

**MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 17, 2012 WORKSHOP MEETING
HELD AT 7:30 PM
51 WEST MAIN STREET
FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor J. Nolan Higgins, Councilman Michael DiBenedetto, Councilman John Newman, Councilman George Schnurr, Councilwoman Sharon Shutzer and Councilman Jaye Sims.

Absent: Councilman Kevin Kane

Also present were Borough Attorney Kerry Higgins, Borough Administrator Joseph B. Bellina, Chief Glenn Roberts and Borough Clerk Traci L. DiBenedetto

2. ROUTINE TRANSACTIONS-SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA (See Attachment I).

See the permanent minute book for the minutes and the resolution book for the attachments.

3. OPEN SPACE PACE UPDATE.

Mayor Higgins stated the event will be held on Saturday, September 29, 2012 at the racetrack to promote horse racing. A parade of horses will begin at 8:00 AM at the intersection of Court and Main Street and travel up Main Street to the race track. The race track is certainly an important part of our economy and our social fabric here and we want to do everything we can to promote the harness racing industry in New Jersey.

4. STATE OF NEW JERSEY – BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST. (SEE ATTACHMENT III.)

Joseph Bellina, Borough Administrator stated the best practices inventory encourages municipalities to embrace internal practices that promote financial accountability and transparency. If you don't achieve a certain plateau, you would jeopardize the last portion of your state aid. The Borough is in the upper tier so there is no threat of us losing state aid. There are 50 questions that are asked, 29 this year are new. Each year the State Comptroller delves into particular areas of municipal government. This year he focused on the health insurance and how the contracts are awarded. That did not affect us because we are enrolled in the state health benefits program. The other was a review of the health benefits to make sure that there aren't any

“ghosts” receiving benefits. We were fine there. Also, they want to make sure we are in compliance with the pensions and we are only paying people who should be paid a pension. Mr. Bellina stated he wished that he shared in Councilman Schnurr’s discussion earlier because he could’ve gone over some of the “no’s” too. One of the “no’s” is if we have a more stringent Pay to Play then the state law. We do not. The state law has certain guidelines and we follow that. Another question: do we require mandatory training for elected officials? That is up to the governing body to make certain that happens. Another question: do we have a written policy on surplus? We really don’t. We discuss it at length during the finance committee meetings. Another item was if we had a separate approval for exit costs. When an employee retires or leaves, he/she is entitled to certain vacation and sick time as per the union contract. We pay that through pay roll. What they want is to show a separate action taken on that. For example, we have a police officer retiring October 1st so probably on the next agenda you will see a separate resolution that will show the employees name and what his cost breakdown is. A couple of other items: longevity – do we have a longevity schedule? Well the answer is “yes” but if you said yes it is a “no”. To change that we would have to rework collective bargaining agreements and the personnel manual. We are in pretty good shape. It matches the audit reports that have come back clean.

Councilman Newman stated this is the third year since Governor Christie came to office that we have gotten this. It gives us a good idea as to where to go forward.

Mr. Bellina stated outside the first two “no’s”, which requires you to go to training and a more stringent “Pay to Play” law, the other “no’s” are all new questions. We are not repeatedly putting down “no’s” for something that didn’t take place.

Councilman Newman stated in the past if we did have “no’s” we have addressed them afterwards.

5. GERE PARK RESTORATION PROJECT AND PROPOSAL. (SEE ATTACHMENT III.)

Councilman Newman stated Gere Park is the little strip of land along Throckmorton Street that borders the railroad, which has fallen into disrepair. Cpl. James A. Gere was the first Freehold resident to die in the “War to End All Wars”. He was part of the 39th Infantry, 4th Division who died from wounds received in action at Chateau Thierry, France on August 30, 1918.

Recently, at one of the Historic Preservation meetings the new building owner on Throckmorton Street adjacent to Gere Park had commented that he has seen some illegal activity and also someone else using the area as a bathroom. Councilman Newman presented this project to Freehold Beautiful and the Historic Preservation Commission. The HPC stated this is something they would like to be apart of. Councilman Newman stated they are thinking of this project as a competition and opening it up to the public to try and design something fitting for this area. Councilman Newman stated the guidelines that he proposed are fitting for a war memorial and possibly cutting off access to the train tracks so it is not used as a “cut through”. The designer would have to think about how to

maintain the park afterwards. Councilman Newman put down an estimated dollar amount of \$20,000.00. The business next door is interested in helping to fund it along with St. Peter's Church. Councilman Newman thought there would be other organizations in town that would be willing to put forth some money to help restore the park. The HPC will rework this for ideas with input from the council. The idea is to think of it as a competition that will be judged by a panel of jurors. This is an unused piece of Borough property with the Gere memorial, litter and some bicycle racks. Councilman Newman feels the racks should be moved but that is something the designer can look at.

Councilman Schnurr asked if they needed an architect.

Councilman Newman stated they would need a landscape architect or someone who can draw plans that would be readily accessible to a landscaper.

Councilman DiBenedetto stated this is a great idea. He made mention that the Recreation Commission deems it part of the Borough park system. Councilman DiBenedetto thought it might be a good idea to work in conjunction with the recreation commission.

Councilman Newman apologized and stated he would be at the next recreation meeting to present this idea to them.

6. SHADE TREE ASSESSMENT.

Mr. Bellina stated the Shade Tree Commission was handed a list of all of the trees for which we received complaints about prior to the storm and after the storm. We sought advice from our certified tree expert, Bill Brash. He gave them a color coding which will distinguish those that need more attention than others. When that is completed, we will be going out to bid. Hopefully, this can be covered with funds from a budget transfer later in the year.

Mr. Bellina stated we also have to generate a bid to operate the yard. We have spoken to three people who are interested in operating the yard, whereby they would chip all of our brush at no charge to us as long as they can operate and bring brush in on their own and go sell it some place. He hopes to have more to report in the coming weeks.

Councilman Schnurr asked that the Shade Tree Commission share the list of the trees with the council once it has been completed.

Councilwoman Shutzer made mention of the report that was given about the trees on West George Street. She has never seen such a detailed report.

Mayor Higgins announced that on September 24th, 25th and 27th New Jersey DOT will be operating on Park Avenue between Kiawah Avenue and South Street and have identified a number of trees on Park Avenue that will be removed. The road will be closed while this is going on.

Councilwoman Shutzer stated that is the route for children walking to and from school.

Chief Roberts stated the police will be out there and the walking children will not be disrupted.

7. AUTUMN BRUSH AND LEAVES COLLECTION.

Mayor Higgins announced Freehold Borough will be providing brush collection services during the month of October and this will be the last opportunity to place brush to the curb until next March. If you generate any brush/debris after the end of October it may be brought to the public works yard on Center Street during normal business hours or tied and placed at the curb on normal trash collection day. Brush bundles can not exceed 4 feet in length. The fall leaf collection will begin on November 1st. Leaves may be placed at the curb in piles or in clear bags. The leaf collection will continue for the remainder of the year. Mayor Higgins asked residents to refrain from parking automobiles over leaves. Beginning next year, the Borough will limit brush collection to March, July and October. The streets and roads department can not efficiently provide for brush pick up on a daily basis which we are trying to accomplish currently. Since the July storm the streets and roads department has been forced to set aside other projects and routine upkeep of our parks, streets and municipal facilities. We certainly understand the scope of the clean up which most of our residents had to undertake and our street department will work to clear all of the remaining brush until the end of October. By establishing a pick up schedule we hope to improve our services and help to make more efficient use of our personnel who are operating with a reduced staffing level. Also, grass clippings left at curb sides are creating a water drainage issue during storms. We are asking our residents and lawn service companies to leave grass clippings out of the gutters. This is also making it difficult, if not impossible for the street sweeper to maneuver in our streets. As a reminder, electronics such as computers, monitors and television sets must be recycled. A dumpster dedicated for those items is provided at the Borough yard. It is the resident or business owner's responsibility to transport those items. We thank you for your help and cooperation in implementing our system and with everyone's cooperation we will have an even cleaner Borough with this system.

Mayor Higgins stated this information will be mailed out to all residents and also e-mailed to those on the e-mail blast list.

Councilman DiBenedetto stated we are not trying to be hard on our tax payers. We had this system in place years ago and it worked. The way we are going about it now is not cost effective.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Mayor Higgins announced there was nothing for executive session.

9. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business to discuss, Councilwoman Shutzer moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM, seconded by Councilman Newman, with All in Favor and Councilman Kane absent.

Respectfully Submitted,

Traci L. DiBenedetto, RMC
BOROUGH OF FREEHOLD