

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF
THE TOWNSHIP OF WANTAGE, HELD AT THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 888
STATE HIGHWAY ROUTE 23, WANTAGE, N.J. ON MAY 28, 2015.**

Mayor Gaechter called the meeting to order, and requested the Deputy Clerk call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Mayor William Gaechter, Committeeman Ronald Bassani, Committeeman Jon Morris. Absent: None. Also present were Attorney Glenn Kienz and Deputy Clerk Christine Von Oesen.

Mayor Gaechter introduced Sussex Borough Councilwoman Katherine Little and Sussex Borough Councilman Mario Poggi.

Mayor Gaechter stated, "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Public Laws 1975, Chapter 231. It has been properly advertised and posted and certified by the Clerk."

YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

Mayor Gaechter introduced the program. Youth in Government Wantage Mayor Miss Callie Gaechter, daughter of Wantage Mayor William Gaechter, invited all to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The students ran their mock meeting and each then spoke to the audience about what they had learned during the day as they shadowed the employees of Sussex Borough Hall and the Wantage Township Municipal Building.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Gaechter requested that the governing body review and approve the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Bassani moved to approve Payment of bills for the meeting of May 28, 2015

Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call,

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Mr. Bassani moved to authorize the refund of \$500.00 to William Lawton, Block 4 Lot 1.05 for Commercial Developers' Fee collected in error

Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call,

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Mr. Bassani moved to authorize the refund of One Day Food Handling Permit fees waived by direction of the governing body at the May 14, 2015 meeting, as follows:

\$ 50.00 to The Armstrong Farm

\$ 50.00 to Brian Belenchia

\$100.00 to The Wennie Hut Mobile Catering

\$100.00 to KTSA, LLC

\$ 50.00 to Homestead Restaurant, Inc.

Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call,

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Mr. Bassani moved to appoint John Card to the position of Building Maintenance Worker (Job #2), effective June 1, 2015 at the annualized salary of \$2,000.

Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call,

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

REPORTS

Administrator's Report

1. The Administrator requested that the Committee enter into Executive Session to review status of negotiations with employee unions.

Administrator's Report, Continued

2. Regarding Municipal and County Health Department fees, Ms. Von Oesen stated that Mr. Doherty had submitted a report and recommended that the governing body accept an offer by the Sussex County Health Department to offer a presentation to the Wantage Governing Body, at the June 11, 2015 Committee meeting, to explain the details of the services that are provided by the County Health Department. Mr. Doherty suggested that the Township Committee ask the Wantage Board of Health for input on fees before taking action.
3. Ms. Von Oesen offered a reminder that Saturday is Wantage Day at Woodbourne Veterans Memorial Park. Copies of the Schedule of Events were provided at this meeting.
4. Speaking on behalf of the employees of Wantage Township, Ms. Von Oesen said to the students in attendance and their families that the Township employees all agree that it was a pleasure to meet with all the students participating in Youth in Government Day, that the students were respectful and engaging, and it is hoped that they enjoyed their day as much as the staff enjoyed having them here.
5. Regarding the SDL Program, Ms. Von Oesen stated that Mr. Doherty had offered suggestions, and requested that Mr. Bassani cover the subject in his Committee Report.

Committee Member Report – Mr. Bassani

Mr. Bassani explained shortcomings that had been identified with the current Spatial Data Logic software system being utilized for inspections. Hardyston software and fee schedule are a better fiscal fit and more user friendly. Mr. Bassani recommends Mitchell Humphrey software replace the SDL currently in use.

Mayor Gaechter requested a Motion to replace SDL with Mitchell Humphrey software.

Motion by Mr. Bassani, Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call,

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Attorney Report - Mr. Kienz

Mr. Kienz reported the Land Use Board met and is working on Route 23 redevelopment.

Committee Report – Mr. Morris

Mr. Morris stated the Fire Chief has a short list of needs regarding the new fire truck specs, and is making progress.

The 59 Crigger Road problem of debris accumulating in the catch basin does not seem to be fixable, other than to clean out the catch basin twice a year. New piping would only relocate the problem to another property.

Mayor Gaechter added that he spoke with the homeowner and stated to him that no major re-piping can be done, but cleaning the basin after storms may help, or perhaps the use of rip rap as a filter could help. He met with the homeowner and explained that this was an existing drainage easement at the time the owner purchased the property.

Mr. Morris stated that Fred Space wishes to open his fishing pond to boys and girls age 16 and under, and that it be advertised on the Wantage Website.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Attorney Kienz advised that the Committee will be entering Executive Session as follows:
WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act , P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 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 Mayor and Committee of the Township of Wantage, that the public shall be excluded from discussion of negotiations involving union negotiations and possible lease of township properties.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the minutes will be kept on file in the municipal clerk's office, and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes shall be made public.

Motion by Mr. Bassani, Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call:

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

After meeting in closed session, Mayor Gaechter requested a Motion to return to the Regular Meeting. Motion by Mr. Bassani, Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call:

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Mayor Gaechter requested a motion to accept, with regrets, the retirement of Kim Aramini.

Motion by Mr. Bassani, Second by Mr. Morris. Upon Roll Call:

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

OLD BUSINESS

Lake Neepaulin use rules will be carried over until the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Warren Weisse stated that the season is here for Lake Neepaulin recreational activities.

Ann Smulewicz asks if the Township sent anything to Rudy Solar's family in memory of his passing. Mr. Bassani replied that something had been sent from the Township.

Ms. Smulewicz attended the Freeholders Meeting, where Freeholder Rich Vohden indicated that there are 9,600 foreclosures in Sussex County, which is 17% of the homes. He added that property values are down 6%. Ms. Smulewicz continued that property values go down when a next door property is a foreclosure.

Mr. Bassani stated that the LUB has redeveloped the Master Plan and is actively seeking potential ratables, and is working to increase Wantage economic development. Mr. Bassani stated that we need jobs to turn the local economy and foreclosures around.

Ann Smulewicz and Ronald Bassani expressed happiness with Ken Nelson's report.

Ms. Smulewicz stated that large size lots are not affordable now. The Wantage Land Use Board granted Joe Retz' request to put duplexes on this 5 acre parcel. She believes that this is a good direction to take. Ms. Smulewicz adds that Freeholder Vohden is a dedicated County worker and that he has good ideas that don't make it into the newspapers.

Mr. Bassani asked Mr. Kienz if the 9,600 foreclosure number is on target. Mr. Kienz replied that Sussex County is in dire straits, and added that the Wantage Land Use Board is as progressive a board as there is.

Ms. Smulewicz stated that we need better representation, and we need to stop paying for Abbott Districts. She adds that we have to help ourselves.

OPEN SESSION, Continued

Karen Merritt stated that although Lake Neepaulin is off limits to the public, people are trespassing – boating, kayaking, fishing and playing basketball on the property. She wants to know who is monitoring the trespassing.

Mayor Gaechter stated that limited resources do not allow for patrols at Lake Neepaulin.

Peter Johr stated that there have been two good, informative articles in the New Jersey Herald regarding the 9,000 plus foreclosures, and also about the declining population in Sussex County. He stated that the local economy needs stimulation. He adds that the Vernon Construction Department makes resale difficult.

Mr. Bassani replied that the Township is doing everything possible to address economic concerns. He added that it is a huge problem.

Christine Keller stated that swimming should not be allowed at Lake Neepaulin. Ms. Keller has concerns about liability, salaries, water testing costs, etc. that would apply if swimming were to be allowed at Lake Neepaulin. She continued that if the Committee wants to permit swimming that it please be put on a referendum and let the community vote and decide.

Mr. Bassani replied that the issue would probably not go to a referendum. He stated that the Committee is very close to resolving Lake Neepaulin use concerns, and liability issues have been identified and determined, and the Committee wants to utilize the Lake in order to get the most out of it. He continued that liability at Woodbourne Park is higher than it would be at Lake Neepaulin if swimming were allowed.

Ms. Keller asked if speed bumps could be placed in the Lake Neepaulin park main entrance area, because people are driving 55/60 miles per hour there.

Bob Heiden stated that, regarding foreclosures, opening the Lake for recreational activities may attract purchasers and build up the Lake Neepaulin area. People, he added, do not want a use-less lake.

Nancy Nolte advised that there is no public parking and that there are no public bathrooms at Lake Neepaulin. The location is good for Lake Neepaulin residents, but not for the rest of Wantage residents. She adds that the Township might own it, but geographically, the Township cannot use it. She stated that the lake is dirty, over populated, and environmentally stretched. Less lake use would be preferable – she says it would be best to clean it up and let it revert back to nature.

Mr. Bassani disagreed with Ms. Nolte's observations.

Kathy Gorman requested all the research that Mayor Gaechter gathered in his assessment of the Lake Neepaulin issue to be documented and made public.

Emily Heiden countered Ms. Nolte's opinion about Lake Neepaulin. Miss Heiden stated that Lake Neepaulin is clean and that she has swum and fished there with her family since she was a small child. She adds that Friends of Lake Neepaulin always had family fun activities. She reiterated that Lake Neepaulin is not dirty.

Ms. Merritt agreed with Ms. Keller that speed bumps are needed at the road by the Lake Neepaulin beach. She stated that people use the road going by the beach as a cut through from Newman Road via Neepaulin Drive to Libertyville, and it is, she adds, a safety concern.

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OPEN SESSION, Continued

Peter Johr stated that the Committee's decisions on Lake Neepaulin will have a direct effect on property values and tax revenue.

Ms. Smulewicz stated that Lake Neepaulin was a scam. She stated that she is paying for 850 farm land assessed properties.

Ms. Smulewicz stated that she recently attended a meeting of veterans. There were many veterans from Wantage. There were veterans in need and the bureaucrats are not doing enough. Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen had two aids there. Also in attendance was Democratic Candidate for Assembly Marie Bilek, and Republican Candidate for Assembly Jackie Staple. Veterans, many from Wantage, have fallen between the cracks.

There being no one else present wishing to address the governing body, Mayor Gaechter closed the meeting to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Gaechter requested a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Mr. Bassani. Second by Mr. Morris.
All in favor: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine M. Von Oesen, Deputy Clerk