

A special meeting of the East Amwell Township Committee came to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Mayor C. Larry Tatsch, Deputy Mayor Patricia Cregar, and Committee members Linda Lenox and Tim Mathews. Committee member Peter Kneski was absent.

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, a copy of notice of this meeting was filed in the Clerk's Office, posted on the bulletin board, and sent to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Times of Trenton, and Star Ledger on May 3, 2011; the notice was published in the May 5 2011, issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat. The purpose of this meeting is to hold a public hearing on Ordinance #11-12, an ordinance to amend the fee ordinance for summer playground, zoning fees for construction, stormwater review fees, and to amend the ordinance for charges for township records.

The public is invited to attend and comment. Action may or may not be taken.

The meeting opened with The Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCE 11-12

ORDINANCE 11-12 AN AMENDMENT TO THE CODE OF EAST AMWELL TOWNSHIP, SPECIFICALLY CHAPTER 75, FEES, TO INCLUDE SUMMER PLAYGROUND FEES, FEES FOR ZONING OFFICER PERMIT REVIEWS FOR CONSTRUCTION, AND FEES FOR STORMWATER MANAGEMENT REVIEWS, AND CHAPTER 6, CHARGES FOR COPIES OF TOWNSHIP RECORDS

As proof of publication, the Clerk provided the legal notice from the May 5, 2011, issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat. The ordinance has been posted and available to the public since introduction on May 2, 2011.

Mayor Tatsch spoke to Attorney Cushing about a possible change in the ordinance to add the words "up to" before the summer playground fee, and it was determined that this would be a major change. If the Township Committee decides not to charge a fee, they would not adopt the ordinance tonight.

Mayor Tatsch spoke with Attorney Cushing, the Clerk, and Andrew Beck (President of the PTO), and he prepared a sheet entitled Options for Summer Playground, which he read into the record (as attached). The intent is to have those residents utilizing the program pay for the program. The Mayor also asked about the PTO's interest in running the program, and he opened to the public for discussion.

Andy Beck, PTO President, contacted as many members as he could last week. Most said no to paying \$85 for a five-week program, but they might consider \$20-25; they would like more structure at the playground, and they would rather send their children to camps if paying that amount of money. He did not find any members willing to volunteer to run the program.

Setting up a committee to poll township residents to get more data and determine how much they were willing to spend was a suggestion; having more ideas for options was also a consideration.

Mayor Tatsch commented on the option of waiving the fee this year since the message to residents about the associated costs got out too late for them to make other plans. If state funding is lost in the future, there may be ways to save money without cutting programs, and residents may be able to help.

Mr. Beck mentioned that the program is not in operation in rainy weather; the possibility of having a weekly fee might be an idea to consider.

Contacting those residents who utilized the program last year was another possibility to determine interest in the program; there were about 90 - 100 children registered last year.

Mayor Tatsch explained that running the summer playground was far removed from Township functions, i.e., the teachers at the school would have a better idea on how to run the program. Having the program in the hands of people who use it, teachers, and volunteers would be a better idea.

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, recommended giving the money to the PTO to run the program this year and use negotiations with the insurance company to run through the township for coverage. She commented on high economic costs for families with children and suggested financing the program this year. Having educational segments in the program next year, e.g., rain gardening, solar, or other educational components, would be some ideas. Using inside facilities at the school would also be recommended.

Carol McGee, 11 Rosemont-Ringoes Road, felt that this was not the year to charge for the program, noting that some families would not participate. She felt that a fee of \$25 would be more reasonable, and she suggested consideration of the paid program for next year.

Terri Mitchell, Dunkard Church Road, has two students in 7th and 4th grades, who "love summer playground." She is a life long resident of the township, feels that the program is a very beneficial program that lets friends get together to play, does not see it as unstructured but a playtime opportunity for children, feels East Amwell is a unique community and keeping the children together in this form was beneficial, knows that some people would not be able to afford to pay for the service, and suggests surveying parents to see how they feel for the future.

Jim Hawthorne, 36 Old York Road, ascertained from the Mayor that during difficult economic times 30 years, residents did not have to pay for summer playground; he did not believe that they should have to now. He mentioned his personal reliance on the free program last year, noting that it was beneficial to be able to send his children there. He suggested carefully considering the matter for next year and leaving the program as is this year.

Frances Gavigan mentioned a tax bill mailing next week and suggested that the Township ask residents to comment on the possible restructuring of the program for next year. Putting a team together to consider the 2012 program would allow "plenty of lead time" to do so.

Motion by Deputy Mayor Cregar, seconded by Ms. Lenox, and it was carried to close to the public.

Mayor Tatsch noted that the ordinance would not pass unless a motion was made to adopt the ordinance, seconded, and an affirmative vote was taken. He asked for a motion to adopt Ordinance 11-12; there was no motion made, and the ordinance was not adopted.

The Clerk asked about having the remainder of the ordinance (without reference to summer playground) ready for the June meeting. Mr. Mathews suggested discussing it before putting the ordinance on the agenda.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Deputy Mayor Cregar, seconded by Ms. Lenox, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk