridge Streets, and had previously asked about a four-way stop. He requested the Committee to act proactively before the traffic becomes worse.

He also noted that he requested assistance for a special needs resident, and would like an update on his inquiry.

He requested that the Committee reach out to the Land Development Board to enforce the recommendations made for the warehouses.

Gil Gehin-Scott, 3 Valley Farm Road, commented that someone was illegally dumping fencing and grass cuttings. Mayor Henley suggested he address it with the Administrator or Public Works after the meeting.

Dates to Remember:

Next Township Committee Meeting October 3rd @ 7PM, Historic Commission Sept 27th @ 7PM, Land Development Board Meeting October 4th @7PM, Recreation Committee Meeting October 11th @7PM, Timbuctoo Day Sept 30th @ 11AM Church Street, Fire Prevention Open House Oct 12th @6PM.

Committee Liaison Reports/Comments:

Committeewoman Nancy Burkley commented that there are eight streets in Rancocas that are striped for traffic. She stated that there is not enough room for a truck or ambulance to come through, and that the roads are old and cannot handle the traffic. She noted historical figures that were residents of the Village. She stated that the trees in the buffer are important for homes and should not be cut down.

She congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson. She stated that she met with Superintendent DiDonato and that the construction is going well. She stated they will begin strategic planning for the future.

She also commented on the American Legion building, noting that she spoke to the members about getting a historic grant for the improvements. She is very concerned that we support them, because the building is in disrepair and there are other groups that utilize the building.

Committeewoman Jaime Mungo congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson, noting he will do a fantastic job. She stated that she appreciated the residents coming out and that the Committee hears their concerns, even if there is nothing that the Committee can do to help. She directed concerns to the Land Development Board.

Committeewoman Genel Cook-Wright congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson, stating that he will serve as a great leader. She thanked the residents for coming out, even though the Committee doesn't have the ability to assist at this time.

Committeeman Odise Carr congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson, stating he will lead the men and women into a great future. He commented on the playground at Spring Meadows and thanked Public Works. He thanked the residents who came out to voice their opinions and comments. He stated he would support a strong Committee for the Village.

Mayor Henley commented on the playground at Spring Meadows, noting he saw kids playing on the new equipment, and that it was a good feeling to see the kids playing while the parents watched from the benches.

He congratulated Chief Brian Ferguson, stating that he came up through the ranks and that he deserved the position. He stated that he felt good seeing all the support from everyone who came out to his appointment.

He commented that there was a Master Arborist that came out to talk about the trees in the Village. He stated that the intent was not to eliminate the buffer zone, but to make sure everyone was safe. He stated he drove around and saw other trees falling and offered his assistance. He stated that the grant writers and PSE&G Government Affairs will come together to offer assistance.

He commented that there are going to be situations that arise that aren't very pretty, but the Township must have a plan to provide expectations instead of blindsiding people. He stated the Township would try to make a better sound barrier than what was there. He commented on the trucks entering the Village and what can be done going forward.

He commented that the fence ordinance will be addressed at the October 3rd meeting. He stated that the police officers have addressed the illegal parking in town.

He commented that the Committee appointed the Administrator as Clerk, and then created a position so that there is a backup individual in the building to run operations when she is off. The position will also handle Open Space Coordination, which will assist with preservation of farmland and also assist the Administrator with other operational functions.

Executive Session

Resolution No. 09.19.2023 - Resolution Authorizing the Township Committee and Support Staff to Meet in Private Session and Authorizing the Exclusion of the Public From that Portion of the Meeting Dealing with Specific Issues Requiring Non-Public Discussions: Attorney-Client Privilege – Personnel.

Motion to approve executive session resolution was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Ms. Wright.

Motion carried 5-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Wright, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

The committee exited the regular meeting at 9:10 pm and entered into Executive Session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Gibson, Municipal Clerk