

**WORK SESSION  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**March 27, 2018  
DELRAN, NJ**

**Sunshine Statement:** Be advised that proper notice has been given by the Township Council in accordance with the sunshine law in the following manner. Notice advertised in the Burlington County Times and Camden Courier Post on January 16, 2018 and posted on the bulletin board on the same date.

**ROLL CALL:** Mr. Burrell, Mrs. Kolodi, Mr. Schwartz and Mr. O'Connell were present. Mr. Catrambone was absent.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Paris, Mayor, Mr. Shotts, Solicitor, Mr. Hatcher, Administrator and Ms. Eggers, Municipal Clerk.

**GREEN TEAM PRESENTATION**

Al Carp, Delran Green Team, made a presentation to Council on the draft Community Forestry Plan. The plan was prepared with consultant from Community Forester, Barry Emmons using a \$3,000 reimbursement grant from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. The plan is due to the state by May 13<sup>th</sup> and Council must adopt a Resolution authorizing the Mayor to sign the plan for submission. The reason for adopting this plan is the systematic framework it provides for maintaining, removing and replacing trees on Township property. Also the liability coverage provided by the state provided that the plan is being implemented. This plan covers actions for the next five years. It focuses on education and outreach, maintaining CEU's for employees and Green Team members and developing an inventory of trees on Township property with the primary focus on parks and playgrounds where there is an increased risk of tree related injuries. This will be a collaborated effort between the Delran Green Team and Public Works. The Plan identifies actions needed to address storm damage including corrective pruning, tree removal, trimming and repairs to eliminate safety issues. Of course replacement is one of the most important components. The plan also identifies education and outreach to the community to address pest problems located on private property. The Delran Green Team is working with the Delran Schools to plant trees to celebrate Arbor Day. The plan also identifies actions which Public Works already have in place such as curbside pickup for branches, leaves and Christmas Trees, composting, mulching and storm water management.

With a limited budget, the commitments for 2018 are to hire a license tree expert to assist with tree inventory. Public Works will continue to work to address storm damage

In 2019, if finished with the tree inventory, we can apply for a grant up to \$10,000 to complete the inventory of risk tree management, storm assessment and insect and disease management. We will also be eligible for reforestation and tree planting grants up to \$30,000 once we have completed the inventory. In order to maintain our status as a community with an approved Forestry Plan, we must insure that we maintain our accreditation of one Township employee and one volunteer has completed the core training. Currently Brian Mullen from Public Works, Al Carp and Bill Curzie have completed the course. There is an additional requirement for 8 CEU's.

Deb Hammond from Green Team pointed out that after the plan was distributed, Barry Emmons recommended that we move the identification of Ash Trees into year one of the plan rather than year two. He is pretty confident we are going to find a significant amount of dead trees real soon. In the final copy, the Green Team made that change. Also, they added in to apply for Tree City USA designation based on the amount of money the Township has already committed to tree maintenance. What the Green Team needs at this point is a Resolution endorsing the plan and authorizing the Mayor to execute the plan. The deadline for submission is May 11<sup>th</sup>. We must make sure the Barry Emmons, our Forestry Consultant is paid by that date in order make sure we receive the reimbursement grant. The invoice has not yet been provided by Mr. Emmons. We hope that Mayor and Council will be open in the future to apply for additional funding to plant additional trees in the community.

Mr. O'Connell thanked the Green Team for the report. He was happy to see that we were already accomplishing most of the goals up to number twelve.

Mr. Schwartz stated that there were some suggestions in the plan to revise ordinances and asked if this was part of the Resolution.

Mrs. Hammond stated it is not. Our existing ordinance is being submitted as part of the plan. After the inventory is completed, if there are recommended changes they will come back to Council.

Mr. Schwartz stated that one of his concern is that the when the Shade Tree Commission was in place they required certain planting. Now those plantings are where they are not permitted which is between the sidewalks and curb. Mr. Schwartz asked how this plan affects those trees.

Mr. Hatcher noted that the Township has never had a Shade Tree Commission.

Mrs. Hammond stated that the tree between the sidewalks and curb have always been considered private trees.

Mrs. Kolodi asked if most of the ash trees will have to be removed.

Mr. Carp stated yes, most have been affected by the emerald ash borer bug.

Mrs. Kolodi asked if the ash trees are mostly on public or private property.

Mrs. Hammond stated that most are on private property. We may find some on public property around Ohio State. For the Township is, it is not a significant issue. The Green Team will continue to educate the residents.

Mr. Hatcher stated that there is also a concern over oak trees.

Mr. Carp stated that it takes a long time to kill an oak tree but they will all die eventually.

Mrs. Hammond stated that there is no treatment for the oak trees.

Mrs. Kolodi asked what the best tree is to replace the oak and ash trees.

Mr. Carp stated that will be determined with the inventory.

Mrs. Hammond stated that one of the trees recommended by Barry Emmons is a Chinese Elm but they did not survive the recent storms.

Mr. Carp stated that there are also some good maple trees along with some bad ones.

Mrs. Hammond stated that their main focus is on the parks and playgrounds.

Mr. Burrell stated that the way he understands it is that we need to approve the plan so that the funding is allocated.

Mrs. Hammond stated yes.

Mr. Schwartz asked is any component of this is an enforcement component.

Mr. Shotts stated that the enforcement component would be the ordinances on record.

Mr. Schwartz stated that his only concern is this plan is going to ramp up enforcement of tree removal between the sidewalks and curbs.

Mr. Shotts stated that he would have to look into the ordinance but he doubts there is any part that would force removal of existing trees.

Mr. O'Connell stated that they mentioned the expense to have an ash tree treated but there is also a great expense to have a tree trimmed or removed. His concern is some residents will not have the resources to do that.

Mrs. Hammond stated that if you fail to maintain a tree and it falls, your insurance may or may not cover the damage.

Mr. Carp stated that when an ash tree falls it is like icicles and you can't determine where it will fall.

Mr. O'Connell asked the Green Team to explain the map included in the plan.

Mrs. Hammond stated that if you look at the letters at the top, they identify the parcels that are developed and those are the parcels they will be working to inventory.

Mayor and Council thanked the Green Team for their presentation. Council agreed to add a Resolution to the public meeting agenda endorsing the plan and authorizing the Mayor to sign the plan.

### **WATER'S EDGE – SUPPLEMENTAL REMEDIAL WORK PLAN**

Mr. Hatcher reported that they had a conference call with Jeff Worden regarding the Water's Edge remediation. Mr. Worden indicated that they wanted to change the nature in which they were removing the soil samples. Initially they were removing them by a truck but were having a difficult time getting the truck to the area because of the incline. They now want to switch to

using loader to remove the soil samples and bring them to the dump truck. They have plastic under the truck and sidewalks. They will have a flagman out there which will stop traffic during the dumping. They expect to finish in about two weeks and should have less impact to the residents. The residents affected will be notified by e-mail or in person. Also, they have asked to use the area with the pump station to store a drum for water samples. They will install some interior fencing to store the equipment. He talked with the Sewer Department and they have no issues. Council agreed to their request.

Mr. Paris stated that there is an additional part that will be discussed later regarding spores they will be testing down by the water. He asked them if it was going to impact the same residents and they were not sure yet. As soon as they have that plan they will bring it to Council.

### **SEWER DISPUTES**

Mr. Hatcher reviewed the following sewer disputes.

**Block 43, Lot 1** – The resident indicates that they made repairs on a leaky faucet that was completed on April 7, 2017. Resident provided a plumbing invoice indicating the repair was made and since the repair has taken place the bills have dropped significantly from approximately 10,000 gallons a month to below 3,000 gallons a month. If you determine to make an adjustment based upon the information that was provided I would recommend that you adjust the bill to a minimal billing. Council agreed.

**Block 118, Lot: 4** - The resident indicates that the water meter was bad and the meter indicated that the water had 46,000 gallons used during the billing period and the resident indicates that before that they had found a leak from the water main to the house. The leak started in August and replaced the meter January 1, 2017. The resident was billed for \$940 excess and the resident provided a bill from a plumber that indicated that their water service was dug up from the middle of the yard into the basement of the house. Those bills are dated for the time of the repair once the repairs were completed the sewer bills went down significantly. Based upon a review of this residents prior year in 2016 and subsequent year 2018 in both billing periods he utilized 18,000 gallons. Therefore, if you are going to make an adjustment, we recommend that it be made to 18,000 gallons. Council agreed.

**Block 79 / Lot: 5** - Resident indicates that they had a frozen pipe that flooded the yard and home. Resident provided the receipts for equipment and materials to repair the leak. Based upon their water bills for the subsequent year they were at a minimum rate. The billing period provided 22,000 gallons; however, in 2018 they used the minimum and they did not own the home in 2016 therefore, we don't have water consumption from this particular owner that year. Should Township Council wish to amend this Mr. Hatcher suggested that it be amended to the minimal billing.

### **REQUEST TO WAIVE TAX INTEREST BLOCK 65.01, LOT 1**

Mr. Hatcher stated that they resident indicated that they mailed a check on January 25<sup>th</sup>, which was dated January 31<sup>st</sup>. The check was not received until after the due date. They provided no

additional information. The interest accrued to \$36.05 and they are request that interest be waived. Since we have no additional information, we do not recommend the interest be waived.

After discussion, Council agreed not to waive the interest.

### **2018 BUDGET POWER POINT**

Mr. Hatcher provided Council with a copy of the 2018 Budget Power Point. A number of the items included are required by the Best Practices Worksheet. If Council does not have any suggestion or recommendations, we will put this on the website tomorrow.

Mr. Burrell asked if Mr. Hatcher added the item they discussed.

Mr. Hatcher stated that Mr. Burrell suggested that we include information in terms of the breakdown of the tax rate. If Council is okay he will add a page with that information. Council agreed.

Mr. O'Connell stated that it is really quite amazing when you see that state revenues have been flat and even decrease a few times. We also went through a recession and are still maintaining services to the residents while keeping the tax increase minimal. This is a testament to the employees and the Mayor and Council. It is one thing to have a budget and raise taxes it's another thing to provided services and I feel that the residents appreciate those services.

Mr. Paris stated that all the employees have worked very hard to get the budget in line.

Mr. O'Connell reported that the new governor is not proposing any increase in state aid.

### **2018 SEWER BILLING**

Mr. Hatcher reported that when the Tax Collector mailed out the 2018 sewer bills she did not realize that she need to block out the message that showed on last year's bill. The 2018 bills were sent with a 2017 message indicating the sewer bill due date was extended to June 1<sup>st</sup>. The individual quarters have the correct due dates. The options are to send new bills with the correct due date or just extend the due for the first quarter to June 1<sup>st</sup>. The collections have been coming in so our recommendation is to extend the due date for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter payment. Mr. Hatcher stated that he has discussed this issue with the Tax Collector to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Mr. Schwartz asked that we put something in place to correct these issues.

Mr. Paris stated that Mr. Hatcher dealt with the issue.

After discussion, Council agreed to place a Resolution on the public meeting agenda.

### **REPORTS**

**Ms. Eggers** – No report.

**Mr. Hatcher** – Mr. Hatcher reported that we are continuing on with overtime for Public Works for branch collection to catch up from the storms. This will continue until the end of next week and then they will go back to the regular schedule to start preparing the fields for the spring. Branch collection will continue until October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Paris stated that he feels we are in pretty good shape with potholes but asked that we try to get them filled as soon as possible.

Mr. Hatcher stated that we have crews out now.

**Mr. Parente** – No report.

**Mr. Shotts** – No report.

**Mrs. Kolodi** – No report.

**Mr. Schwartz** – No report.

**Mr. Burrell** – Mr. Burrell reported on behalf of the RAC that the Delran Business Association will no longer be running Delran Day. The RAC decided to merge Delran Day with a new event celebrating National Night Out. Council had no issues with this change. The date will be August 7<sup>th</sup> so we will need to change the public meeting date for that month. Mr. Burrell stated that they will put out a save the date announcement soon.

Mr. Hatcher stated that we may also have reach out to the state to determine if any change can be made to the exiting Delran Day account. A single account for Delran Day would work better for donations.

**Mr. O'Connell** – Mr. O'Connell asked the Chief of Police to extend our appreciation to the department for apprehending the alleged burglar that broke into some homes in Summerhill. There were also other towns involved.

**Mr. Paris** – No report.

## **PUBLIC PORTION**

Mr. O'Connell made a motion to open the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Kolodi. All were in favor, motion approved.

Greg O'Lear, 7 Teaberry Lane, stated that one of the issues that brought him here tonight is the sewer bills. Last year there was discussion about the error and three things were promised. One was that NJAW Company was going to change the billing cycles to fit with the ordinance, the Township was going to amend the ordinance to fit with the billing and there would be a procedure out in place to make sure the bills did not go out incorrectly. It looks like that didn't happen.

Mr. O'Connell stated that when he received the bill he didn't notice the message. Certainly if we made a commitment, we should live up to it.

Mr. Schwartz stated that if there is an inconsistency in the ordinance legal would have to review.

Mr. Shotts stated he can review the ordinance.

Mrs. Kolodi stated that she does remember having a conversation about getting our billings consistent with NJAW.

Mr. Burrell stated that some of the conversation was regarding the way the data came from NJAW.

Mr. Hatcher stated that we have asked to receive the information earlier and that was done.

Mr. Schwartz stated that there still may be an issue with the wording of the ordinance.

Mr. Paris stated that as the issue last year was that the billing figures were wrong which required the bills to be reissued. This situation, although it was not correct, if did not affect the figures and we are honoring the extension.

Mr. O'Lear stated that we should be doing better especially after last year.

Mr. Shotts will review the current ordinance.

Mr. O'Lear stated that regarding the budget, consistently our reserve for uncollected taxes is 2 ½ to 3 points below our collection rate. He would like comments on why we are under estimating the reserve, which drives up the rates, instead of using the collection rate.

Mr. Hatcher stated that one of the things we have tried to do over the years is manage the surplus and that is one of the ways we do that by anticipating a percentage below the collection rate. Every town anticipates a percentage below what they will collect. Regardless of how many years the collection rate is consistent, if the reduction in the tax collection rate managing the surplus can lessen the tax impact to the residents. If you look at the management of our surplus that is one of the reasons there hasn't been a significant tax increase in the last eight years.

Mr. O'Lear asked why we don't just use the correct rate. Mr. O'Lear stated that in neighboring towns they are almost spot on with the tax collection rate.

Mr. Hatcher stated that he believes we are using the correct rate for the reserve for uncollected taxes. We have done it in the past similar to what Mr. O'Lear is explaining and in one year, we faced a 5% reduction in the collection and were faced with a \$1,000,000 deficit. This keeps that from happening. Also in using the surplus to the balance the budget, we are giving the tax payers back those funds.

Mr. O'Lear stated that we are an anomaly in the area.

Mr. Paris stated that we are also doing very well with the taxes.

Mr. O'Lear stated that it could be lower. We also have the highest surplus in the area and it might be excessive. We are building the surplus based on over collection. We should figure out where the surplus should be, manage the rates to that point and then maintain.

Mr. Hatcher stated that there are two ways to do it and if we did it the way Mr. O'Lear is explaining, the first year we had a reduction in the collection rate we will see the surplus diminish and have a tax increase. One of the reason we need cash flow is that we are not the largest entity that we are collecting taxes for. When the bill comes in from the school district, we have to turn those funds over. If you don't have cash, you can't make the required payments to the other entities and towns like that are living on tax anticipation notes. Which means they are

paying interest they don't have to. We are using those surplus funds to offset any tax increase. For a town without any growth to not have a minimal tax increase over the last eight years is an anomaly.

Mrs. Kolodi stated that she is not an expert on the money but when the look at the services and road program is second to none compared to other towns. All those things make living here a good thing.

Mrs. Kolodi made a motion to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Burrell. All were in favor, the motion was approved.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Kolodi. All were in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamey Eggers, Township Clerk