

**MOUNT LAUREL TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 28, 2009**

A Work Session Meeting of the Mount Laurel Township Council was held on Monday, September 28, 2009 in the Courtroom of the Mount Laurel Municipal Building. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Keenan at 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The members of Council present were Mayor Keenan, Councilwoman Bobo and Councilman Smith. Also present were Acting Township Manager, Jennifer Blumenthal, Patricia Halbe, Municipal Clerk and Christopher Norman, Esq. Deputy Mayor McCaffrey and Councilwoman Riley were absent.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The Public Announcement, which is required by the "Open Public Meetings Act" of the State of New Jersey and read at every meeting of the Township Council was read by the Municipal Clerk.

Larchmont and Union Mill Road Traffic Light

Ms. Blumenthal reported that Mr. Litwornia looked over the estimates and has a new estimate from Mr. Litwornia's office based on what Camden County just paid for a traffic light that they went out to bid on. The new estimate went down from \$296,347.17 to \$208,925.32 and includes estimated engineering costs. She suggests moving forward with the project and going out to bid. Some money was funded for the actual traffic light and the remaining funds are coming from the Outside Road Program.

Mayor Keenan stated that Mr. Litwornia had indicated that perhaps the township could do some of the work and bid out the electrical portion of the project. Ms. Blumenthal stated that she had spoken with Mr. Basim and he indicated that we do not have employees that can do that type of work. Mayor Keenan asked if the County would be capable. Ms. Blumenthal stated that the County has a maintenance department but she does not believe they do installations. She will contact them to see if it is something that we could do as a shared service in the future. Council was in agreement that if the County cannot help with the work, it should be put out to bid.

Councilwoman Bobo questioned if we had found if conduit was put under the roadway at that intersection. Ms. Blumenthal stated she still has not found out the answer to that issue.

Football Program

Tom Perry, Commissioner and Bob Anderson were present. Mr. Perry indicated that the new complex has no concession stand. Dan Higgins Builders is will to donate a concession stand that can be used by all sports temporarily and it could be moved.

Mayor Keenan stated that it was great to see Mr. Perry tonight and how well he is doing. The concession stand relieves the township from the burden for now and is a temporary structure. He had asked Mr. Perry to come in to talk to Council so that they could review it and give permission for it to be placed there.

Mr. Perry stated that it is in the location where the tent is currently located and does not block the flow of traffic. Mayor Keenan stated that the Council should have someone go out to look at the location, such as Mr. Holshue. He questioned if the township can waive the permit fees and Ms. Blumenthal responded that they could be waived.

Councilman Smith questioned if there are any requirements for electric for the building. Mr. Perry responded that the builder is putting electric in the building and they have a generator that they can hook it up to or they may be able to run it from the main box. It will have a serving window and one entrance.

09-28-09

Mr. Perry stated that there are some safety issues that they want to bring up. They need lighting along the driveway. Mayor Keenan responded that they are looking at putting reflectors along the driveway. Mr. Perry also felt that speed bumps were needed. Mayor Keenan responded that it had been discussed but people could drive around them and go off the roadway.

Mr. Perry stated that they would like to put up signs on game day to direct other teams to the site. Mayor Keenan stated that he had suggested naming the park, Mount Laurel Memorial Park, and we have put in a request for steel from the world trade center to put a memorial section there.

Mr. Perry would like to have permission to sign out a key to access the facility to complete the work. Ms. Blumenthal stated that the police have a key and could go over to open the gate for them.

Mayor Keenan also felt a sign was needed for the turf field for No Use Without Permit. Mr. Perry also felt signs were needed to prevent people from walking their dogs on the turf. Ms. Blumenthal will have Mr. Giangiulio have signs put up.

Mr. Perry stated that they would also like to take responsibility for turning the lights on and off themselves like they had at Spencer. Mr. Anderson questioned if the satellite was operational. Ms. Blumenthal will check with Mr. Giangiulio.

Mr. Perry also asked for more trash cans and recycling bins. Mayor Keenan asked that the side gates be closed so that no one can access except the players.

Mr. Perry asked how often the turf field is maintained. Mayor Keenan that we were told that it only needs to be brushed once a year but it is our intent to do it before and after each season.

Softball Fields

Austin Craley, 136 Brentwood Drive was present. He stated that they have 520 girls in the softball program and over 500 are Mount Laurel residents. He believes that they are the second largest girls sport in Mount Laurel. They are operating with 9 fields spread out throughout the township but no home and 7 of the fields have port-a-potties, which are a problem for the girls. They have lights at only two fields and no ability to run tournaments and no concession stand. Baseball has three solid complexes in town. He is dealing with angry parents who want to go to the ACLU about gender equity. He has told them that he has been working with the township. He wants to get the ball rolling. They are looking to have a complex at Trotters Crossing. Two softball fields were designed to be built at Trotters Crossing. They would like a quad similar to what is at Laurel Acres to be built in the front section of Trotters Crossing. He has been told that there may be a problem with the height of the ground and he would like an engineering study be done to see if it is viable and would like to work with the township on this. He has cutouts of the fields and there seems to be room to put them there. He was told there was money in the 2006 budget for softball fields and is now told it is not there in 2009. They are unsafe fields and they are shared with the men's leagues, who do not maintain them at all.

Mayor Keenan asked if Mr. Craley would be willing to share his map with the cutouts. Mr. Craley indicated that he would be glad to do so. Mayor Keenan stated that the wetlands permit was originally approved in 2003 and with the permit extension act the approvals are grandfathered until sometime next year. Last year Council did approve, with the Parks & Recreation Director's recommendation, that the design move forward for building two fields. When the softball sub-committee met with the softball organization they were asked if the township could plan for a quad for the future. Mayor Keenan indicated that the money is not in the budget currently. He asked that we have the engineer review the plans and that the engineering costs be capped at two hours. Council was in agreement.

Mayor Keenan stated that some of the area is above the flood plain height and will need to be looked at. They will also need to review where to relocate soccer for their practice area if a quad is placed there.

Mr. Craley stated that bathrooms and concession are not convenient to where the fields will be located but this can be looked at later and they are willing to work with the township but want to start moving forward. He indicated that Ms. Fourre had looked at other sites but did not communicate with them whether she ever found any that would be more suitable.

Council was in agreement that Mayor Keenan to take the map to ERI to discuss the proposal. Mr. Craley stated that the cutouts are the size for men's fields and that the girls could play on a smaller field so they are a worst case scenario so that men and coed teams could play also although that is not their preference.

Councilwoman Bobo asked the amount of land needed for a quad. Mr. Craley stated that they never did a calculation of the square-footage. He indicated that the best place would be at the Turnpike Field but when they explored it they found that it is not owned by the Township and could be taken back by the Turnpike Authority.

Mayor Keenan stated that he would get together with ERI within the next week.

Mr. Craley welcomed Ms. Blumenthal onboard as Manager.

New Zoning Map

Ms. Halbe distributed copies of the new zoning map that has been created between Mr. Long and Mr. Glass. According to the Township Solicitor, we will need to adopt an ordinance to accept the new zoning map. It will be a color rendition, which we have not had in the past and we will need to update our fee ordinance to sell them at cost. They took changes that were made over the past several years and implemented them. She believed that they thought that the coloring was easier to look at.

Mr. Norman stated that for purposes of any golf course litigation it is good to have a color rendition which clearly shows that the golf course is zoned as outdoor recreation conservation. He will prepare an ordinance for introduction.

Public Comment

Robert Bohinski – 41 Broadacre Drive – Asked for status of Spring Valley Estates. Ms. Blumenthal stated that she has the letter in draft form. Mayor Keenan indicated that Mr. Norman and Council will review it and then they will get it out to the residents. Mr. Bohinski stated that he has been coming here for years and nothing happens. Mayor Keenan stated that Council has determined that a homeowners association should be established. The estimated costs per year for basin maintenance is \$25,000 per year and the money should have been set aside each year for that.

Mr. Bohinski stated that in the minutes of January 12, 2009, the Manager stated that the engineer had given an estimate of \$54,000 to install the sidewalks and there is more than enough money in the account to do so.

Mayor Keenan stated that the recommendation of the professionals at the time of the approvals was that a homeowners association should be formed to maintain the 6 acres and the retention basin. Also money was used to repair the bridge that washed away and the funds were used from the settlement.

Mr. Bohinski stated that the money was set aside to complete the development as planned. Mr. Norman stated that the settlement was dealing with an issue of bankruptcy and trying to get the best deal for the township. The offer was made to establish a trust fund for general maintenance purposes of a while litany of things that it could be used for. It was not to specifically to complete the development, it was for general maintenance purposes. Most residential sub-divisions are conditioned upon the creation of a homeowners association, that way the taxpayers for the entire town are not burdened with paying for one development's basin, it is a fairness issue.

09-28-09

Mayor Keenan stated that Council had determined to move ahead and ask the residents if they will voluntarily form an association. The Township is currently responsible for the basin and if the residents form an association, we will turn over the balance of the money to the association or put it aside for maintenance of the basin. We are looking at the big picture. If the basin fails, the residents of the township will have to pay for repair of the basin.

Mayor Keenan also indicated that Mrs. Bohinski had been here the week before questioning about a sign that was taken down. Mr. Norman stated that he had looked over the development approval and resolution and there was no approval for the sign that was recently taken down. Mayor Keenan said it is a sign that should not have been there in the first place.

Mayor Keenan said that if you want bike paths, you should get an association that agrees with you and then they can do so. Mr. Norman stated that the township would transfer ownership of the open space over to the association. Mr. Bohinski responded that when the people signed the agreement of sale that is not what they agreed to.

Mayor Keenan stated that we have a lawsuit against the Ramblewood Golf Course because people bought their homes with the understanding that the golf course would always be there. Residents paid extra to back up to the golf course. We are now at the mercy of the courts.

Councilwoman Bobo stated that a few things have come up that the developer promised the buyers that were not approved by the township. The development called for a dry basin and the marketing documents stated a pond.

Mayor Keenan stated that it was the prerogative of Council to use the money as they saw fit. They chose to use a large portion to replace the bridge. I believe that the Township should be charging for the maintenance that has been done there. The letter will go out as soon as possible.

Neil Mercaldo –516 Oakview Court - Had spoken to the Manager about the wine and liquor store opening up in the shopping center on Church Road and if there was zoning notice given. Ms. Halbe stated that she believes that it is allowed in that zone. Mayor Keenan commented that it is a permitted use in that zone. Mr. Mercaldo questioned if the baseball fields could also be used for softball and if they could use school fields.

Mayor Keenan responded that the infield is different between baseball and softball. The Softball organization is currently using several school sites to play.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilman Smith and seconded by Councilwoman Bobo. All were in favor and Council adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Halbe, RMC
Municipal Clerk

These minutes are summary minutes. A copy of the tape recording of this meeting will be available in the office of the Municipal Clerk for four years.