

February 28, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Chiariello who issued the formal statement in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

Roll call was taken and present were: Mayor Chiariello, Deputy Mayor Clark, Councilwoman Quinn, Councilman Hertzberg, Councilman Blumetti, Interim Township Manager/CFO Grant Rome, Acting Township Attorney Angelo Bolcato, and Assistant Township Clerk Roxanne Landy.

Open Public Meetings Act-Executive Session:

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried, the following resolution was duly adopted:

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of an action upon the hereinafter specified subject matters.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
 - a. Personnel
 - b. Litigation
 - c. Contract Negotiations
 - d. Miscellaneous Legal Advice

It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when deemed appropriate.

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried, Council reconvened into public session at 7:35 p.m.

Salute to the Flag:

Mayor Chiariello led the assembly in a salute to the flag.

Minutes:

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried the minutes of the reorganization meeting held on January 5, 2023 were approved as presented.

Manager's Report:

Interim Manager Grant Rome gave updates to various projects and events in Sparta Township, a copy of which is attached hereto:

REGULAR SESSION / ITEMS:

Public Works Department:

- The Road Division had its first significant snow event last night into this afternoon making it #7 for this season.
- During the milder weather, the Road Division has been crack-sealing roadways (most recent Park Lake Road, Skyline Drive and Grandview Drive).
- Public Works and Parks Departments are working together on tree clearing and site work for the new access path and parking area off of Holland Circle at Sparta Glen.
- Public Works personnel continue to inspect road conditions where the gas company has installed new lines (most recent, Cherry Tree, West Cherry Tree and Surrey Lane).

Utility Department:

- A reminder that the first quarter water & sewer bills are due on March 15th. If customers have not received their utility bills, they can contact the Utility Office to obtain a copy.
- Sparta's Utility Director, Phil Spaldi has decided to retire from the Township on April 1st after 28 years of public service. He expresses his gratitude to the Township Council for their continued cooperation during his time serving Sparta Township. He also thanks the many customers, contractors, vendors and staff members that have helped make his time here successful and rewarding.

Parks & Recreation Department:

- Winter Program registration continues with the current brochure taking programs through April. The second session of most Winter programs are at full capacity. Day Camp registration begins March 1st for residents.
- The Recreation Department is accepting employment applications for lifeguards, counselors and a Day Camp Director.

Construction Department:

- This Department has issued 289 permits for various work throughout the Township which is a moderate pace. Some new construction is included in this number, but most projects are renovations and alterations, and they do anticipate new projects breaking ground by mid-Spring.

Police Department:

- The Police Department has completed renovation to their gym. The expansion allows for more Police personnel to work on their physical health and mental wellness which is vital in maintaining healthy officers. The expansion also allows for Attorney General mandated training in areas such as CPR refreshers as well as defensive and de-escalation tactic training. All costs associated with the improvements were paid for by the Sparta Fraternal Order of Police Association. The labor was provided by Gene Donnelly with Buildings and Grounds staff who did an excellent job and the Department thanks them for their hard work.
- This February Officer Paige Dewald took the position as the Township's new School Resource Officer for Sparta Public Schools. Officer Dewald previously had three-years experience with Netcong Police Department and her strong work ethic and approachable personality will be in perfect character for this position.
- This Department has seen an increase in DWI arrests for the month of February. They would like to remind the public that "Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving" and urge individuals who have consumed alcohol to be responsible in designating a driver to reach their destination. Sparta Officers are constantly enforcing motor vehicle violations and receive numerous calls from concerned citizens who witness motorists driving erratically

and possibly impaired. They encourage concerned citizens to contact the Police Dispatch Center immediately via 911 if they feel they have observed an impaired driver.

Approval of Manager's Report:

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried, the Manager's Report was approved as presented.

Open to the Public:

Adrian Meerman, 12 Brook Drive addressed Council concerning the snow removal schedule. He stated that there were several roads within the Township that have been excluded from the schedule, mainly in Sparta Lake and asked that the schedule be expanded to include these roadways.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that the Township would not do snow removal on private roadways because of liability issues and the roadway would have to be brought up to certain standards.

Mr. Meerman asked if private contractors could be deputized to plow the roads.

Mayor Chiariello stated that shifting the responsibility was not the issue, but rather the acceptance of liability for the road.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that every private association had to take into consideration that when they decide to become private, there are upsides and downsides. He stated that the HOA is then responsible for maintenance of private roadways and if it is no longer economically feasible, the HOA has to decide for itself whether or not to remain private.

Mr. Rome stated that if an HOA is in fact a qualified HOA they would be entitled to reimbursement for snow removal, however, they would have to enlist their own contractor and turn in receipts to the DPW. He stated that the Township would then pay no more than what it would have cost the Township to plow the road.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the matter should be brought to the attention of the HOA for Sparta Lake. She stated that the Lake Mohawk HOA receives reimbursement from the Township for snow removal of their roadways.

Deputy Mayor Clark advised Mr. Meerman to make certain that the HOA keeps good receipts and contacts the DPW to find out what it needs for reimbursement.

Peter Litchfield, 120 Conestoga Trail addressed Council and stated that he lives on a private road and he was able to get his taxes reduced because of the additional expenditure that he had to incur in having his roadway plowed.

Kathy Ebbinkhuysen, Scudders Road addressed Council concerning the streaming of Council meetings. She asked if there were any updates on the procurement of the equipment and/or what the plan was for doing so.

Mr. Rome stated that the IT Director has been looking into it and has received pricing for the equipment and once he has a quote together, it will be presented to the Council for their consideration.

Ms. Ebbinkhuysen stated that she thought that the process was further along than it apparently is.

Mr. Rome stated that there was additional equipment that is needed in order to complete the task.

Ms. Ebbinkhuysen asked if the IT person could provide a time frame to the public.

Mayor Chiariello asked if there was a target date where this would come together.

Mr. Rome stated that he would speak with the IT Director tomorrow and get the pricing out to the Council and if there was consensus, then the equipment could be purchased.

Mr. Blumetti stated that the Environmental Commission Secretary had stated that there were two pieces of hardware that they were waiting on for streaming and it was expected by mid April.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she thought that the issue was that the equipment that had been ordered was not compatible with the current cameras so some things needed to be switched out.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that it seemed odd to him that equipment would be ordered that would then be incompatible and the IT director should know that. He stated that the public has been waiting a long time for this and it should be installed as quickly as possible.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she did not know for sure that that is what happened, but her understanding was that there was some kind of issue with the current cameras. She stated that she had asked the Township Manager for a report so that it would be known exactly when streaming can start.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that they shouldn't be speaking poorly about Township employees without knowing the full story.

Mr. Rome stated that he knew there had been some issues with backorders and some of the equipment has been difficult to obtain, but he would have a full report for the next meeting.

Jennifer Dericks, Tap Into Sparta, addressed Council and asked if there were emergency plans in place in the event there was a derailment of toxic chemicals in Sparta.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that he had raised this issue with Mayor Chiariello and Chief McCarrick. He stated that there is a plan and Council will be briefed on it. He stated that Norfolk Southern does have a rail line through Sparta.

Police Chief McCarrick stated that on March 28th information will be made available to the public.

No one else wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Expenditures:

In response to a question by Deputy Mayor Clark, Mr. Rome stated that it was in the police contracts that if officers go for higher education, their tuition fees are reimbursed by the Township.

In response to a question by Deputy Mayor Clark, Mr. Rome stated that all of the tax dollars that are collected by the Township are disbursed to either the County, the school board and the municipality.

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilman Blumetti and unanimously carried expenditures in the amount of \$8,414,784.59 were approved as presented.

Introduction of Ordinance:

23-04 Bond Ordinance Providing for the Construction of a Salt Shed in and by the Township of Sparta, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, Appropriating \$2,200,000 Therefor and Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,090,000 Bonds or Notes of the Township for Financing Such Appropriation

Councilman Blumetti stated that at the hearing he would like to see some cost estimates for other sized salt sheds and a little bit more data. He stated that public safety is a top priority and he believed that the DPW was really dedicated to their work and his need for more information had nothing to do with trusting Mr. Zepp or his staff. He stated that Council also had an obligation to understand the rationale for any and all investments that tax dollars are being used for and so far he hasn't seen the level of analysis or details that he needs to make a decision. Councilman Blumetti referenced a memo from the Environmental Commission. (*attached*)

Councilman Hertzberg stated that the rationale behind the size of the salt shed was to possibly sell salt to other towns that were searching for places to buy it.

Councilman Blumetti stated that he personally would like to see commitments from other towns that they would purchase salt from Sparta.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that fortunately this year was a mild winter, but there had been years when Sparta had difficulty finding salt for the roadways and even when it was found, the town had no place to store it. She stated that she would rather the Township be independent and did not want to give away valuable space and would like to hear more facts from Mr. Zepp.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that if there were more cost effective, environmentally safe solutions, he would like to hear them.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that it was not just a salt shed, but was also going to be used for the storage of trucks and equipment.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that Jim Zepp has all the information in regards to the plans for the salt shed but these practices will also be at a cost. Deputy Mayor Clark voiced concerns as to whether or not the salt usage would be diminished. He stated that Council would be able to decide how much of the money from the ordinance would be spent on the salt shed. He stated that most of the money is used for labor costs.

Mr. Rome stated that some of the work could be done in house with Township employees.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he would like to see quotes for different size options. He stated that the Township could improve its practices going forward and use less salt if it can still have a building that could be repurposed if necessary.

On motion by Councilwoman Quinn, seconded by Councilman Hertzberg the following resolution was duly adopted by roll call vote:

Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes
Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Councilman Hertzberg - Yes

Councilwoman Quinn – Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **Bond Ordinance Providing for the Construction of a Salt Shed in and by the Township of Sparta, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, Appropriating \$2,200,000 Therefor and Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,090,000 Bonds or Notes of the Township for Financing Such Appropriation** is hereby adopted on first reading and the same shall be considered for final passage at a meeting of the Township Council to be held on March 28, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 65 Main Street and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish notice of the introduction and final hearing according to law.

Hearing of Ordinance:

23-03 The second and final hearing of the ordinance entitled **An Ordinance Amending the Code of the Township of Sparta Respecting the Display of Flags on Township Flagpoles** was given and held open for public discussion.

Peter Litchfield, 120 Conestoga Trail addressed Council and stated that he didn't see anything in the ordinance regarding where the commemorative flags would be placed on the flagpoles.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he believed that there were some placement options mentioned in the ordinance.

Councilman Blumetti stated that they needed to be on a separate flag pole and beneath the height of the American flag.

Mr. Litchfield asked if the commemorative flags would take the place of the POW flag.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the POW flag would not be replaced.

Mr. Litchfield stated that President Trump had signed the POW/MIA Flag Act and it would serve as a daily reminder of service members still missing. He stated that the national leaders had made a pledge to account for every service person who did not come home and has not been accounted for yet.

He stated that there were eleven organizations that had commemorative flags with a month long celebration and he was certain that some organization would be coming who would want their flag put up and Council will deny it, and then the organization will sue the Township. He stated that he was afraid that by adopting this ordinance, that the Township would be opening itself up to expensive law suits that will cost the taxpayers money.

No one else from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Deputy Mayor Clark made a motion to adopt the ordinance and Councilman Blumetti seconded.

Mayor Chiariello asked for comments from Council members.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that he could not vote to approve the ordinance as currently drafted. He then went on to suggest amendments to the ordinance in section 1, subparagraph A and recommended adding a Section 2 that he read aloud. Deputy Mayor Clark also recommended adding a subparagraph E in Section 1. He stated that the purpose for the additions would be to be more specific about what the Township would consider to be commemorative flags and also gives the Council effective control over what would be displayed. He stated that was a key element that the Courts look to in determining whether or not it is government speech which Council would be entitled to make.

In response to a question by Councilman Blumetti, Deputy Mayor Clark stated that the flag ordinance cannot change the law as it exists right now which is that the American flag, the POW flag and NJ flag must be on the flagpole. He stated that the commemorative flag would fly on its own flagpole.

Councilman Blumetti also offered some minor amendments to the ordinance to clarify the language under Section 2 F.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she had not been privy to any of the proposed changes to the ordinance. She stated that she had not received any proposed recommendations or updates. She stated that if the ordinance was going to be brought to a vote, all Council members should have the most current copy with everyone's comments on it. She stated that she hears a lot of subjectiveness and ambiguity in the ordinance. She stated that the Township spent money to have lights at Town Hall and a ribbon campaign on the light poles on Main Street and asked why it makes sense to micromanage what goes on the flagpoles rather than adopting an ordinance that says what flags would be on the municipal flagpoles and everything else will be celebrated using the lights.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the lights were only visible at night and the flags could be seen throughout the day.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that ribbons were visible during the daylight hours.

Mayor Chiariello stated that flags were very powerful symbols and there had been a number of situations in town where flags had been destroyed and people feel strongly when that occurs and the municipality should stand up and show that flags are to be respected.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that Mayor Chiariello was referring to one flag incident. She indicated that the Township was opening itself up to lawsuits with this ordinance and felt that it was an unnecessary risk and she wanted to understand why this ordinance was necessary.

Mayor Chiariello stated that a group can make a petition to fly a flag, but under the ordinance the decision to display it rests with the Council by a majority vote.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that they were just adding an additional mode of expression for government speech.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that government speech was politicizing the flagpoles and being willing to take on unnecessary litigation so that the government can say what it wants to on the flagpoles.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that he didn't think that any other country's flag or any other group's flags belong on the municipal flagpoles.

No one else on Council had any other comments.

Deputy Mayor Clark made a motion to amend Ordinance 23-03 to include changes to add what is considered to be a commemorative flag, and also further specifies and bolsters the fact that the Council has effective control over what flags can be flown on the flagpoles. Councilman Blumetti seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Quinn reiterated her concerns regarding possible lawsuits and did not feel that this was a better option for the community and was gross government overreach.

The motion was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes	Councilman Hertzberg - No
Councilwoman Quinn – No	Mayor Chiariello - Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark - Yes	

Councilman Blumetti made a motion to amend the flag flying policy, Section 2, part F in order to clarify that any commemorative flag would be on a separate flag pole from the U.S. and POW flags. Deputy Mayor Clark seconded.

Mayor Chiariello opened the meeting to the public.

Unidentified speaker addressed Council and stated that the public has no idea what changes were being made and it would be helpful if the public could see the ordinance.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that his preference would be to have another hearing regarding the ordinance and the changes made to it.

Mr. Bolcato stated that the amendments to the ordinance were substantial and the ordinance would need to be reintroduced at another meeting and another hearing would be scheduled.

Unidentified speaker asked Council who would decide which flagpoles the commemorative flags would be flown on and it could become a problem.

Mayor Chiariello stated that it would be rectified in the amended ordinance.

No one else wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

The motion was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes	Councilman Hertzberg - Abstain
Councilwoman Quinn – Abstain	Mayor Chiariello – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark - Yes	

Councilman Blumetti made a motion to reintroduce the ordinance to include the previously discussed amendments. Deputy Mayor Clark seconded the motion and it was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes	Councilman Hertzberg - No
Councilwoman Quinn – No	Mayor Chiariello – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark - Yes	

Open to the Public – Resolutions:

No one wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Resolutions:

In response to a question by Councilman Blumetti concerning Resolution 9-5 Amend the General Capital Budget Section, Mr. Rome stated that each time there is a bond ordinance, a capital budget needed to be prepared. He stated that it was in place for the amount of the ordinance.

In response to a question by Councilman Blumetti, Mr. Rome stated that there was a typo in the included table regarding the year and he would have it corrected.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried Resolution 9-5 was amended to reflect a correction from the year 2022 to 2023 in the attached table.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried, Resolutions 9-1 through 9-5 were duly adopted:

9-1 Tax Department - Water Utility Overpayments

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the Tax Collector refunds the following Water Utility over payments:

ACCT#	ADDRESS	AMOUNT
101384	28 Village Lane	\$247.47
102248	16 Main St Unit C10	\$254.05

9-2 Resolution for Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Fiscal Grant Cycle FY2024

WHEREAS, the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse established the Municipal Alliances for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse in 1989 to educate and engage residents, local government and law enforcement officials, schools, nonprofit organizations, the faith community, parents, youth and other allies in efforts to prevent alcoholism and drug abuse in communities throughout New Jersey.

WHEREAS, The Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey recognizes that the abuse of alcohol and drugs is a serious problem in our society amongst persons of all ages; and therefore has an established Municipal Alliance Committee; and,

WHEREAS, the Township Council further recognizes that it is incumbent upon not only public officials but upon the entire community to take action to prevent such abuses in our community; and,

WHEREAS, the Township Council has applied for funding to the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse through the County of Sussex;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey hereby recognizes the following:

1. The Township Council does hereby authorize submission of a revised strategic plan for the Sparta Municipal Alliance grant for fiscal year 2024 in the amount of:

DEDR	\$ 6,341.00
Cash Match	\$ 1,585.25
In-Kind	\$ 4,755.75

2. The Township Council acknowledges the terms and conditions for administering the Municipal Alliance grant, including the administrative compliance and audit requirements.

9-3 Resolution Approving the Lease Agreement for the Operation of a Summer Day Camp at Camp Sacajawea

WHEREAS, the Township of Sparta is currently leasing Camp Sacajawea located in the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey for the operation of a day camp beginning on May 1, 2023 up to and including August 14, 2023, Mondays through Fridays, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, the Sparta Township Council desires to approve the lease agreement between Sparta Township and Camp Sacajawea LLC in the amount of \$13,500.00.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey that the Mayor and Township Manager are authorized to execute the lease agreement on behalf of the Township of Sparta.

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

9-4 One-Day ABC Social Affairs Permit – Our Lady of the Lake

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that permission be granted to Our Lady of the Lake, 294 Sparta Avenue, Sparta, NJ for a social affairs permit to be held on March 25, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at 294 Sparta Avenue, Sparta, NJ.

9-5 Resolution to Amend the General Capital Budget Section

WHEREAS, the local General Capital Budget for 2022 was adopted on the 14th day of June 2022; and

WHEREAS, it is desired to amend said adopted General Capital Budget section.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey that the attached amendment to the adopted General Capital Budget section be made.

(See Attached)

Council Liaison Updates:

Councilman Blumetti stated that the Environmental Commission had issued a report regarding road salt science best practices with potential opportunities for the Township to explore technology equipment, along with some comments regarding the salt shed size and scale.

Councilman Blumetti stated that there had been conversations at the Environmental Commission meetings regarding a lithium recycling battery box that had been located at Town Hall. He stated that he believed it had been removed because of concerns about sparking. He stated that there was an interest to try to find another solution where residents can drop off lithium batteries that is safer. He stated that SCMUA was working with a vendor and had plans to get different municipalities involved with having outposts throughout different towns to collect lithium batteries for recycling. He stated further that there were other companies that facilitate recycling as well.

Councilman Blumetti stated that the Earth Day fair would be held on April 22nd on the front lawn of the municipal building from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that he and Mayor Chiariello had met with the President of the school board, the Superintendent and one other member to discuss areas where they can be of help to the Township and ways that the Township can be of help to the school board. He stated that they had received an update regarding the search for additional space for a new school.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that he would be attending the Board of Trustees meeting for Lake Mohawk.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the Health Committee had met and they had discussed the Rave system.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the 07871 Committee had met and they had brainstormed things that will be ongoing and they had received 47 requests for new home town hero banners this year.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the Cultural Affairs Committee continues to work on their summer lineup and nothing has been finalized yet.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the Library Board of Trustees did not meet this month and will meet again the second week in March.

Unfinished Business:

Mayor Chiariello indicated that there were two vacant alternate positions on the Zoning Board.

Councilwoman Quinn made a motion to nominate Ann LoPuch to the Zoning Board.
Councilman Hertzberg seconded the motion.

Councilman Blumetti stated that her application indicated that she was interested in serving on the Planning Board for both her first and second choice.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that in her application, Ms. LoPuch didn't identify whether or not she wanted to serve on the Zoning Board.

Councilwoman Quinn suggested just appointing one person to the Zoning Board and leaving the other position open temporarily in order to check back with Ms. LoPuch as to whether or not she would like to serve on the Zoning Board.

Councilwoman Quinn made a motion to retract her original motion. Councilman Hertzberg seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Mayor Chiariello made a motion to appoint Kate Matteson as an alternate to the Zoning Board. Deputy Mayor Clark seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Quinn reiterated her concerns regarding Deputy Mayor Clark appointing people to the Planning and Zoning Boards due to the perception of a conflict to interest.

Deputy Mayor Clark again reiterated that he has no such conflict of interest and it doesn't affect his objectivity or independence of judgment.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the conflict stems from Deputy Mayor Clark appointing people to the Planning and Zoning Boards who would be selecting the attorneys he was going to be arguing against on both Boards in his lawsuit against the Township.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that the members of both boards decide who they select as their attorney and he had nothing to do with that. Deputy Mayor Clark discussed perceived conflicts of interest that both Councilwoman Quinn and Councilman Hertzberg have concerning the proposed warehouse.

Councilwoman Quinn and Councilman Hertzberg denied having any conflicts of interest concerning the proposed warehouse.

Mayor Chiariello asked for a roll call vote on the motion to appoint Kate Matteson to the Zoning Board.

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Councilwoman Quinn – Abstain
Deputy Mayor Clark - Yes

Councilman Hertzberg - No
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

Mayor Chiariello stated that there needed to be a discussion concerning the Economic Development Committee and what its proper scope would be.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that he had emailed information to Mayor Chiariello regarding what the prior committee's goals had been.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she had asked at the last meeting that this be made part of the Agenda so that the public could read it and Mayor Chiariello had agreed to that.

Councilman Hertzberg made a motion to table the discussion until the next meeting in order to allow the information to be distributed to the public. Councilwoman Quinn seconded the motion.

Deputy Mayor Clark agreed that the nature and scope of the Economic Development Committee should be in written form so that people can see it and have feedback on it.

Discussions ensued among the Council members regarding the best way to gather information and present it to the public. Mayor Chiariello favored having all discussions during the open meeting while also allowing for public participation.

The motion to table the discussion of the Economic Development Committee until the next meeting was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – No
Councilwoman Quinn – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark - Yes

Councilman Hertzberg - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

Mayor Chiariello opened the meeting for any public discussion regarding the Economic Development Committee.

Celeste Luciano addressed Council stated that she wanted to understand how any changes to the Economic Development Committee would impact the Planning Board going forward.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that the committee was always an advisory board to the Council.

Mayor Chiariello stated that when it was originally formed it was an advisory board to the Planning Board.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she couldn't answer Ms. Luciano's question because she didn't know what the Committee would look like after the makeover.

Councilman Hertzberg stated that policy goes from the Council to the Planning Board and therefore the Committee should be advisory to the Council.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the problem he had was that at some point the Committee had taken it upon itself to change its scope without formally going through the Council.

Deputy Mayor Clark asked what her preference would be as far as who the committee advises.

Ms. Luciano stated that she would prefer that the Committee be advisory to the Planning Board.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the Planning Board could have a liaison from the Economic Development Committee to advise them or vice versa.

Mayor Chiariello stated that if Ms. Luciano had any thoughts or ideas, she could send him or Council an email and they could consider it for the next meeting. He stated that he would like the committee to be focused on small business development. He stated that there should also be a liaison from the committee to the Sparta Chamber of Commerce.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that he felt that the Economic Development Committee should be able to weigh in with the Planning Board whether it's through a liaison or by some other means.

Councilman Blumetti stated that he felt that the Committee would need to support the master plan.

No one else from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

New Business:

Councilman Blumetti stated that he wanted to bring up the topic of the NJ State plan endorsement to learn some more about the process and the timing with respect to the Township center.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the Planning Board attorney Tom Collins should be contacted because he has the draft of the vision statement. She stated that it had never been moved forward because of changes that had been made on the Planning Board.

Ms. Luciano stated that the Planning Board members had been advised by Mr. Collins that there is a deadline and the vision statement has been started, but the issue was that the full renewal would not be able to be completed by the March deadline. She stated that Mr. Collins had advised that Council be asked to provide a letter to the State that the Township intends to move forward.

Councilwoman Quinn asked that Mr. Collins send an email to the Council and the Township Manager with specifics so that it could be signed and sent on to the State.

Mayor Chiariello stated that it would also require a resolution from the Council.

Mayor Chiariello stated that at the last meeting Franklinite had been recognized as the NJ State mineral and the bill has passed out of the NJ State Assembly and is heading to the full Assembly vote.

Mayor Chiariello stated that there had been some discussion about capturing statistics from the Township website to see what news articles might be accessed by the public. He asked Council members if they had any ideas regarding what types of information they would want to see gathered from the website, to give it to the Township Manager.

Mayor Chiariello stated that March is Women's History Month and he has invited a couple of guests to come to the first Council meeting in March to receive a proclamation.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he had received from Councilwoman Quinn a proposal for the Donate Life Month in April.

Mayor Chiariello stated that Council would be holding a budget workshop soon and a week night would be best for public participation. There was consensus that a week night would be good for the meeting.

Mayor Chiariello stated that this was Read Across America Week and he was scheduled to read at one of the schools.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he had participated in the New Jersey Governor's call for local and county government and it had focused on the NJ State budget and there would be no new taxes or fees introduced in the State budget this year.

Open to the Public:

Jen Dericks, Tap Into Sparta, addressed Council concerning Kate Matteson's appointment to the Zoning Board. She stated that she is on the Board of Elections and wanted to be sure that it wasn't a conflict.

Ms. Dericks stated also that at the last Planning Board meeting members had said that they needed funds to do the master plan review.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that if a person runs for office they would automatically have to come off of the Board of Elections, but that same person could serve on a board as an appointed member.

No one else wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Adjournment:

No one else wished to be heard and no further business was brought up, motion was made by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried to adjourn at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Roxanne Landy, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Township of Sparta

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION



TO: Sparta Township Council

CC: Interim Township Manager
Department of Public Works

FROM: Sparta Township Environmental Commission

DATE: February 23, 2023

SUBJECT: Salt Management and Disbursement on Roadways

The Environmental Commission recognizes the enormous responsibility of the DPW and Director Jim Zepp to ensure public road safety is maintained. The public, schools, police, emergency services and local businesses all rely on roads that can be driven on in times of bad weather. Mr. Zepp and his team have shown their dedication to this endeavor, even in the most challenging circumstances and short timelines. The coordination between the public works and police when monitoring road safety appears to be working well.

The Environmental Commission shares the DPWs view that safety is the number one concern and in no way condones putting the public, school children, police, emergency workers or local employees/employers at risk in bad weather.

However, the Commission recommends a thorough review and consideration of industry best practices related to salt disbursement, with the goal of ensuring public safety as well as protecting our drinking water, streams, and preserving overall environmental integrity. The applications of salt and related substances that we apply to paved surfaces eventually make their way into our streams, aquifers, and soils. The Commission strongly believes that preserving the environment is also in the public's best interests.

Furthermore, Ordinance 2-39 established the Environmental Commission for the protection, development, and use of natural resources. This includes: "To study and make recommendations concerning open space preservation, water resources management, air pollution control, solid waste management, noise control, soil and landscape protection, environmental appearance, marine resources and the protection of flora and fauna." This mandate, as it relates to the salt disbursement in the Township of Sparta, concerns both water resource management and the flora and fauna that exist in and rely upon our waterways, streams and brooks. Additionally, the Environmental Commission does not claim to know how to run a public works department.

Therefore, the Environmental Commission respectfully submits the following information and recommendations for consideration.

Environmental Impact of Salt/Chloride

- Human Health Issues:
 - Drinking water well contamination by Sodium: FDA recommends 2,300 MG per day or about 1 tsp. Individuals with heart conditions should consume lower than 1,500 MG per day.
 - Residual chloride in the soil can contaminate underground wells, posing a direct impact to drinking water resources in the Paulins Kill. In Columbia, New Jersey, a NJDEP study of drinking-water wells found that sodium levels within the community were more than five times greater than the recommended chloride safety standards because of Columbia's close proximity to major highways, including Route 80, Route 94, and Route 46, that are significantly salted by road departments during below freezing precipitation events (Novak, 2019). This sodium chloride loading within the Paulins Kill threatens drinking water supplies for residents reliant on underground wells and has prompted the Knowlton government to initiate steps such as coordinating with public works departments to ensure that roadways are not excessively salted, rebuilding the town-owned road salt storage shed to prevent chloride runoff, and installing reverse osmosis treatment devices in homes whose wells have been impacted by chloride groundwater contamination (Scruton, 2021).
- Elevated chloride levels in waterways lead to:
 - Lower reproduction in fish based on scientific studies levels above 50 mg per liter (see resources) Research reports also indicate that chloride levels as low as 50-90 mg/L showed the greatest taxa change for macroinvertebrates (Wallace and Biastoch, 2016), and chloride levels as low as 33-108 mg/L have altered fish diversity and abundance within stream ecosystems (Morgan et al., 2012).
 - Kills sensitive insects that are primary food sources for fish (example: mayflies)
 - Leads to die off of aquatic plants and the primary producers (the critical bottom of the food chain) and increases harmful algae (note recent algae blooms in local lakes)
 - Decrease of biodiversity
- Seeing salt on roadways/parking lots is not an indication of appropriate application of salt. In fact, just the opposite is true, and results in increased pollution without additional safety.

Replacement Salt Shed

Mr. Zepp has recommended the funding and construction of a new salt shed to replace the existing structure. It would provide secure storage of both kinds of salt, reduce the risk of salt spillage entering the nearby wetlands, and would protect township trucks from the environment. In addition, he has mentioned the potential for saving tax dollars by buying salt in bulk and offering shared storage services to other townships.

The Environmental Commission shares the following:

- A replacement shed is clearly needed to ensure safe storage of salt. The only clarity that seems to be needed is the size (and therefore, cost). The Environmental Commission recommends that

the size be determined based on a detailed review of past use and a projection of future use. Future use should incorporate the impact of best practices – technologies, equipment, and processes – on salt usage and storage requirements.

- Confirmation should be secured that viable interest exists from nearby municipalities to take advantage of the additional space for salt storage through a shared services agreement. The extent to which this would generate meaningful profit for the township, as well as whether a shared services business model is viable and desired by our township, should also be determined.

Salt Disbursement Management

- Recommend that the Township explore and potentially invest in the latest technology for salt distribution and snow removal, if the latest technology is not currently in place, including examples such as:
 - Equipment for pre-wetting salt at time of application to increase amount that stays on road and accelerate melting.
 - Applying liquid salt directly to road surface (typically in advance of storm) to prevent bonding of ice/snow with the road surface.
 - Automated application rate technology based on conditions and other fine-tuned inputs (vs manual setting).
 - Camera technology to view real-time salt application and truck bed remaining quantities
 - Pavement surface temperature sensors (distinct from air temperature).
 - Plow blades with spring loaded carbide cutting edges that feature lateral floating motion to maintain contact as plow travels over road surface variations.
 - Additional truck-based sensors (ex: Chloride, Residual salt, Salinity, Freezing Point, Ice Presence, Friction).
 - Tracking systems and software to support detailed reporting of salting efforts (example, HTRACK Tracking System by Hilltip).
- Suggest that if complete outfitting of new technologies on all 13 municipal trucks is not fiscally viable, consider a pilot program and outfit a smaller number of trucks. The pilot program would also need to include details about how monitoring and key performance indicators would be collected to determine success (see tracking system software mentioned above).
- If not already in place, suggest that ongoing monitoring of salt usage, impacts to waterways and ongoing continuous improvement process be established by Township and shared with stakeholders. This should include data collected from implemented tracking system, water monitoring information from various sources and proposed pilot program. Regular reporting after each storm or monthly from October – April, should be established and should include fiscal impacts outlining cost vs savings (value proposition).
- Consider becoming SWiM Certified and a commitment for supporting the continuous improvement process for at least 5 years.

The Environmental Commission would offer any support needed or deemed within its purview. Specifically, the Environmental Commission will:

- Continue to remain informed on the latest information on impacts of chloride and salt distribution science and share this information with the Township
- Continue to participate in salt/chloride monitoring as outlined by the Musconetcong Watershed Association in Sparta, and/or other studies as needed
- Provide assistance with educational campaigns for the public

Thank you for your consideration.

References:

1. Musconetcong Watershed Association's: 2022 Road Salt Round Table

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zy040WK423A>

The topics covered:

Sustainable Management with Lake George Case Study: Phill Sexton, WIT Advisors

Results of Monitoring and Impacts of Road Salt: Christa Reeves, MWA

Monitoring Program and Science of Road Salt: Erin Stretz, Watershed Institute of NJ

Stormwater Regulations and Road Salt: Debbie, Kratzer, NJDEP

Wisconsin Salt Wise Case Study and BMP details – Allison from Wisconsin Salt Wise

2. "Road Salts, Safety, and the rising salinity of our freshwaters"

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/fee.2433>

3. The Cary Institute for Ecological Studies

"Road Salt: Tips for Municipalities, highway departments, and winter maintenance"

<https://www.caryinstitute.org/news-insights/guide/road-salt-tips-municipalities-highway-departments-and-winter-maintenance-staff>"

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4. "Snow and Ice Control Environmental Best Management Practices Manual"

June 2015

Laura Fay, M.Sc., Mehdi Honarvarnazari, Ph.D., Scott Jungwirth, M.Sc., Anburaj Muthumani, M.Sc., Na

Cui, Ph.D., Xianming Shi, Ph.D., P.E., Western Transportation Institute College of Engineering, Montana

State University; Dave Bergner, Monte Vista Associates, LLC.; Marie Venner, Venner Consulting, Inc.

Clear Roads Research Program

http://clearroads.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Manual_ClearRoads_13-01_FINAL.pdf

5. https://www.lehighvalleylive.com/warren-county/2015/10/knowlton_township_wells_being.html

6. Morgan, R. P., Kline, K. M., Kline, M. J., Cushman, S. F., Sell, M. T., Weitzell Jr, R. E., & Churchill, J. B. (2012). Stream conductivity: relationships to land use, chloride, and fishes in Maryland streams. *North American journal of fisheries management*, 32(5), 941-952.

7. Novak, S. (2019, February 27). A town found the source of its contaminated wells: Road salt. what's being done about it? lehighvalleylive. Retrieved March 26, 2022, from <https://www.lehighvalleylive.com/warren-county/2019/02/a-town-found-the-source-of-its-contaminated-wells-road-salt-whats-being-done-about-it.html>
8. Scruton, B. A. (2021, October 30). Knowlton looks to use COVID relief funds to fix salty private wells for Columbia residents. New Jersey Herald. Retrieved March 26, 2022, from <https://www.njherald.com/story/news/2021/10/30/knowlton-nj-covid-relief-funds-fix-road-salt-columbia-wells/6195135001/>
9. Wallace, A. M., & Biastoch, R. G. (2016). Detecting changes in the benthic invertebrate community in response to increasing chloride in streams in Toronto, Canada. *Freshwater Science*, 35(1), 353-363.