

The agenda meeting of the Northampton Township Board of Supervisors was held at 6:00 p.m.

Present were:

Adam M. Selisker
Paula Gasper
Dr. Kimberly Rose
Robert Salzer
Joseph Pizzo
Amanda Fuller
Robert M. Pellegrino
William Wert

Agenda items were reviewed and discussed.

The regular business meeting of the Northampton Township Board of Supervisors was called to order at 7:00 pm. Members of the Board present were:

Adam M. Selisker
Paula Gasper
Dr. Kimberly Rose
Robert M. Salzer

Members absent:

Barry Moore

Others present were:

Robert M. Pellegrino, Township Manager
William Wert, Assistant Manager
Amanda Fuller, Township Engineer
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chairman Selisker led the Pledge of Allegiance and held a moment of silence in support of the military, and emergency service personnel.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None was heard.

CONSENT ITEMS

BOARD MINUTES

The Board meeting minutes of January 24, 2024, were presented by Mrs. Gasper.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

The accounts payable for February 14, for \$2,597,058.77, and for February 28, 2024, for \$1,032,874.84 were presented by Dr. Rose.

CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS R-24-4 AND R-24-5 DECLARING AND RESCINDING SNOW EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS FOR JANUARY 19, AND FEBRUARY 13, 2024

Mr. Salzer presented Resolution R-24-4 declaring a limited state of emergency effective 1200 hours, January 19, 2024, and ending on January 19, 2024, at 23:15 hours.

Mr. Salzer also presented Resolution R-24-5 declaring a limited state of emergency effective 0900 hours, February 13, 2024, and ending on February 13, 2024, at 1500 hours.

A motion was proposed by (Gasper-Rose) for the approval of the consent items. All of which received unanimous approval.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None was heard.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Consider a Zoning Ordinance Amendment Related to Accessory Structures, the Keeping of Chickens, and Other Miscellaneous Charges

Chairman Selisker opened the hearings at 7:02 pm.

Mrs. Gasper outlined the proposed Zoning Ordinance noting the following changes:

1. To eliminate an obsolete definition;
2. To allow decks and patios to encroach a maximum of 25% into the rear yard setback. This is a resident-friendly provision that will eliminate the time and expense of variance requests while still maintaining a significant setback to protect neighboring properties;
3. To allow structures such as gazebos and pool houses to meet the same setback as detached garages thereby resulting in a more consistent and uniform application of the ordinance;
4. To allow the keeping of chickens in all zoning districts subject to specific criteria. Currently, our ordinance requires a minimum of five acres in limited districts within the Township, which is restrictive given the trend for people to raise their personal chickens. As a result, this amendment will address this issue while also including significant safeguards within the ordinance that will protect neighboring properties.

5. Finally, criteria related to special events will be removed from the Zoning Ordinance into a separate section of the code to establish a more comprehensive process to administer these events.

As required, the proposed ordinance was properly advertised in the Advance of Bucks County and has been available at the Township building and on the website. In addition, a copy of the County Planning Commission review was provided along with the recommendation from the Northampton Township Planning Commission.

A motion was made and seconded (Gasper-Rose) to approve Ordinance #617 amending the Northampton township Zoning Ordinance to amend sections related to definitions, accessory buildings, and structures, permitting the keeping of chickens in all Zoning Districts subject to specific criteria, and deleting special event provisions.

Chairman Selisker called for public comment.

Laurie Katz, a resident, questioned when the decision was made to drop the acreage down from 5 acres to allow for chickens.

It was stated by Mr. Pizzo that if the property is larger than five (5) acres, limitations do not apply. If your property is less than five (5) acres, you can only have six (6) chickens and no roosters. A majority of people want to raise chickens for personal consumption, which is why this amendment will address that trend.

Chairman Selisker called for Board comment. There were none heard.

Motion Passed 4-0.

Consider an Ordinance Amendment Related to Special Events, Boards, and Commissions

Mr. Salzer summarized the proposed ordinance amendment for consideration that establishes an updated and more comprehensive process for managing special events in Northampton Township. In addition to establishing a permit and inspection process, the ordinance establishes specific criteria to more efficiently coordinate these events between Township administration and all aspects of emergency management.

Further, the proposed amendment reduces the Planning Commission from seven to five members to more efficiently handle meeting logistics and quorums.

As required, the proposed ordinance was properly advertised in the Advance of Bucks County and has been available at the Township building in addition to the website.

A motion was made and seconded (Salzer-Gasper) for the approval of Ordinance #618 amending the Northampton Township Code related to special events and the membership requirements of the Planning Commission.

Chairman Selisker called for Board and public comment. There were none heard.

Motion Passed 4-0.

Chairman Selisker closed the public hearing at 7:07 pm.

REPORTS

Dr. Rose made the following announcements:

- There are still a few remaining spots remaining in the Parks and Recreation ½ day, full summer Camp Explore program for elementary school children. Hurry to register, it is almost full!
- The Spring and Summer brochures will be hitting your mailboxes soon. Be sure to check out our new Teen Makeup for Prom class! For summer, look for over 20 one-week specialty camp offerings including golf, tennis, theater, chess, basketball, and more.
- On Friday, February 2nd, the Parks and Recreation Department offered Northampton Township's first Puzzle Palooza! 64 people from the ages of 20 to 64 competed in teams of 4 to be the first to complete a 500-piece puzzle in 2 hours. One team even made shirts for the occasion! The first team completed their puzzle in under an hour winning a gift card to Gianni's. Participants left begging for more. The next Puzzle Palooza is scheduled for April 22nd and teams can now choose to compete in an "Advanced" category. It was a fantastic event!
- Flower show tickets are still available at the administration building and the Recreation Center at significant savings and the ability to go anytime you want to instead of picking your date. The flower show takes place March 2 – 10, 2024. Don't miss it!
- Seasonal help is needed for the summer of 2024. Parks and Recreation is seeking applications for camp counselors, lifeguards, and the front desk at the swim club.
- The Parks and Recreation Department is proud to announce they will be partnering with Northampton Valley Country Club to offer our residents an interactive Murder Mystery Dinner right in their backyard. The first murder, A Golden Girls Murder Mystery is scheduled for Saturday, May 18th – ticket information coming soon!
- For more information contact the administration building, the Recreation Center, or visit us online at WWW.NORTHAMPTONREC.COM

- Spring can't arrive early enough for our seniors! A lot of planning is going into a variety of fun and exciting activities for the months ahead. Registration for the golf and billiards leagues begins in March, with games starting in April.
- Make sure to mark your calendars for Friday, April 19th from 5:00 to 8:30 pm for the annual Spring Fling Shopping Event. There will be over 50 vendors selling a variety of handcrafted jewelry, scarves, totes, home décor, candles, clothing, and more! If anyone is interested in becoming a vendor, please contact the senior center at (215)357-8199 or send an e-mail to nhsc@nhtwp.com
- For more information about the center and all the awesome activities that are offered, feel free to stop by for a tour. The center is located across from the library at 165 Township Road. The hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9 am to 3:30 pm, and Tuesday and Thursday from 9 am to 8 pm.

Mrs. Gasper made the following announcements:

- To meet the needs of the township residents and provide renewed access to Kindle-formatted e-books to be used on Kindle eReaders, Free Library of Northampton Township has joined forces with 6 other county libraries to create the Community Library e-Cooperative of Bucks County. Use of OverDrive's Libby app was originally discontinued for county residents in 2020 by Bucks County Free Library while choosing a different e-book vendor which was not compatible with Kindle reading devices. The Libby app went LIVE for township residents on February 5.
- The library offered its first-ever Introduction to Ancestry class in February to rave reviews. The class was full with a waiting list of twelve additional people and a second class has been scheduled for March 4. It, too, has a full registration book. We are planning to offer an evening class in April as well.
- The Commonwealth increased its annual State Aid to our library by 1% this year. The commonwealth's Public Library Subsidy piece of the annual budget hasn't yet returned to its 2008 amount but public libraries have seen slight increases in monies over the last 2 years when the annual amount had remained stagnant.
- In January, we began assembling committees to begin discussion and planning for the implementation of the new Strategic Plan priorities. Library Board members are overseeing the committees which currently include board members, library staff, and the director.
- The Northampton Township Veterans Advisory Commission is holding a town hall on March 18, 2024, at 7:00 pm at the Township Administration Building to discuss Veteran's issues. Matthew Allen the Director of Veterans Affairs in Bucks

County will host a question and answer session. Veterans Service Officer, Betty Carleo will cover an explanation of the claims process and details on benefits accessible to Veterans and their spouses and various programs available.

Mr. Salzer made the following announcements:

- The Board of Supervisors has been fielding questions about a raise in fees. Mr. Salzer stated that he has noted in past reports the Municipal Authority has contracted with an outside agency for their website and a payment portal. In response to those inquiries on the fees, Mr. Salzer wanted to remind everyone of what the portal now permits. There is a one-time only 1.25% fee charge this could not be lowered or negotiated further so to those that have inquired it is a one-time fee. The portal will allow the following: ♣ Residents will be able to sign up for e-bills ♣ Electronically use your mobile device to pay by text ♣ Sign up for reoccurring auto pay (There is no fee for EFT payments) ♣ Residents will receive emails and schedule appointments ♣ Customer Engagement and Protocols are part of the format of the new system ♣ Municipal Authority will now receive bank portal payments without a paper check from the bank and receipts will be sent in 24-48 hours

If you have any questions you can reach out to Jean Norsitto in the Finance Department at Jnocito@nbcma.pa.org or at 215-357-8515.

Chairman Selisker announced Mr. Moore is absent tonight.

Chairman Selisker made the following announcements:

- In the past month, there have been three (3) serious fires. Two of them were located in Northampton Township and one in Newtown Township. Newtown's fire resulted in a fatality. Make sure your home is equipped with working smoke detectors. Smoke detectors will give a warning sound so you have time to get to safety. Take a few minutes to check your smoke detectors to make sure the batteries and the detectors are working. If you need help checking, installing, or replacing the batteries call the Fire Department at 215-357-8277 or stop by the Fire House to make an appointment.

MANAGER'S REPORT

- Thanked the Public Works for their efforts during the two recent snow storms.

ASSISTANT MANAGER'S REPORT

- No Report

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

- No Report

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Annual Report on Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit

Amanda Fuller, of Gilmore Associates and the Township Engineer, stated the Northampton Township's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit was approved on May 15, 2019, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has tentatively approved the Township's permit for the next five years contingent upon the 30 Day comment period. These requirements are mandated by DEP for every municipality in Pennsylvania and the Township remains in compliance with the current requirements of the permit. As a part of the permit, the Township is required to construct several projects to help reduce stormwater pollution. The Township should be hearing about the permit renewal in the next few weeks. The Township will submit its required annual report to the DEP in September and will continue to comply with the DEP's requirements.

Chairman Selisker Report Cont'd

It is with great pleasure that Northampton Valley Country Club announces the long-awaited implementation of a 10% discount on memberships, greens fees, and cart rentals for the following classifications effective January 1, 2024:

Residents of Northampton Township, First Responders (Police, Fire, Emergency Services), and Active Military and Military Veterans

Proper documentation is required at the time of the transaction. Please feel free to contact the Pro Shop at 215.353.2234 should you have any questions or require further information.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Simms, a resident, thanked the Board for all that they do. Mr. Simms stated he is on a fixed income and would like the Board to look at ways to offset costs and save the taxpayers money.

He referenced the new firehouse and suggested the Board create a database to pull resident contractors from for input on large projects. Mr. Simms also referenced the work being proposed on the 40 acres and the costs to maintain a sports complex. Mr. Simms suggested partnering with companies. Also asked the Parks and Recreation Department to do a different study and come up with different options for the 40-acre site.

Renee Fagan, a resident, questioned putting a referendum on the ballot to have an option box put on each ballot to see if voters would like to continue counting through the Electronic ballot system or if voters would prefer to have the ballots counted by hand.

Ms Fagan based her concerns on the recent Bucks County Cyber attacks, Government systems being hacked, and the possibility of national and local elections being attacked.

Mr. Pizzo responded by noting that voting falls under the State Election Code and adheres to and follows the mandates of election codes. To have a referendum placed on the ballot at the Northampton Township level is unnecessary and will not carry any weight. This referendum must be done at the County Level and be proposed at the County Level.

Laurie Katz, a resident stated a press conference was held on February 7th by Sheriff Richard Jones of the Sherrif's department in Ohio. Mr. Jones held a 17-minute briefing on crime on national security, border crimes, gangs, drugs, cyber attacks, and terrorism. The message being presented was not if but when and noted this comes down to preparation. Ms. Katz questioned what Northampton Township has in place regarding emergency preparation. Ms. Katz is proposing that the Police Department, Fire Company, and the Bucks County Sheriff's Department pull together in the next couple of months to hold a town hall type of meeting to allow citizens to ask questions of these agencies. Ms. Katz's concern arises from Bucks County being a Sanctuary County.

Ranjan Mukherjee, a resident commented prices always go up but never go down. He stated he lives on a fixed income is there any way the Board of Supervisors could decrease or offset the millage that was imposed this year?

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paula Gasper, Secretary