

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF WANTAGE, HELD AT THE WANTAGE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL
BUILDING, 888 STATE HIGHWAY 23, WANTAGE, N.J. ON MARCH 7, 2016**

Mayor Bassani called the meeting of the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Wantage to order, and requested the Clerk Pro Tem to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Bassani, Committeeman Morris, Gaechter.

The following member was absent: None.

Also present: Clerk Pro Tem Michelle La Starza

Mayor Bassani led those present in the Salute to the Flag.

Mayor Bassani 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 noticed and posted to the public, and certified by the Clerk."

BUDGET

A review of the Capital Road Projects and open items for the Fire Department were reviewed. Mayor Bassani requested Mr. Morris contact Sussex Fire Chief, Jake Little, to see if there was any flexibility in the \$25.00 per member charge to enter a shared service agreement with Sussex Borough Fire Department to provide FIT testing services annually. An additional amount will be added to the Chief's operating budget for this specific purpose.

The Governing Body agreed by consensus that since there is presently the ability to increase the amount of funds allocated for road repair and improvements without increasing the municipal tax rate for the 2016 budget, that \$910,000 be approved for a 2016 Bond Ordinance. The Committee requested that the roads allocated not be named until Bob Wagner, DPW Supervisor and Harold Pellow, Township Engineer look at which roads are in the greatest need of repair.

The Committee reviewed the quotes for the repair of the salt shed roof. This item has been tabled and will be discussed at the March 10, 2016 regular meeting of the Mayor and Committee

Executive Session

Mr. Morris moved to enter into closed 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 matters involving personnel matters related to the Zoning Official.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that 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.

Mr. Gaechter seconded the motion. Upon roll call,
Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

After meeting in closed session, Mr. Morris moved to return to open session and continue with the regular order of business. Mr. Gaechter seconded the motion. Upon roll call,
Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Mayor Bassani opened the meeting to the public for any questions or comments.

William Gettler, 98 Gemmer Road, addressed the governing body regarding his perception of performance issues with Tax Assessor, Kristy Lockburner. After his presentation, he delivered his written report all members and the Clerk Pro Tem. Mayor Bassani thanked him for his input.

Eric Schlueter, 17 Bridal Way, addressed the Governing Body regarding the condition of the Clydesdale Ridge Development, specifically, Bridal Way and Martingale. Mr. Schlueter informed the Committee that he had written assurance from Jim Doherty that Clydesdale Ridge will be part of the 2016 road improvement plan. Mayor Bassani advised that the Governing Body just approved \$910,000 for 2016 road improvements, but cannot promise that this development will be deemed as one of the roads improved as a needs assessment has not been completed.

Anne Smulewicz, 108 Route 23, expressed concern that during the Administrator's absence, the public needs to know who is in charge. Mayor Bassani informed Mrs. Smulewicz that according to Mr. Doherty's terms of employment, he is still fulfilling his duties as Administrator with the assistance of the Governing Body, Deputy Clerk and Chief Financial Officer.

Mrs. Smulewicz further voiced her concern with the information presented by Mr. Gettler and her perception that nothing will be done with the information he has provided. Both Mayor Bassani and Mr. Gaechter informed Mrs. Smulewicz that there was too much technical information presented to give an informed response at this time and that every concern of the public is reviewed with appropriate parties or personnel. Mr. Gaechter further explained that Mr. Doherty is presently using his accumulated sick time, a benefit that all Township employees receive.

Mr. Gettler voiced his opinion that his correspondence can have a negative impact on the 2016 budget if all farmers were to appeal their taxes. Mayor Bassani stated that the matter would be looked into.

Mrs. Smulewicz further voiced her opinions regarding the overpayment of Mayor and Committee salaries, overstaffing of municipal offices and the negative attitude of the Governing Body and Administrator towards those who voice opinions that are not complimentary regarding the handling of Township business. Mayor Bassani informed the public that Mr. Gaechter had the opportunity to receive health benefits when he first was elected, but declined them after recognizing how many hours the Mayor and Committee dedicate to holding their offices. In lieu of health benefits, it was determined that the annual salary be raised for all Governing Body members. Mayor Bassani further informed Mrs. Smulewicz that he is personally dealing with her issue regarding the sale of her business.

As there was no one else from the public wishing to address the Mayor and Committee, Mayor Bassani closed the meeting to the public.

As there was no further business to discuss, Mr. Morris moved to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Gaechter seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

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

Mayor Bassani declared this meeting to be adjourned.

Michelle LaStarza, Clerk Pro Tem