

**TOWNSHIP OF HARDWICK  
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17, 2024**

**OPENING ROLL CALL:**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Jacksic at 7:00 pm. Present was Deputy Mayor Meuse and Committeeman Lovell. Also, present were DPW Supervisor Campbell, Chief Financial Officer Rolef, Township Attorney Igor Bykov, and Municipal Clerk Shippis.

**FLAG SALUTE:**

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT:**

“Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, P.L. 1975, Ch. 231 setting forth the time, date, place, and purpose of this Public Meeting through a legal notice published in New Jersey Herald and The Express times following the Township’s Annual Reorganization Meeting at which time the 2024 meeting schedule was adopted.”.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**I-80 DWG update.**

Tara Mezzanotte stated that she met with Assemblyman DiMaio and talked about the safety of the I-80 project and that nothing has been done on the design deficiencies of the “s” curve and the speed limit. Assemblyman DiMaio would like a briefing from New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) before receiving resolutions from townships so he can hear both sides. Mrs. Mezzanotte addressed construction safety concerns that are going on right now and requested that a resolution of concern be prepared for the next meeting for review. The Committee agreed and thanked Mrs. Mezzanotte for all her hard work.

**DEPARTMENT REPORT:**

**Tax Assessor Rich Motyka**

Tax Assessor Motyka provided information on a reevaluation for Hardwick Township with the cost estimated to be over \$100,000. Maps should be completed by September at the latest.

**DPW Supervisor Campbell**

DPW Department took care of about 20 Ash trees that fell from the last storm.

**Chief Financial Officer Rolef**

CFO Rolef reported that the township Auditors will be in the office starting February 20, 2024 to start the annual financial statements. Once it is completed, they will start on the budget process. CFO Rolef will reach out to the Auditors on budget meeting dates.

**Fire Tower/Forest Fire Bob Wolf**

Mr. Wolf stated that preparation is starting for the forest fire season with annual refreshers.

**Bill Hughes-Stillwater Fire Department.**

Stated that Dwayne Banghart is the new fire chief and hopes to make it to the next meeting to

introduce himself. Mr. Hughes provided the 2023-year-end report.

**MINUTES:**

November 1, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

**Motion made by Lovell, second by Meuse and carried to approve November 1, 2023, Meeting minutes.**

December 6, 2023, Meeting Minutes

**Motion made by Meuse, second by Jacksic and carried to approve December 6, 2023, meeting minutes. Committeeman Lovell abstained.**

**ORDINANCE:**

**Public Hearing/ Adoption**

2023-21- Ordinance of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, Amending and Supplementing Sections 5-1.7 “Animal Control Officer” of the Township Code to Allow the Township to Enter into Contract(s) with Other Municipalities Pursuant to Shared Service Agreements.

**Motin made by Lovell, second by Meuse and carried to open public comment.**

**No public comment.**

**Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to close public comment.**

**Motion made by Lovell, second by Meuse and approved by roll call vote: Lovell—yes, Meuse—yes, Jacksic—yes for adoption of Ordinance 2023-21**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. 2024-19-Resolution Authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to Execute the Interlocal Services Agreement Between the Pollution Control Financing Authority of Warren County and the Township of Hardwick.
2. 2024-20-Transfer of Funds
3. 2024-21 Approving Payment of Vouchers.

**Consent Agenda item #2 was pulled.**

**Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and approved by roll call vote: Lovell—yes, Meuse—yes, Jacksic—yes January 17, 2024, for Consent Agenda.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Spring Valley Rd.**

Mayor Jacksic reported that the county is deciding if they are going to handle the project or if it is to be bid out.

**RAVE**

No update

**Township Signs**

DPW Supervisor is waiting for quotes.

**Voiceover**

Up and running with some issues that will be addressed.

**Cell Tower Lease**

Township Attorney Bykov stated that the lease is still being discussed with Gaelic Communications LLC.

**Committee Liaisons**

The committee agreed on liaisons.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **Tree Removal Sample Ordinance-**

Attorney Bykov is waiting for a return call from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regarding the tree sample ordinance that all towns are required to pass and stating that most of the ordinance does not apply to a small town like Hardwick.

### **November 2024 Meeting.**

Clerk Shippis addressed the November meeting conflicts with the League of Municipalities. The committee agreed to change the meeting date to November 15, 2024.

**Budget Workshop Meeting Date**-discussed during Department reports.

### **ACO 2024 Agreement**

Attorney Bykov explained the change that was made to the agreement. The committee agreed to the change. Attorney Bykov will forward the updated agreement to Newton Township.

## **CORRESPONDENCE:**

None at this time.

## **TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY:**

No report.

## **TOWNSHIP CLERK:**

No report.

## **TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Committeeman Lovell spoke to the committee about a few prospects for Risk Management Consultant. Committeeman Lovell requested that the interview process begin at the next meeting which the committee agreed to.

Deputy Mayor Meuse had no report.

Mayor Jacksic stated that a letter was received from New Jersey Department of Transportation on the resurfacing of Route 80 between mile markers .5 and 12.8 including the ramps. The starting date is projected to be the summer of 2024 with completion in the fall of 2024.

Mayor Jacksic reported that all residents are restored with electricity and cable from the last storm which had strong winds.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Smrita Choubey founder and CEO of Veda Farms spoke to the committee with respect to the possibilities of the cultivation and cannabis in Hardwick Township. Veda Farms is a holistic medicine company and they are interested in providing holistic medicine to pharmacies. The company has received a conditional license to cultivate cannabis in the state of new jersey and they are in contract to purchase a property on Millbrook Rd. Veda Farms is working on an

agricultural approach to cannabis. Ms. Choubey stated that they are seeking an ordinance change that will allow the cultivation and manufacturing of cannabis. Members of Veda Farms were present and introduced themselves to the committee.

Attorney Bykov will do some research on the state's requirements for cultivation of cannabis and manufacturing. The committee agreed to review the proposal prepared by Smrita Choubey and will discuss it at the next meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to go into Executive Session at 8:05 pm.  
2024-22 Resolution Authorizing Executive Session

- Attorney advice

Motion made by Meuse, second by Lovell and carried to close Executive Session at 8:55 pm.

Attorney Bykov stated that the Hardwick Township Committee emerged from Executive Session at 8:55 pm where one matter was discussed regarding Attorney Privilege no action will be taken and copies of the minutes will be available as such time as the committee determines there is no harm to the public interest.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion made by Meuse, second by Jacksic and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:86 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kristin Shipps, RMC