

WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

7:00 PM REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

June 20, 2016

The meeting was called to order and at 7:03 PM by Mayor Daniels. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 14, 2016. The flag was saluted. Mayor Daniels wanted the moment of silence to be in memoriam of those whom were victims of the Orlando shootings. There was a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Committeewoman Chang	Present
Committeeman Lopez	Present
Committeewoman Smith-Hartman	Present
Committeewoman Teleisa	Present
Mayor Daniels	Present

Al Marmero, Solicitor, was present.

Donna Ryan, Clerk/Administrator and Marion Karp, Deputy Clerk was present.

Approve 6/20/16 Agenda – motion to approve made by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. All voted yes.

Closed Session Minutes of 6/6/2016 – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. Mr. Daniels, Mr. Lopez, and Ms. Smith-Hartman voted yes, Ms. Chang and Ms. Teleisa abstained. Regular Meeting Minutes 6/20/16 – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. Ms. Chang, Mr. Daniels, Mr. Lopez, and Ms. Smith-Hartman voted yes, Ms. Teleisa abstained.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Vernita Jones – asked what the emergency appropriation was for. Donna Ryan explained that it was for the purchase of the Rancocas Friends School, we need to raise the down payment as well as the bond payment for this year; we are splitting the cost with the school. We need to do this to get the money on the books. We will purchase the bond anticipation notes.

Robert Davies – is curious when this acquisition became an issue. He never heard about this before this evening. Donna explained that we need to act on this quickly as there are two other offers to purchase the property. He asked if we are looking at it for a possible expansion of Westampton schools. Mayor Daniels answered yes, potentially. He gave Mr. Davies a history of the school and a background of what has occurred over the last few months regarding the school. The Committee thinks it is a great opportunity to

acquire the buildings at a fraction of what they are worth. He explained that we will be realizing increased amounts of school children in the Township and this is much more cost effective than building or adding on our schools. Mr. Lopez explained that the Board of Education has forecast a cost of 12 to 19 million dollars if a new school was to be built; and this would have to occur during the next 5 years. Acquiring the school would avoid a large tax hike for residents. Mr. Davies asked if an inspection has been done on the property and if an appraisal has been done. Mr. Daniels answered that these have not been done yet but will be. There is a degree of urgency here. He stated there will be a full presentation made for Township residents requiring the acquisition. The State does inspections of schools yearly. Mr. Davies wanted to know what would happen to the facility if it sat idle; Mr. Daniels answered that the Westampton preschool classes hope to move in this fall so the building would not remain empty.

Maureen Malecki – as a longtime resident and employee of the school district she is thrilled to see this on the agenda. The schools in Westampton are overcrowded; we will be able to expand our preschool program which we receive tuition for. This seems very financially feasible for the Township. Ms. Chang asked if Ms. Malecki is a member of the school board; she is not. She asked if she had taken part in any discussions on this acquisition; she answered that she thought no discussions had taken place in public as of yet.

Mr. Daniels stated that if the resolution and ordinance pass, the Township will perform their due diligence, along with meetings and public information sessions between the Township Committee and the Board of Education. There are many more upsides to this acquisition other than the revenue that the preschool program generates.

Vernita Jones – wants the public to be notified and have it be well advertised.

Maureen Malecki – stated that Gene Blair did inspections when the school was constructed and she is sure that it is fine. The school also does yearly inspections as does the fire department. The school is extremely well outfitted. Mr. Lopez stated that an environmental survey will be performed. Second reading on the ordinance would take place on July 5th; there will be a public information session that will be scheduled at 6 PM. It will be a joint meeting with the Board of Education, if possible.

Maureen Malecki asked what would happen if a charter school would purchase the property. Donna Ryan answered that a charter school would take funds from the school district. The layout of the site and floor plans of the school would be posted on the website as soon as possible.

Janet Curran – at all the meetings she has attended she has heard that all the new developments would not affect our school system much. She thinks the residents of the Township should have the right to vote on whether they want to purchase this or not.

Mr. Daniels answered that there is no way to predetermine the proposed number of new students; instead they have to base everything on projection models. He had hoped that

the Friends Academy could continue to operate as they have been; there were many efforts to try and save the school. This opportunity makes good economic sense. Janet Curran agrees, if we can afford to.

Mr. Davies – asked if the benefit/cost analysis would be posted on the website. Once we have the information back from the state we would do so.

A new school addition would cost approximately 17 million dollars, while a new school would amount to approximately 24 million dollars. The Board of Education has done studies on both of these scenarios.

Vincent Knott – a simple search shows the assessment of the Friends School to be at about 6 million dollars so he thinks it is a great acquisition.

New Business

Police Report – Patrolman Einstein and Sgt. Lutz should be commended for their efforts. Ms. Chang thanked Lt. Rogers for his appearance at Law Day. It is the first year an officer has attended. Mayor Daniels also mentioned the two interns that have been with the Police department this summer.

EMS Report – no further comments made

Resolutions

56-16 Payment of Vouchers – motion to approve made by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Teleisa. All voted yes.

57-16 Emergency Appropriation for Down Payment of a Bond Ordinance to Finance purchase of Rancocas Friends Academy – motion to approve made by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. Mr. Daniels, Mr. Lopez and Ms. Smith-Hartman voted yes, Ms. Chang and Ms. Teleisa voted no.

58-16 2016-17 Liquor License Renewals - motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. All voted yes.

59-16 Refund Homestead Rebates on Exempt Properties - motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Chang. All voted yes.

60-16 Pavement Management Report/Holly Lane Improvements – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. All voted yes.

Ordinances

16-2016 Amend Chapter 232, Vehicles and Traffic (second reading) – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Chang. This was opened to the public for comment. Mr. Davies asked if the County Engineer was contacted; it is the County's requirement that Westampton Township prohibits these turns. All voted yes.

17-2016 Bond Ordinance for purchase of Friends Academy, Block 201, Lot 6 (315 Bridge Street) (first reading) – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman.

Ms. Chang commented that she heard Mr. Daniels say today that we are contemplating a shared service with the Board of Education; she hasn't heard one time our superintendent say that we need a new school. She isn't ready to make a 2.5 million dollar decision on something that has never been discussed. There has been no information from the school district; she thinks it is at least premature. She won't vote on a "perhaps". She read a BCT newspaper article from 2014 written by Norm Miller. It was regarding the County gifting property to Westampton Township and residents coming out against it. Now we are paying 1.2 million and she has seen no commitment from the schools.

Ms. Teleisa doesn't like to be rushed; there are so many unanswered questions and she sees residents with the same concerns. She wants to see an agreement that the school district is agreeing to pay half. This is only going to add to our debt. We don't need the new school at this point; what benefits will the Township realize right now? She wants to see a plan; she thinks it is a burden on the tax payers.

Mr. Lopez promises to do what is in Westampton's best interest and he has tried his hardest to execute this. When faced with important decisions he hears hypocritical statements being made. He remembers a particular meeting where school superintendent Virginia Grossman mentioned the need to expand our schools and that she was in frequent communication with then Mayor Chang. Both Ms. Chang and Ms. Teleisa voted for projects that will bring students into our schools; he finds it hypocritical that they made these decisions and now they, the new Committee members are forced to clean them up. Quite frankly, this is a steal, being able to purchase this for one quarter of what it is worth today. This is in the best interests of the residents of Westampton.

Ms. Smith-Hartman thinks Mr. Lopez did a phenomenal job in explaining; as a real estate agent this is an opportunity to get a great property at a great price. If we don't act now we will lose out on it. If it turns out we don't need it we should be able to sell it at a great profit.

Mayor Daniels stated that we need to act on this now; we can always sell the property at a later date. This is an opportunistic moment that we need to avail ourselves of.

Mr. Daniels, Mr. Lopez and Ms. Smith-Hartman voted yes; Ms. Chang and Ms. Teleisa voted no. The Bond Ordinance did not pass, as a 2/3 vote is needed.

Correspondence

Burlington County – Brush/Foliage Clearing along County Roads. Residents need to be notified that they need to mow to the edge of the road.

Ms. Chang – received a letter of thanks from Ms. Donnelly regarding her student's attendance at Law Day; she is a teacher at WMS.

Dates to Remember

Westampton Township Farmers Market – every Thursday at the Burlington County Library from 4 to 7 PM. We need produce farmers to come, as well as other vendors.

Ms. Teleisa asked if the changeable sign that the police have could be placed out on Woodlane Road. Chief Joe Otto answered that we could do that.

Ms. Smith-Hartman thanked Acting EMS/Fire Chief Farnsworth for posting about the Worrell girls and the Olympic swimming trials; it is an amazing accomplishment. They start June 26th and run through July 6th; thanks for posting it on the Firehouse sign. Donna Ryan's daughter Wendy Gordon, a biomedical researcher, was named a Pew Scholar this year.

Comments from Department Heads and Professionals

Police Chief Joe Otto – National Night out will be Tuesday August 2nd, they will move over to the Public Safety Center this year since they have outgrown the WMS site.

Acting EMS/Fire Chief Farnsworth – thanked Ms. Teleisa for attending the firehouse dinner last Friday. Ms. Teleisa commented that members of Westampton's EMS came over to the Farmer's Market last week; she thanked them for their support.

Ms. Chang – doesn't think it is appropriate for she and Ms. Teleisa to be disparaged; they simply wanted more information.

Mr. Lopez – thanked all for coming out tonight to the meeting.

Open to Public Comment

Vernita Jones – isn't for or against the school acquisition; she does think we need more information; it should be advertised very well and we need a cost analysis to be completed. We need to make an informed decision about this.

Janet Curran – Timbuctoo Day was wonderful. Veterans Day is a very special day. She is upset by the loss of open space and farmland in Westampton over the years.

Mayor Daniels – thanked Janet for her comments. 113 kids graduated from WMS last week; all have the opportunity to do something great. He presented an award to a child whose father came all the way from Afghanistan as a surprise for the graduation.

There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Karp, Deputy Municipal Clerk