

October 8, 2020

The Township Committee met on the above date via Gotomeeting.com with Mayor Liedtka calling the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Following the flag salute, roll call was taken showing present: Mayor Jeremy Liedtka, Deputy Mayor Lido Panfili, Committeemen Shreekant Dhopte and Michael Russo and Committeewoman Denise Koetas-Dale. Also present John Gillespie, Township Attorney; Joe Hirsh, Township Engineer, Tom Sahol, Township Administrator and Caryn Hoyer, Township Clerk.

The Open Public Meetings Act statement was read and compliance noted.

AGENDA MATTER(S) REQUIRING RECUSAL(S)

None

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC – MATTERS APPEARING ON THE AGENDA ONLY

None

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Russo made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to approve the September 24th minutes. Roll Call was taken: Mr. Dhopte – yes; Ms. Koetas-Dale – yes; Mr. Panfili – yes; Mr. Russo – yes; Mr. Liedtka – yes.

Mr. Panfili stated there is an error in the May 7th meeting minutes regarding his recusal on the Ward Avenue redevelopment discussion. The minutes notate that Mr. Panfili recused himself from the discussion because he owns a property in that area. However, that is not true. He does not own nor has he ever owned property in that area west of the NJ Turnpike. His grandparents' estate has a small parcel which is now owned by three family members who do not live in his house. Mr. Russo made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to amend the May 7th minutes to reflect the correction. Mr. Russo made the motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte. Roll Call was taken: Mr. Dhopte – yes; Ms. Koetas-Dale – yes; Mr. Russo – yes; Mr. Liedtka – yes. Mr. Panfili recused himself. Resolution approved.

TOWNSHIP ENGINEER REPORT

Harker Road Phase II – The contractor finished the repairs which were the last items on their punch list.

Sykesville Phases I & II – This project was awarded to Earl Asphalt. Construction meeting scheduled for October 13th at 1pm.

Sykesville Road Phase III – This is from Herman Black Road to the pond. Taking bids on October 22nd.

Restrooms at Fenton Lane Recreation Bldg. – Mr. Hirsh is trying to schedule a pre-con meeting for next week sometime with the contractor. Mayor Liedtka and Mr. Panfili asked to attend as well.

Phase IV Traditions & Phase I of Harker Road – Both of their maintenance bonds run out next year so Mr. Hirsh will be putting together a punch list for them.

RESOLUTIONS

Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Mr. Panfili to approve Resolution 2020-10-1. Roll Call was taken: Mr. Dhopte – yes; Ms. Koetas-Dale – yes; Mr. Panfili – yes; Mr. Russo – yes; Mr. Liedtka – yes. Resolution approved.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-10-1

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PREPARATION OF BID PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS AND TO SOLICIT BIDS FOR PROPERTY MAINTENANCE OF MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE AND PARKS WITHIN OLD YORK VILLAGE

WHEREAS, the Township has a need for property maintenance services for certain public lands of open space and parks within the Old York Village section of the Township, which services include landscaping, mowing, and general maintenance of said public property; and

WHEREAS, in preparation for the 2021 budget, it is necessary to commence the bidding process for these services

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Township Committee of the Township of Chesterfield, County of Burlington, State of New Jersey does hereby authorize the Township Clerk, Qualified Purchasing Agent and the Township Administrator to prepare bid specifications and advertise and solicit bids as per the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.

~~~~~                      ~~~~~                      ~~~~~

## **DISCUSSION**

DPW Rate Scale – Mayor Liedtka believes we need to put a pay scale in place in order to show DPW employees we want longevity. He suggests a step scale similar to what the police have in place however not contractual. Mayor Liedtka does not want any more turnover in the Public Works as our longest tenured employee has been here 3 years. With the budget season coming up, Mayor would like to consider this option. Mr. Dhopte asked Mr. Sahol to give some ideas and benefits. Mr. Sahol stated this is very traditional and usually contractual. It is good for employee retention as they can see the longevity. He will outline in detail and send to the Committee for their review.

Farmland Preservation Acquisition Target List – Mr. Sahol stated the “ATL” is shared with Burlington County towns to find out if there are properties that would like to be preserved. The County cannot move forward on the ATL without the consent of the Committee. Mr. Gillespie stated if the County chooses a property to be preserved it will have to come back to the Committee for approval. The Committee was in agreement. Mr. Gillespie asked if anyone has a property on the ATL. The answer was yes, family. No comment is necessary however, Mr. Sahol will respond to the County and advise one property on the list is already preserved through TDR.

Economic Development Committee – Mayor Liedtka advised the Township Committee he gave Mr. Sahol some suggestions in order to prepare an ordinance to establish the EDC Ordinance to be introduced at the next meeting. Mr. Sahol suggests consolidating the advisory boards and/or committees into a single chapter within the Code. The Shade Tree Commission establishment will be in there as well.

~~~~~                      ~~~~~                      ~~~~~

Mr. Panfili said that over the last couple weeks there has been a lot of rumors and misinformation posted on social media in regard to the vote of the redevelopment designation on Ward Avenue and why and where it came from. In the past year, two farms went for sale in that area, Wagner Youth Facility is closing and we have heard that Bordentown Community Soccer may leave Friendship Fields. The chair of the Planning Board suggested the redevelopment designation on Ward Avenue a few months back and it was well received by the Township Committee. Mr. Panfili stated the rumors that the committee is looking to put warehouses there cannot be further from the truth. Maybe a sports facility, warehouses are not his intention. The Township Committee is doing this in order to see who is interested in these properties and to get ratables for our town. Mr. Panfili asked his fellow committee members for their input so we are all on the same page. Mayor Liedtka agreed the Planning Board chair recommended the area to the Township Committee. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated this is very early in the process. All of this takes place at public meetings. Mayor Liedtka said that the Township picked up the bill for the planning services but we can get money back from the developer. Mr. Gillespie stated it is not unusual for the Township to pay for the designation study and development study and get reimbursed by the developer. Old York had already come to the Township and that cannot be included. The specific use for that area has not been discussed. Mr. Gillespie has been trying to get a meeting with DOC to discuss the properties owned by the State.

Mr. Sahol stated the Recycling Center seems to have settled down and is running smoothly. No more illegal dumping has been happening. Mr. Sahol is still looking to expand the recycling center by moving forward with textile recycling in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Sahol sent out a leaf notice on the Township Facebook page and it was very well received. He said he has been posting on the Township Facebook page but still cannot get access to Next Door. He is currently working with a neighboring town for a shared service for leaf pick up. He stated grass is a solid waste and he is trying to work with the three waste haulers that come through the town to get them to work with the residents. Mr. Sahol stated in response to comments regarding the soil removal behind the township building, he reviewed all of the minutes surrounding what took place. He is concerned that the allegations touch on all the committee members, and the allegations are unfounded and unfair. He is confident that everything was done correctly and during the public meetings.

Mayor Liedtka spoke about the dirt pile and said that in 2014 the Township purchased the old school from the BOE and he knew the township would need fill once the building came down. He inquired about the fill from the round-about on Bordentown-Chesterfield Road that was being completed by the County. The County had the fill dumped on the Township property. Some of the fill was used but not all was needed. He proposed in 2017 to make two multipurpose fields behind the municipal building but that did not occur. In 2018, the fill was put out to auction three times but no one bid on it. Mr. Panfili stated he reviewed numerous complaints from home owners regarding the dirt pile. Mr. Panfili

stated Mayor Liedtka recused himself on the vote to remove the dirt pile and the remaining four committee members voted unanimously for Herman Liedtka Inc. to remove the dirt pile. Mr. Panfili asked those committee members if he feels we did anything wrong. They all replied no. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated nothing was done wrong and a number of times we tried to sell. Mr. Dhopte stated he appreciates the statements made by Mayor Liedtka and Mr. Panfili and stated it is election season and there will be rumors flying around. He said the Committee is putting out the facts and if anyone has questions they should contact the Township Administrator.

PAYMENT OF THE BILLS

Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to approve the bill list. Roll Call was taken: Mr. Dhopte – yes; Ms. Koetas-Dale – yes; Mr. Panfili – yes; Mr. Russo – yes; Mr. Liedtka – yes.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Russo made a motion to open to public comment seconded by Mr. Dhopte. All were in favor.

Dale Walton - 179 Chesterfield-Crosswicks Road asked Ms. Koetas-Dale about her post on Nextdoor about how she can be opposed to what Old York Country Club is going to do when there is not an application yet and she voted for it. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated she does not support a pilot program for a warehouse. Mr. Walton asked if she was in support of the tax abatement for the shops at Old York Village. She stated she was, because they are having problems renting out the stores. The tax abatement should be looked at carefully on a case by case basis. She does not believe that tax abatement for a warehouse is warranted. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated she agreed to move forward with the redevelopment west of the turnpike on Ward Avenue.

Susan Layton - 90A Bordentown-Chesterfield Road is looking forward to meeting Mr. Sahol. She enjoyed hearing him on the calls and said he is very informative. Ms. Layton was very unhappy when the Recycling Center was closed down but wanted to say that Public Works Vincent and Morris are always very helpful at the center. She feels the Recycling Center has been made right and thinks it looks great. Ms. Layton submitted an OPRA request for the PW reports and found out that a landscaper dumped mulch, weeds and yard debris that was prohibited at the Recycling Center. He came from 3 Rosewood Drive which is the home of Denise Koetas-Dale. Ms. Layton is appalled that she allowed residents to post negatively about the Recycling Center when she knew why there were issues based on her own experience and could have posted reasons not just hers. She is very upset with what is going on with social media. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated she is not responsible for what other people write on social media and she is not writing anything negative on social media. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated that Ms. Hoyer informed her that her landscaper dumped illegally. Ms. Koetas-Dale called her landscaper immediately and asked him to stop. She did not know her landscaper was going to dump there and does not appreciate being called out at a public meeting.

Dale Walton - 179 Chesterfield-Crosswicks Road stated he was the one that attended the May 7th Township Committee meeting and asked for the dirt pile to be removed. He was tired of looking at the mound. He then made a suggestion to have someone local remove it which was Herman Liedtka Inc. It was a unanimous vote to have Mayor Liedtka remove

it free of charge. He finds it disturbing that some people are claiming the Mayor is benefiting from removing the dirt and making him out to be a bad guy in this situation. Mr. Walton appreciates everything that Mayor Liedtka and the township committee did to remove the dirt pile at no cost to the tax payers.

Ms. Hoyer stated Mr. Panfili is having problems with his camera and is trying to correct it. Mr. Panfili stated he is on the call however, his camera keeps going in and out.

David Sass - 15 Old York Road - has questions about the area in need of redevelopment. He would like to know the process if this will be offered a pilot program and what other strategic developments are out there. Mayor Liedtka stated the Master Plan Reexamination completed a few years ago indicated some areas could be designated for commercial zoning but no rehabilitation or redevelopment. The area west of the turnpike was suggested by Brian Kelly for redevelopment in order to be pro-active. He would like to have solar and green throughout it as well said Mayor Liedtka. He stated that other than the Old York Country Club we don't have any area to develop in Chesterfield. We have 13,000 acres in Chesterfield, 7,600 acres are preserved. There are very few areas left in town that can be developed. Mr. Gillespie said most of the property on Ward is owned by the State and they plan to meet with them. The purpose of the redevelopment study is to see what businesses are interested in coming into town. Mr. Gillespie said if we do a redevelopment plan, an applicant will not need to get a use variance since a redevelopment plan is a strategic way of achieving redevelopment as opposed to going through a typical use variance and site plan application process. Mr. Sass asked the township has thought about running an RFP process for businesses to come in and make it more competitive. Mr. Gillespie said he has done that in other towns but the study to determine if it is even feasible is in the process of being done now. Mr. Sass stated that solar farms are hot right now and there are places for it in Chesterfield. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated the area for redevelopment is a lot of different properties and asked if it would be assessed individually. Mr. Gillespie explained there are three different area in the Township so the planner will evaluate all three areas as three separate areas. They are (1) old firehouse properties (2) Emergency Squad & Old Municipal Building properties (3) properties on Ward Avenue west of the Turnpike. Once the study is complete, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing and make recommendations.

Shamita Kumar - 39 Harness Way commended Committeewoman Denise Koetas-Dale for handling being attacked at the meeting with dignity. You can't control what is being said on social media. She stated people should not be allowed to speak like that at a meeting. If you have a problem with someone, go talk to them.

Dawn Donahue - 79 Bordentown-Chesterfield Road stated the candidates should not be allowed to put their signs on township property. There are two right now and they should be removed. She is tired of what is going on in regard to social media in town. Ms. Donahue would like the residents to call or email the township if they have questions instead of posting negativity. She does not agree that the township should be helping the shops at Old York Village with tax abatements. She does not want higher taxes and older people are going have to leave.

Christina Hoggan - 396 Chesterfield-Jacobstown Road stated she hates election time. Ms. Koetas-Dale and Mayor Liedtka are not responsible for what people say on social media and she would like everyone to get along. People are going to have opinions.

Both sides are responsible. We do not have to tear each other down in the process. We all want what is best for the town.

Hearing no further comments, Mr. Panfili made a motion seconded by Ms. Koetas-Dale to close public comment. All were in favor.

Mayor Liedtka stated Ms. Hoggan is correct and there are going to be those people on both sides who are nasty and he apologized to Ms. Koetas-Dale saying that he should have stopped it earlier. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated it came out of left field and apologized for losing her cool.

Mr. Panfili said a few meetings ago he made a statement that the cohesiveness of the committee is unseen. Social media attacks are personal and hurtful and not true. We have a responsibility as the committee to establish the truth and support each other no matter what political party we are with. We have to take the lead. The misinformation needs to stop and provide valid and transparent information and we need to continue to do that.

Mayor Liedtka stated we do come together and that is shown in the minutes and votes on everything. It gets ugly every year this time. It is hurtful to the families as well.

Mr. Dhopte – suggested Mr. Sass to talk to the economic development committee when it is formed. That is the purpose of the committee is to gather information and they will bring it back to the township committee.

Mr. Panfili made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Caryn M. Hoyer, RMC
Municipal Clerk