

The regular meeting of the East Amwell Township Committee was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Mayor Peter Kneski, Deputy Mayor Dart Sageser, and Committee members Tim Mathews and David Wang-Iverson. Committee member Patricia Cregar was absent. Township Administrator Timothy Matheny and Attorney Judy Kopen were also in attendance.

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Deputy Clerk Pamela Dymek announced that this is a regularly scheduled meeting, pursuant to the resolution adopted on January 1, 2013, and a meeting notice published in the Hunterdon County Democrat issue of January 10, 2013. A copy of the agenda for this meeting was forwarded to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Times of Trenton, Star Ledger, Courier News, posted on the bulletin board, and filed in the Clerk's Office on September 10, 2013.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE

Mayor Kneski spoke about the passing of Floyd Menchek, a former Township Committee member, stating a resolution would be presented. He also asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Mr. Menchek and of the victims of 911.

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RESOLUTION #98-13

WHEREAS, Floyd Menchek was a life-long resident of the Township of East Amwell, living and working on land owned by his family for well over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Floyd Menchek was an integral part of this and neighboring communities, including serving as a Volunteer Fireman on the Amwell Valley Fire Company; a Supervisor and Officer for the Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District; a member of the Board of Directors of Farmers Mutual Insurance Company in Flemington; and a Board Director of the Harbourton Cemetery Association; among other endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Floyd Menchek was a five-term member of the East Amwell Township Committee, beginning his service in 1971 and serving until 1985, including serving as Mayor of the Township in 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, and 1985, and also serving on the Planning Board at various intervals from 1971 through 1995 - during these terms his leadership and dedication to the residents of East Amwell were strongly displayed, including but not limited to several publicly enhancing developments during his tenure, such as adopting a soil erosion and sediment control ordinance; creating an inter-local agreement with Hunterdon County Health Department to provide public health services; serving on the negotiating committee for Comcast Cable; authorizing funding to create municipal ball fields next to the municipal building and to build the grit-yard barn; and establishing the State Uniform Construction Code Enforcement Agency in the Township, among other items; and

WHEREAS, everyone who encountered Floyd was aware of his dedication to the Township, his ability to serve the public wholeheartedly, his willingness to provide hands-on support to the public and to East Amwell employees when needed, and his ability to enact change in our community at a time when East Amwell was still a very rural area, all of which have benefited the Township tremendously;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of East Amwell, that they hereby mourn the loss of Floyd Menchek as one of the Township's dedicated leaders and wish his family their heartfelt sympathy.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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Motion by Mr. Mathews, seconded by Mr. Wang-Iverson, and carried unanimously to approve the resolution.

AGENDA REVIEW

Under Unfinished Business, SHREC (South Hunterdon Regional Electricity Co-operative) will be discussed at the next Township Committee meeting.

Under Correspondence, the Planning Board's adopted Master Plan, as of 9/11/13, was added.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be a special collection for scrap metal and for home goods during the October 5, 2013, monthly recycling depot on the municipal lot. See flyers for details, located on the Township website at www.eastamwelltownship.com

Hunterdon County Utilities will hold a Computer & Electronics Collection Day on Saturday, October 12, 2013, at the County Complex from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call 908-788-1110 or email swrs@co.hunterdon.nj.us for more information. (The next Hazardous Waste Collection Day will be on November 9, 2013 at the same time.)

Special Election Day for Vacated Senatorial Seat is Wednesday, October 16, 2013, from 6 a.m. – 8 p.m. All polls are located at the municipal building.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 8, 2013, Special Minutes were approved on a motion by Deputy Mayor Sageser, seconded by Mr. Mathews, and carried with one abstention, Mr. Wang-Iverson.

August 8, 2013, Executive Minutes (Personnel, Acquisition) were approved on a motion by Deputy Mayor Sageser, seconded by Mr. Mathews, and carried with one abstention, Mr. Wang-Iverson.

August 8, 2013, Regular Minutes were approved on a motion by Deputy Mayor Sageser, seconded by Mr. Mathews, and carried with one abstention, Mr. Wang-Iverson.

STATE POLICE UPDATE

There was no representative from the Kingwood Station present. Their August 2013 report was noted.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (for Comments from the Public for Items Not on the Agenda)

Dick Ginman, 125 Mountain Road, complimented the Township on making one of the top 100 towns recognized in New Jersey Monthly Magazine.

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, mentioned attending the Planning Board meeting last night when it was announced that the Township lost another CFO; she was surprised not to see this on the agenda tonight since it was a large, well attended meeting. She commented on losing three CFOs in two years since Jane [Luhrs] retired. She also mentioned an agenda item about DPW employee who was here briefly. She spoke about a turnover in personnel, about having people in the past staying for a length of time and felt that the loss of 8 people in the last 3 years is a lot. She said that industry would say that "this is a signal," and she found this disconcerting.

Ms. Gavigan commented favorably on the new software purchased, which provided detailed bills of the evening. She commented on three months of payroll on tonight's list and asked if there was a problem or "was the system not moving smoothly."

Ms. Gavigan also mentioned the draft minutes from August concerning people from the mountain re: vehicles on Stony Brook Road with Route 518 being out. She mentioned her comments at the time about speaking with the County, and she understood that Mr. Matheny would be following up. Within two weeks after the meeting, she spoke with the County Director of Bridges, and he said that upon request, they would provide four ton limit signs for posting to deter truck traffic on the roads. She followed up two weeks later and again this week, and the County said that they did not receive any request from East Amwell Township. Ms. Gavigan felt that the bridge on Route 518 would be open again before any signs are put in place to avert heavy traffic. Ms. Gavigan felt the “turnover in personnel and issues, and financial and other kinds of things speak to an issue that the house is not in order...,” and she hoped that the Township Committee looked into these things shortly and do something about it. She commented on taxpayers have trouble paying their taxes for various reasons, including Senior Freeze, and she asked that the problem be fixed.

Mayor Kneski asked Mr. Matheny to update the Committee about the Route 518 issue under his report.

Microphones were tested at this time for proper functioning.

Iiona English, 9 Runyon Mill Road, asked township debt and whether interest or principal was being paid down. Mr. Matheny left the room to ask the CFO/Treasurer to come to the meeting. Ms. English continued by stating that she felt it was important to start paying down principal, and the Township Committee owes it to the taxpayers to let them know when that would happen to advise them of “big knocks to the taxes.” Ms. English asked Mr. Trasente her question, and he answered principal. She then asked about projections. Mr. Trasente did one for the bond ordinance being considered tonight, but he did not know of any future projects. He stated that the debt service is what it is, mostly fixed; there are also notes that will be fixed in the future. The debt service is listed in the audit, which is on the website. Ms. English asked if an average taxpayer would be able to understand it. Mr. Wang-Iverson said that he looked at debt service at the beginning of the year during the budget process and plodded it on an Excel sheet. Payments are flat until 2017 and drop off rapidly. Based on numbers from February, the debt would be completely paid off by 2024, assuming no further debt. High payments now will start to go down after 2017 (based on February figures).

Ms. English asked how many people (at the dais) have driven around the mountain area because there is “a time bomb if there is ever a fire.” She stated that there are tons of lumber on the ground, and none of the roads qualify to be fire breaks since they are not wide enough. During Sandy, a fire truck and ambulance were damaged getting up to the mountain. She mentioned discussions about preservation on the mountain, asking what about preservation of the people that live here, especially if there is a major fire on the mountain. She was aware of a new fire report, but “it doesn’t speak to the dead forest on top of the Sourland.” She mentioned her husband’s service on a board for Mohawk Preserve in New York, and she invited all those who speak about preserving the mountain to go up there and see a huge preserve that’s been there for 25 years and see what the forest should look like. She further commented on the following: The Sourland Mountain is a dying forest, i.e., short root systems; roads are closed in storms; although there are good volunteer fire people, she is still concerned; there is no livestock evacuation plan, i.e., horses are an investment, are agriculture, and are living animals; she did not believe that Emergency Management knows how to handle animals, and “no one from agriculture has come to equine community”; there are lots of flag lots; she asked that someone look at the area and have state forestry do a report to see if the Township needs a fire break and if the Township needs to buy land to build one; she wanted something done.

Finally, Ms. English said that she has lived here over 25 years, and she has never seen so many problems with personnel since the Administrator was hired. She asked if exit interviews were being done. She commented on East Amwell being a great to live, but no one wants to work here, which she felt was a management problem. She was mostly concerned with the financial issues because she is a financial person. She did not believe a business administrator was necessary, and she concluded by stating that she is paying a tremendous amount in taxes.

Mayor Kneski asked Mr. Mathews about the fire plan, which is currently being reviewed. The State Forestry is involved with the “active group” meeting to put a plan together. Mr. Mathews

said that the mountain was covered in the draft plan, and since the past storms, the situation is worse. The plan calls for grant money to communicate to the residents about the risks and guidelines, and there is money for an exercise to work with the fire department to address response in the mountain district. The fire company is able to control fires, and they are asking for grant funding for additional tools to assist, although there isn't enough money to get all the equipment they need. OEM Coordinator Gary Myers is organizing another meeting with state representatives for another draft of the plan before it is approved.

Frances Gavigan said that the Agricultural Advisory Committee held a forum after Irene with County people about emergencies with respect to animals, and they have not been involved with OEM. Ms. English felt that OEM should cover everything, and she "had no faith sometimes." She commented on "no separation from the mountain if there is a fire." She believed in having block captains in the community to provide checks on residents, including those on flag lots and the elderly.

Mr. Mathews said the plan outlines risks in all areas, but the mountain was the largest risk area, based on the State Foresters' assessment.

Charles Van Horn, 62 Snyderstown Road, wanted to publicly thank the Township Administrator. Mr. Van Horn brought the problem of the heavy traffic on his road to the Township Committee's attention last month because of the detour on Route 518, and he has been in communication with Mr. Matheny on what has transpired. The speed drone has been placed on Snyderstown Road, which should help. Trucks are still using the road, but he did not believe that the Township has the authority to ban trucks. Mr. Van Horn provided anecdotal information about a car carrier using the rural road, perhaps because a GPS unit sent it that direction. He thanked Mr. Matheny and the Committee very much and wanted them to know that there are some residents that are very happy with response.

Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to close to the public.

SPECIAL DISCUSSION

COMCAST QUARTERLY PRESENTATION Director of Government Affairs Rob Clifton was present.

Mr. Clifton had no formal report, stating that the company is continuing their routine maintenance in the township and on the system. He commented on working with the Clerk to increase computer speed. Mr. Matheny said that representatives did put in a new modem, which went down between 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. each morning, and it eventually "powered out." Comcast techs replaced the newer modem with an older model, and the system is functioning; speed was a little better with the newer modem. Mr. Clifton believed that the problem was the wiring from the street, and he will be sending representatives to address this.

Mayor Kneski spoke about a letter from Princeton Hydro that came in late this evening regarding modem issues. A copy of the letter was given to Mr. Clifton to address.

Mayor Kneski opened the meeting to the public for any comments regarding Comcast.

Patty Kurkewicz, 45 Linvale Road, has complaints about the company, stating that her service and phones are "horrible." A box was replaced four times, she can't wait to leave the company, and she has bad service on the mountain. Mr. Clifton will provide her with his contact information for assistance; he said that it may be an external problem.

Frances Gavigan said that she switched to Comcast for internet and television. She pays an extra fee for high speed lines, and it is still slower than the phone company. She lives on a main road, not the mountain. Mr. Clifton again stated that it may be an external problem and will provide his contact information for assistance.

Ilona English said that she has no problems and does not have Comcast. On a question from the Mayor, she said that Century Link provides triple play and a higher level of service.

Mr. Clifton referenced a new program available for home security, running through the modem to use cell phones for lights and security. There are no hardwires involved and plugs into regular outlets. The cost is around \$40.00/month and works with existing systems. Mr. Mathews asked for an Eagles channel; there is none available.

Joan Read, 40 Linvale Road, noted sometimes “sketchy” service, but felt that the employees have always been efficient, very polite, and very helpful.

Mr. Clifton was thanked for his presentation this evening.

Mayor Kneski recommended a 5 minute recess to set up the projector for the next presentation.

AN OVERVIEW OF EAST AMWELL’S 2013 REASSESSMENT OF PROPERTY VALUES

Township Assessor Marianne Busher was present. Mr. Wang-Iverson also was involved with the presentation. A handout of the presentation was available to the public (For the record, it is also on line at the Township website).

Ms. Busher thanked the Township Committee for the opportunity to speak this evening. She began with property value trends since the last revaluation in 2005. A chart of the US Housing Bubble showed nationally property values rose sharply until the first quarter of 2006 with a rapid decline in 2007 and 2008 with a hopeful low in 2012. In fourth quarter 2005, after the revaluation, the median house price was \$283,397.00. In fourth quarter 2012, before the reassessment, the median US home price was \$174,585.00, representing a 38% loss in property value between 2005 and 2007. The US Housing Bubble Chart showed a substantial decrease in home prices from 2005 to 2012. Locally, indicators showed sales prices below assessments, and there were increased tax appeals by property owners, i.e., in 2012 there were 26 appeals, resulting in a \$1,610,300 value reduction and \$25,600 refunded for these appeals. Appeal refunds include all but county portion of taxes, including school taxes. To insure fairness, the Township Committee and the State Division of Taxation approved a reassessment for the municipality.

Ms. Busher explained the differences between reassessment and revaluation. A revaluation is completed by an outside firm. All properties are inspected, reviewed and adjusted by an outside firm. East Amwell’s last revaluation was in 2005. A reassessment involves inspections by an outside agency, and all properties are reviewed and adjusted by the East Amwell Township Assessor. Both the revaluation and reassessment are approved and monitored by the County Board of Taxation and the State Division of Taxation. The difference is the cost of each, i.e., the 2005 revaluation cost \$135,700; the reassessment in 2013 was \$46,500, or 65% less than in 2005.

There were also other indicators that a reassessment was necessary. One was the increased equalization ratio (ER). The ER is the measure of assessments and how close they are to true market value. As an Assessor, Ms. Busher likes values to fall between 95 – 100%. In 2007, the ER was 97.03% and in 2012 it was 104.56%, clearly showing assessments exceeded market value. A listing of the homes in early 2012 showed that 64% properties had asking prices under their assessed value.

The composition of the ratables, shown in pie chart form, showed 59% residential, 12% farm homestead, 19% farm qualified, 7% vacant land, and 3% commercial/apartments. The ratable base before and after the reassessment showed the following value changes: 28.26% decrease in vacant land; 16.27% decrease in residential; 14.13% decrease in farm homestead; .01% decrease in farm qualified, 7.86% decrease in commercial; 5.58% increase in apartments, for a total decrease of 14.92%.

The impact of the reassessment on residential taxes was presented: 46% realized a 2% or greater reduction in 2013 property tax; 21% realized a -2% to +2% change in 2013 property tax; 33% realized a 2% or greater increase in 2013 property tax.

In summary, Ms. Busher said that 2005 valuations were near peak of the housing bubble; 2012 valuations were much greater than their selling prices; there were indicators that the assessments

were not defensible; the new assessments put all residents on equal footing and strives to spread the tax burden fairly, and an annual reassessment that may be considered will allow for yearly corrections, based on market trend and eliminate large swings in assessment values.

Mr. Wang-Iverson said that he would try to explain some of the changes in the municipal tax. He said that it was a very confusing tax year because of the reassessment and in the first time in four years, the budget was increased somewhat. The total budget for 2012 was \$2,432,000 and in 2013 it is \$2,625,000 or a change of \$193,000. Municipal taxes to be collected from the property owners in 2012 was \$1,185,000 and in 2013, \$1,242,000 or an increase of \$57,000. The impact on an individual resident will be calculated tonight, but Mr. Wang-Iverson wanted to explain why taxes were changing. The Township Committee kept a flat budget from 2010 to 2012 so there were no increases in taxes to be raised at that time. This year the Committee agreed to keep up with increasing costs even with low inflation and to reinvest in the town, including adding an additional road member, based on their recommendation that they would be more effective with five members. Mr. Wang-Iverson spoke about residents seeing what they get for their taxes, including DPW assistance in road plowing, repairing drainage, fixing potholes, etc. The governing body believed that this was a "worthwhile investment."

Mr. Wang-Iverson continued, as follows: The total tax distribution is important. It is \$2.257, up from last year. Only 10% of the tax dollar is municipally controlled, including 4 cents that residents voted upon to fund open space and farmland preservation and the rest goes to fund staff, salary, electricity, etc., and whatever it takes to fund operation. The rest (90%) goes to all the other portions, i.e., county and schools. In 2012, an average residential value was \$454,408 with a municipal tax rate .15. Because of reassessment and decrease in property values, the average value is \$382,472 in 2013 or a decrease of 15.8%. To meet the budget, the rate had to increase to .184, which was set by the County. Mr. Wang-Iverson explained how to determine the effect of the tax rate increase independent of reassessment, i.e., you would take the 2013 value and multiply it by the rate to get the value. Last year's calculation was the same (value times rate), and you subtract to get the difference of average rate for the year increase for the year, i.e., \$22.14. To determine tax increase per hundred dollars, independent of the reassessment, one would divide \$22.14 by \$3824.72, which is roughly 0.6 cents per hundred. As examples, Mr. Wang-Iverson showed a slide of his assessed value of \$415,900 with a \$24.08 tax increase and another property assessed at \$201,500 with an \$11.67 increase as their share of the \$57,000 tax increase this year.

Mr. Wang-Iverson again used his property as an example, showing overall impact, i.e., in 2012, his assessment was \$491,200 with a tax rate of \$1.913 and taxes of about \$9,400. In 2013, his assessment is \$415,900 with a rate of 2.257 and taxes of a little less (-0.1%). Looking at only the municipal tax, he is paying \$28 more rather than \$24. This is because of the effect of the reassessment. The average property values dropped 15.8% but his value dropped only 15.3% to show the \$4 difference because his value didn't drop as much as the average. He said that this is important to keep in mind because if the property values do not go down to the full 15.8%, then property taxes will go up. He also did a hypothetical on his property, showing no change in the property value and increasing his taxes by almost \$1,700. This could possibly happen because sales prices in the area did not change, noting that the Assessor looks at sales prices to base assessments. Possibly, an addition or change to the property was made to increase the value of the property that offset the effect of the reassessment decrease; based on data in the Assessor's office, the value of the property increased because of the change. Another possibility is that the information in the Assessor's data-base was incorrect, and something was picked up during the reassessment inspection; without record of the improvement, he may have been paying 15% lower in taxes in the past. If there was no change in assessment, then impact on his taxes would be 10% as the municipal rate.

A summary slide, entitled "Why Did My Taxes Go Up," was shown. Two factors include the following: 1) the increase would be from the value of the property – if you property is more valuable, the percentage is the same but multiplied by the higher value; 2) if there is a small change in assessment, i.e., less than 15.8%, the taxes will not increase because you are not on the average.

Three scenarios were provided for the increase, including 1) market segment is less affected by housing slump; 2) property didn't decrease as much as average 15.8%; 3) property improvements or incorrect information were detected.

Mr. Wang-Iverson wanted the public to know that the impact of the \$57,000 increase in municipal tax is an average of \$24.00 per year for property owner.

Mr. Trasente also mentioned that if there was a recent tax appeal in 2011 or an appeal in 2012, there would have been a market rate adjustment at that time, i.e., their taxes will go up since they had an adjustment at that time.

Mayor Kneski asked the Township Committee for comments or questions.

Mr. Mathews complimented Mr. Wang-Iverson for his presentation, and he asked if Mr. Wang-Iverson could comment on the impact of the open space tax vis-à-vis the reassessment. Mr. Wang-Iverson had not done that calculation, but since the property owners are paying a fixed rate per assessed value, the total income realized for open space is going down 15%. Mr. Mathews said that this would impact the debt service.

Mayor Kneski opened to the public for comment.

Iлона English, 9 Runyon Mill Road, spoke about paying for school taxes while having no children. She attended a school meeting and was very disturbed by the fact that the children were not speaking proper English. She is paying \$10,116 for district school taxes, and she felt that she should receive better treatment from the Board of Education, and the Township Committee should have a dialogue with the Board about this. She would prefer to give her \$11,000 in taxes to another school; she believed that the School “was an island”; the only feedback she receives from the school is when an election is being held; she felt that there was no respect from the Board, that there was no dialogue with the governing body, and she wanted more of both.

Mr. Mathews explained voting changes this year, i.e., a new state law allows the Board to raise their budgets by 2% without a hearing. The only way to vote down a budget is a vote on something over 2%, and he voiced concern about this. Ms. English agreed that the figure could grow exponentially without a vote.

Patty Kurkewicz, 45 Linvale Road, said that her property was reassessed \$30,000 less in 2006, stating that there were no new improvements for the increase and she had no children. Mr. Wang-Iverson suggested that she make an appointment with Ms. Busher for an explanation in her office.

Joan Read, 40 Linvale Road, asked what was the methodology of lowering any of the land values and pointed out various people in the audience whose values changed from 15% to 30% either up or down. Ms. Busher said that the reassessment was based on market value and sales, and it applied to land value sales in open market, adding that there was a 38% loss of value because of the US housing bubble. Ms. Read asked what about Township loss; Ms. Busher said that at the time of the reassessment, East Amwell was 4.56% on average true market value.

Ms. Read said that 46% of the residents went down 2%. She was advised that this slide pertained to taxes, not values. Ms. Read asked if the taxes went down, did that mean that the values were less. Mr. Wang-Iverson explained that tax bill percentages and value percentages are different. If a property owner had a tax bill of \$10,000 in a group that went down 2%, taxes were \$9,800 this year. Ms. Read referred to the slide showing Impact of Reassessment on Residential Taxes, showing specific percentages of tax changes; she noted differences in taxes between her and her neighbors with some of them increasing more than 20%. She concluded that \$57,000 was a reasonable amount of increase for the Township, but she questioned the different percentages. Mr. Wang-Iverson tried to explain the differences in assessed value, e.g., one block may have been above market value and one below. Ms. Read referenced the 2005 reassessment and gave her assessment information from that time through 2012 for both the house and the land (two separate lots). She stated that the house increased \$37,000, adding that she had an unfinished room above the garage since 1988, giving specifics of the development of a 407 square foot room. She added the following: she loves East Amwell and is willing to pay her fair share but feels “slammed” with the increase; she commented on “intimidation” by the Township to necessitate the visit from the inspector; she will consider removing the room above the garage if her taxes will be reduced; she again questioned her increase, especially upon using

sales as a comparison since farms are not selling and no farm over \$1,000,000 has sold since 2005.

Mr. Wang-Iverson said that Ms. Read could appeal her taxes, and she spoke about difficulties in reading assessment cards and in matching up different valuations. She suggested that the Township may have gotten better results if they paid more for the reassessment, noting that in 2006, both valuations and taxes went down. She spoke about her frustrations, along with other residents', offering her opinion that residents are encouraged to "keep properties up, make little waves and keep your head down...without ruffling feathers, and live in a quiet, bucolic place." She concluded that she will appeal her taxes and let the Township Committee know the results.

On a question from the public, Ms. Busher said that higher value houses came in mid-range, and the County determines the average assessment, based on total assessments and a standard deviation.

Iiona English, 9 Runyon Mill, asked about the square footage value and whether it was the same regardless of the condition of the house; Ms. Busher said no, not everyone is the same, and condition is determined by the inspector; assessment is based on true market value, and if a property is not maintained, then there is a loss. Ms. English asked about factoring of land assessment; Ms. Busher said that it was the same rate for all property.

One resident said that the land value went down and assessment went up 12% with an increase in 32% for taxes. Mr. Wang-Iverson said that the worst-case scenario would be when an assessment went up and the average went down.

One resident said that his home assessment went up \$103,000 from \$162,000 to \$266,000 for improvements. Ms. Busher said that there must have been a specific reason, and she urged the resident to come to her office to discuss this.

Ms. Gavigan spoke about the diversity of the township, i.e., residences, farms, businesses and using data from only the house category, e.g., 60% in the \$170,000 - \$225,000 range. She commented on a benefit of the reassessment in becoming more accurately valued to other municipalities, mentioning the Finalized Equalization Table she pulled off line and asked about taxes relative to other municipalities as the result of it. Mr. Trasente asked about the percentage of the equalization; she read that Aggregate True Value was \$752,000, a taxable percentage level of 100%, real property rate of aggregate assessed to aggregate true value of 89.07%, and funder equalization of replacement revenues, real property ratio of aggregate assessed to true value at 100.53%. She would like to see if parcels in East Amwell have some relevant exemptions, especially for seniors.

Mr. Trasente explained that when it comes to distribution of county taxes, townships without revaluations for many years are "way under-assessed"; he also noted that when they do an equalization, these towns get hurt because they are under-assessed in relation to others and have to pay a bigger percentage.

On a question from Ms. English, Mr. Trasente said that the County looks at the latest reassessment for true value, and it is done by market value and sales, same as bank appraisals with comps. He said that one town may be valued more than another but they are all valued the same way, based on market value and improvements. He commented on some properties being under-assessed because improvements are not picked up, e.g., finished basements, extra bathrooms, which are often discovered during reassessments. Ms. English said that she would not allow the inspector into her home, suggesting it was an illegal search and that she was being realistic, not paranoid, especially due to robberies in the area. She said that she has signed, sealed drawings of her house, speaking about costs for stormwater management issues, and she said that her assessment went down before but up last year. There were no changes and she asked about standardization after the inspector walked by. Mr. Trasente said he heard her say that she wouldn't let the inspector in; she countered by stating that everything was signed off and that there were no changes to her property.

Peter Alicandri, 46 Linvale Road, asked if an average house stayed the same; Ms. Busher said that about one-third average went up or down. Mr. Trasente provided anecdotal information

about an assessment in Middletown, mentioning a lot of appeals. He mentioned lower market values on property after the revaluation in 2006 as one reason for the reassessment now.

Chris Vogel, 5 Manners Road, wanted to compliment Ms. Busher and Mr. Wang-Iverson for tonight's presentation. He also thanked Ms. Busher for working with him individually when he needed assistance. He referred to the last slide in the presentations on three scenarios for increased taxes, asking if numbers could be quantified for each category. He spoke about having a lot of information in his file compiled over 23 years of living in East Amwell, asking how many other people were in the same scenario. He asked about the confidence in the quality of information now versus what was generated in the past and asked about how many properties may have incorrect information in the files. Mr. Wang-Iverson said that he did not know. Mr. Trasente said that it was important for residents to come in for review of their records.

Ms. Read asked if the company doing the inspections was given valuation sheets from the prior revaluation. Ms. Busher said yes. Ms. Read commented on the possibility of having errors from years ago in perpetuity.

Andrea Bonette, 17 Ridge Road, had three comments: 1) She mentioned a visit from an inspector and changes found in houses; she hoped that the inspectors looked into everything during their inspections. 2) Some people's assessments go up, meaning that they haven't paid fair share in the past, and people like her, who went down, were paying more than their fair share – she suggested looking at that side too. 3) She also mentioned a situation many, many years ago when a person occupied a house that was being constructed without paying taxes on the dwelling and we "were filling in the gaps since we have to pay taxes and school taxes." She felt that this was a "gross injustice." She appreciated the information tonight.

An unidentified man asked about incorrect information on a property, i.e., if improvements were made on a home since 2005 and properly permitted and inspected, can we assume new assessed value was given. Ms. Busher said yes, explaining receipt of permitting information on a monthly basis from the construction files, and assessments are added to the property by her.

Ms. English asked about fines if improvements are done since the last assessment that are not documented; Ms. Busher did not know about fines. Ms. English explained that was the difference between people like her who get inspections and those who do not, and "you say that's okay we'll just raise the value now." Ms. Busher has no mechanism to apply fines, but she stated that this was one reason for an annual reassessment and inspections every four years during the process to keep property records up to date.

Ms. Read asked why the reassessment in 2005 was so much more costly than the recent one; Ms. Busher explained that there was an outside firm, Appraisal Systems, involved for all aspects of the revaluation in 2005.

Ms. Gavigan said Assessor Marianne Busher did a lot and saved money for the taxpayers (during the reassessment). People were in her house in 2005 and this past year, and in 2005, she felt that the man was "clueless"; she spoke with Ms. Busher thereafter and adjustments were made after the Assessor inspected. Ms. Gavigan said that it behooves residents to know assessment values, but the "sharpest pencils in the box" weren't hired in 2005 or in 2012. The inspections for \$46,000 had some "serious quality issues," making work for the Assessor and frustration for individuals. Ms. Gavigan asked about a feedback mechanism as more errors are being discovered. She suggested a non-penalty error clause in any future contracts. She stated that, "You didn't get a whole lot of quality work," and the Assessor's efforts afterwards were of quality and professionalism. Ms. Gavigan spoke about being a rural community with comps being a challenge and provided anecdotal information on her own re-financing, mentioning her concerns of a problem of reassessing in a rural area of an urban state.

Ms. Gavigan asked if a property sells tomorrow, is the value of the sale the tax valuation. Ms. Busher said no, explaining that she cannot just change the property based on upon a sales price because that is spot assessing. She would need to review the whole neighborhood and adjust all similar properties and would also review all comparables.

Ms. English commented on no penalties being assessed for those people who do not get permits for improvements, stating that Hopewell would require residents to remove improvements that

are not permitted. She asked what the point was for residents (like her) who do get required permits; she suggested a rollback on taxes as a possibility. Mr. Wang-Iverson said that annual reassessments would help, and Ms. Busher explained that they would be on a four year cycle with inspections allowing additions and improvements to be noted.

Mr. Vogel suggested that the "extremely informative work sheets" Ms. Busher provided as the basis of the tax assessment be given to every owner, perhaps mailed out with the next tax bill. He believed that this would helpful in keeping the public informed.

Mayor Kneski gave his thanks to Ms. Busher, Mr. Wang-Iverson, and members of the public. He called for a short recess at 9:27 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 9:34 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

RATIFICATION – AG LICENSES #13-04 TO #13-07 FOR DONNA COOKE FOR 4 GAMES AT 4H FAIR FROM AUGUST 21 – 25, 2013

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RESOLUTION #99-13

WHEREAS, South County Park, property belonging to the County of Hunterdon, is located in the Township of East Amwell, and

WHEREAS, South County Park is now the location of the annual Hunterdon County 4H Agricultural Fair, and amusement games play an important part in the entertainment at the Fair;

WHEREAS, in July 2013, the Township Committee authorized the Clerk to process license applications for amusement game operators if their applications came in between governing body meetings;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Committee of the Township of East Amwell ratifies the actions of the Clerk and approves the following amusement game applications, which conform to local ordinances:

Applications AG #13-04; AG #13-05; AG#13-06; AG#13-07:

Donna Cooke
Hunterdon County 4H Fair/South County Park/ 1207 Route 179,
Lambertville, NJ 08530
August 21-25, 2013 from 11 a.m. - Midnight
Balloon Water Gun, Crazy Cans, Basketball, Target Rack Game

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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RESOLUTION #100-13

RESOLUTION AMENDING 2013 BENEFITS RESOLUTION TO INCREASE ANNUAL DPW CLOTHING ALLOWANCE FROM \$200 TO \$600 (as Discussed During 2013 Budget Meetings)

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of East Amwell, that they hereby amend Resolution #21-13, the 2013 Benefits Resolution as follows:

Section Three: All full-time Department of Public Works employees will be reimbursed up to ~~\$50~~ **\$150** per quarter or part thereof that they work in a calendar year (~~\$200.00~~ **\$600.00** per year) for work clothes in addition to their regular salary. Appropriate receipts must be submitted to the Treasurer for reimbursement. This resolution is retroactive to January 2, 2013.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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RESOLUTION #101 -13

ABC SOCIAL AFFAIRS PERMIT: HEALTH RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL TRUST OF NEW JERSEY FOR AN EVENT TO BE HELD ON OCTOBER 15, 2013 AT THE RIDGE AT BACK BROOK

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of East Amwell, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, that they have no objection to a Social Affairs Permit being granted to Health Research & Education Trust of New Jersey (HRET) for an event to be held on October 15, 2013, at The Ridge at Back Brook, 211 Wertsville Road, Ringoes, NJ 08551.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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RESOLUTION #102-13

ABC CATERING PERMIT: ASHTON JAZZ LLC (DBA) ELEMENTS, FOR AN EVENT TO BE HELD AT STONYBROOK MEADOWS ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of East Amwell, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, that they have no objection to a New Jersey ABC Catering Permit being granted to Astons Jazz LLC for an event to be held on September 17, 2013, at Stonybrook Meadows, 82 Stonybrook Road, Hopewell, New Jersey 08525.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Mr. Mathews, and carried unanimously to approve the resolutions on the consent agenda.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

RECREATION COMMITTEE

- 1) 8/16 Email of Resignation from Angelo Lovisa

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

1) 8/20 Resignation of Kat Cannelongo

Mayor Kneski asked for a motion to accept both resignations with regret. Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to do so.

Mr. Mathews commented on the Recreation Committee having trouble getting a quorum and asked if he, as a liaison, would be able to vote. Ms. Kopen said that it would depend on how the ordinance was written and get an answer for the record; she could not find it in the Code's index. The ordinance will be circulated to the Township Committee for their information.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES/PUBLIC HEARINGS

DISCUSSION WITH CFO/TREASURER ON BONDING FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

Mr. Trasente said that the question was about the impact on bonding on total debt. He prepared two sheets, entitled Debt Service Projection (bonds and notes) and Note Projection, both dated 9/12/13. He referred to the note page, explaining it was for ordinances already adopted. The payments were reduced this year to better utilize and "stretch out payments" from the Township's open space fund. The notes go out to 2017, and bonds will have to be issued at that time, or they could be restructured in a fashion decided by the CFO. The totals show what is being paid in principal each year, and if you add the new bond ordinance, there is no impact until 2016 when the first payment is made. If the bond ordinance is adopted, the note will be issued next year, and the first payment will not be due for two years (as the maximum extension).

Mr. Trasente recommended making the first payment on the new bond in 2016 in the amount of \$19,500. He stated that notes will increase in 2015 by 53.75%, but there is no increase in 2014, since nothing is due. Total debt service in 2017 drops off; the current total is \$553,407.50 then goes up in 2016, and it drops down in 2018 by about \$150,000 (without the new ordinance). With the new ordinance, the percentage of debt increase will be 5% in 2014, 3.0% in 2015, and it has a minimal impact for the next couple of years. He spoke about weighing the need of the purchase v. the debt that will be incurred. He suggested planning that new things are added when old things come off.

Mr. Wang-Iverson asked about the ordinance and the cost of the barn at \$130,000. He thought that the cost discussed in February (during the budget hearings) was \$50,000. Mr. Matheny said that insulation and heat were part of the ordinance, and this amount also includes bid and engineering specifications. Mr. Trasente took the amount from the budget, and the salt barn was a separate item not in the budget this year. Mr. Wang-Iverson was concerned with the discrepancy in the figures from February until now. Mr. Trasente stated that the bond ordinance gives authorization to spend, but does not necessarily require you to borrow the full amount, i.e., what is not used can be cancelled.

Deputy Mayor Sageser said that the TC agreed that it was a good idea to insulate and heat the barn. The next step is to determine cost and without engineering and decisions, it is difficult to get a number. Mr. Wang-Iverson again asked how to understand the difference between \$50,000 in February and \$130,000 now. Mr. Mathews recalled at least \$100,000 in the budget. Committee members debated how they reached the number, noting that they were supportive of the improvement.

Ms. Kopen advised Mr. Mathews that she could not locate the ordinance establishing the Recreation Committee, and the ordinances are on line and she will search there.

Mr. Trasente noted that he obtained the \$125,000 figure in the capital budget for building renovations, and \$125,000 for the backhoe. He again stated that the money does not have to be borrowed, although the bond ordinance will authorize the borrowing of the amount required.

Mr. Matheny gave the following budget figures: \$26,400 for work; \$18,000 for paint, plus engineering costs, which totaled about \$50,000, based on proposals.

Deputy Mayor Sageser asked why the Township was keeping the full amount in the ordinance if the cost was only around \$50,000. Mr. Trasente said that the ordinance was ready tonight, and if the Township Committee waits until next month for a new ordinance, they would be putting off the projects until December. Mr. Trasente explained work of the previous CFO/Treasurer on preparing figures for the capital budget that he used for the ordinance.

Introduction of Ordinances

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ORDINANCE #13-07

BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE ACQUISITION OF A BACKHOE AND BARN GARAGE RENOVATIONS FOR AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF EAST AMWELL, IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTERDON, NEW JERSEY, APPROPRIATING THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF \$259,700 THEREFOR, AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$246,715 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE TOWNSHIP TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF EAST AMWELL, IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTERDON, NEW JERSEY (not less than two-thirds of all members thereof affirmatively concurring) AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The improvements or purposes described in Section 3 of this bond ordinance are hereby authorized to be undertaken by the Township of East Amwell, in the County of Hunterdon, New Jersey (the "Township") as general improvements. For the improvements or purposes described in Section 3, there are hereby appropriated the sums of money therein stated as the appropriation made for each improvement or purpose, such sums amounting in the aggregate to \$259,700, including the aggregate sum of \$12,985 as the down payments for the improvements or purposes required by the Local Bond Law. The down payments have been made available by virtue of provision for down payment or for capital improvement purposes in one or more previously adopted budgets.

Section 2. In order to finance the cost of the improvements or purposes not covered by application of the down payments, negotiable bonds are hereby authorized to be issued in the principal amount of \$246,715 pursuant to the Local Bond Law. In anticipation of the issuance of the bonds, negotiable bond anticipation notes are hereby authorized to be issued pursuant to and within the limitations prescribed by the Local Bond Law.

Section 3. The improvements or purposes hereby authorized for which the bonds are to be issued, the estimated cost of each improvement or purpose and the appropriation therefor, the estimated maximum amount of bonds or notes to be issued for each improvement or purpose and the respective periods of usefulness are as follows:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Appropriation and Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Estimated Maximum Amount of Bonds or Notes</u>	<u>Period of Usefulness</u>
a) Acquisition of a backhoe	\$127,200	\$120,840	5 years
b) Renovation of barn garage involving heating system and	\$132,500	\$125,875	20 years

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Appropriation and Estimated Cost</u>	<u>Estimated Maximum Amount of Bonds or Notes</u>	<u>Period of Usefulness</u>
insulation improvements			
<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>\$259,700</u>	<u>\$246,715</u>	

The improvements or purposes described above include all costs necessary therefore or incidental thereto. The excess of the appropriation made for each of the improvements or purposes aforesaid over the estimated maximum amount of bonds or notes to be issued therefor, as above stated, is the amount of the down payment for each purpose.

Section 4. All bond anticipation notes issued hereunder shall mature at such times as may be determined by the chief financial officer; provided that no note shall mature later than one year from its date. The notes shall bear interest at such rate or rates and be in such form as may be determined by the chief financial officer. The chief financial officer shall determine all matters in connection with notes issued pursuant to this ordinance, and the chief financial officer's signature upon the notes shall be conclusive evidence as to all such determinations. All notes issued hereunder may be renewed from time to time subject to the provisions of the Local Bond Law. The chief financial officer is hereby authorized to sell part or all of the notes from time to time at public or private sale and to deliver them to the purchasers thereof upon receipt of payment of the purchase price plus accrued interest from their dates to the date of delivery thereof. The chief financial officer is directed to report in writing to the governing body at the meeting next succeeding the date when any sale or delivery of the notes pursuant to this ordinance is made. Such report must include the amount, the description, the interest rate and the maturity schedule of the notes sold, the price obtained and the name of the purchaser.

Section 5. The Township hereby certifies that it has adopted a capital budget or a temporary capital budget, as applicable. The capital or temporary capital budget of the Township is hereby amended to conform with the provisions of this ordinance to the extent of any inconsistency herewith. To the extent that the purposes authorized herein are inconsistent with the adopted capital or temporary capital budget, a revised capital or temporary capital budget has been filed with the Division of Local Government Services.

Section 6. The following additional matters are hereby determined, declared, recited and stated:

(a) The purposes described in Section 3 of this bond ordinance are not current expenses. They are improvements that the Township may lawfully undertake as general improvements, and no part of the costs thereof has been or shall be specially assessed on property specially benefited thereby.

(b) The average period of usefulness, computed on the basis of the respective amounts of obligations authorized for each purpose and the reasonable life thereof within the limitations of the Local Bond Law, is 12.65 years.

(c) The Supplemental Debt Statement required by the Local Bond Law has been duly prepared and filed in the office of the Clerk, and a complete executed duplicate thereof has been filed in the office of the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs of the State of New Jersey. Such statement shows that the gross debt of the Township as defined in the Local Bond Law is increased by the authorization of the bonds and notes provided in this bond ordinance by \$246,715, and the obligations authorized herein will be within all debt limitations prescribed by that Law.

(d) An aggregate amount not exceeding \$30,000 for items of expense listed in and permitted under N.J.S.A. 40A:2-20 is included in the estimated costs indicated herein for the purposes or improvements.

Section 7. The Township hereby makes the following covenants and declarations with respect to obligations determined to be issued by the Chief Financial Officer on a tax-exempt basis. The Township hereby covenants that it will comply with any conditions subsequent imposed by the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), in order to preserve the exemption from taxation of interest on the notes, including, if necessary, the requirement to rebate all net investment earnings on the gross proceeds above the yield on the notes. The Chief Financial Officer is hereby authorized to act on behalf of the Township to deem the obligations authorized herein as bank qualified for the purposes of Section 265 of the Code, when appropriate. The Township hereby declares the intent of the Township to issue bonds or bond anticipation notes in the amount authorized in Section 2 of this bond ordinance and to use the proceeds to pay or reimburse expenditures for the costs of the purposes described in Section 3 of this bond ordinance. This Section 7 is a declaration of intent within the meaning and for purposes of Treasury Regulations §1.150-2 or any successor provisions of federal income tax law.

Section 8. Any grant moneys received for the purposes described in Section 3 hereof shall be applied to either to direct payment of the cost of the improvements or to payment of the obligations issued pursuant to this ordinance. The amount of obligations authorized but not issued hereunder shall be reduced to the extent that such funds are so used.

Section 9. The chief financial officer of the Township is hereby authorized to prepare and to update from time to time as necessary a financial disclosure document to be distributed in connection with the sale of obligations of the Township and to execute such disclosure document on behalf of the Township. The chief financial officer is further authorized to enter into the appropriate undertaking to provide secondary market disclosure on behalf of the Township pursuant to Rule 15c2-12 of the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "Rule") for the benefit of holders and beneficial owners of obligations of the Township and to amend such undertaking from time to time in connection with any change in law, or interpretation thereof, provided such undertaking is and continues to be, in the opinion of a nationally recognized bond counsel, consistent with the requirements of the Rule. In the event that the Township fails to comply with its undertaking, the Township shall not be liable for any monetary damages, and the remedy shall be limited to specific performance of the undertaking.

Section 10. The full faith and credit of the Township are hereby pledged to the punctual payment of the principal of and the interest on the obligations authorized by this bond ordinance. The obligations shall be direct, unlimited obligations of the Township, and the Township shall be obligated to levy ad valorem taxes upon all the taxable real property within the Township for the payment of the obligations and the interest thereon without limitation of rate or amount.

Section 11. This bond ordinance shall take effect 20 days after the first publication thereof after final adoption, as provided by the Local Bond Law.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

Attest: _____
Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk

Introduced:

Adopted:

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Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson and seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser.

Mr. Mathews asked about the repairs to the backhoe and whether the Township was looking for a used or discounted piece of equipment. Mr. Matheny said that it will be a brand new model, and he is trying to locate one on a contract list that the Township may be allowed to use. He is also looking into national cooperatives in his search.

Mr. Mathews mentioned the current market, suggesting that perhaps a used machine might be available from distressed sellers. Mr. Matheny said that the Township must still go out to bid, and new regulations about pollution must be considered. Mr. Mathews asked about auctions; Mr. Matheny said that the Township would be selling their equipment on auction. Mr. Trasente questioned how the municipality would be able to buy from auction, and Mr. Matheny said that it would be difficult to know what the Township would be buying if a used backhoe was purchased, i.e., no warranty or guarantee.

A roll call vote to introduce the ordinance was taken: Mr. Kneski, yes; Mr. Sageser, yes; Mr. Wang-Iverson, yes; Mr. Mathews, yes.

The summary of the ordinance will be published in the September 19, 2013, issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat, and the public hearing is set for the next regular meeting of the Township Committee on October 10, 2013, at 7:30 p.m.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

TOWNSHIP ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE:

1) CFO/Treasurer Resignation: Mr. Matheny wanted to bring this to the attention of the governing body now since there were still members of the public in attendance, and this was mentioned earlier in the meeting. He said that he discussed this with Mr. Trasente at the end of last week, and he received paperwork over the weekend. Mr. Matheny was in the office on Tuesday and provided it to the Clerk, but there was not enough time to get it on the agenda. Mr. Trasente is here, and he offered an explanation to the governing body, which they felt was important to have.

Mr. Trasente was hired as Director of Finance and CFO of Somerset County. It is a new position, and he is also leaving Middletown, which was his full time job. He is losing flexibility and cannot put in 15 hours per week any more; he may be able to work weekends, but not sure of night hours since it is unclear how the new job will lay out. Additionally, Somerset has concerns about him working somewhere else. Mr. Trasente will have time restrictions going forth, and he will be unable to meet the Township's requirements, although he believed that he had developed a workable system between here and Middletown. It would have to become a very flexible schedule to continue in East Amwell.

Mr. Matheny stated that the Township Committee would have to accept Mr. Trasente's resignation with an end date of September 21, although he has agreed to work in an acting capacity as a title of CFO/Treasurer on evenings and weekends.

Mr. Mathews asked about a part time CFO/Treasurer and his recommendations. From his standpoint, Mr. Trasente said that he would need interaction with people but not a whole lot of daytime or work hour interaction. In Middletown and Hoboken, he has numerous division teams that he manages, which he does not have here, only one staff member he communicates with back and forth. He needs to be here on occasion, e.g., tonight to enter information into the system. There are pieces of the job, such as budget season, where he worked when he had time. This is a part time job, and a CFO needs flexibility to do it, and the 15 hours is one-half of what he does in other towns. This would be the same for any other full time CFO/Treasurers who would be taking this part time job, i.e., there are not many people who want to keep this as their only job. He noted that one of the Township CFO/Treasurers was retired, and this arrangement still did not work for her. The Township may need to be more flexible, and he felt that the likelihood of finding someone who would be willing to come in one or two mornings a week is very slim, and it may be that it will be someone who can come at night for some hours. He

reiterated that flexibility would make the job work. He stated that he is a professional and the license he holds is from the state. He did not report to the municipality, and the state is the entity that can pull his license, so his obligations are statutory from them, which drives him to fulfill the work he must do. He reiterated that he is a professional, and a professional should be able to do their work from home. He spoke about his ability to work from home rather than spending time driving back and forth, e.g., speaking with bond counsel for 1-2 hours, email communications, etc. He said that it would be more difficult finding a person who doesn't have this type of flexibility. He spoke about his other towns' searches for a replacement for him as a full time CFO, highlighting his qualifications working in a big town. There are 10 out of about 30-40 CFOs that he is aware of that are reaching retirement, and replacing them will be difficult because there are no replacements. He mentioned 100-200 CFOs since he first started and up until last year, but as they retire and leave the field, they are not coming since "the money is not here" and no benefits. He stated that he made his path in college and grad school, is "stuck in the field" and wants to serve the public. He mentioned lack of benefits and bonuses as a reason for the trend. He mentioned people coming into the field now who are not auditors, accountants or finance people, but only obtaining certification. He felt that these type of people would be "pretty good" except they are filling the bigger jobs and not available for smaller jobs like this one.

Mr. Trasente mentioned that in the past, residents of the town were the type of CFO/Treasurers that residents saw on a regular basis. He mentioned the East Amwell Township Tax Collector, noting that she is a resident in town and "that's how she worked into it." He mentioned that when she left, the Township may consider combining a position, such as Tax Collector and Assessor, although this may be difficult to achieve.

Mr. Trasente again noted that flexibility "was the best shot," and the Township does not need a full time person. You would have to pay \$80,000 for a full time position, and that employee may leave if something paying more came along. Combining the position with another job or a shared service is also an option. A shared service might be an option, but Mr. Trasente felt that you would need at least three towns for this type of arrangement. He said that he is leaving Middletown, and there are four jobs of that level opening up, including Ewing, Asbury Park, and Union City, and three county positions, relaying that finance is the most important position of all of them and providing anecdotal information on his accomplishments in Middletown.

Mr. Mathews asked what was needed for certification Mr. Trasente explained that there were 8 courses that could be taken over two years, and an exam that is not easy to pass. He believed that the satisfactory testing alone was not necessarily an indicator of a good CFO.

Mr. Wang-Iverson congratulated Mr. Trasente on his new job and thanked him for all his budget work; he spoke about a consensus that they would like Mr. Trasente to help during transition. Mr. Trasente agreed to do what he can until the Township finds someone.

Mr. Wang-Iverson asked about Mr. Trasente's advice on separating debt payments from the general budget. Mr. Trasente suggested taking open space debt out of the budget and paying directly out of the Open Space Trust Fund; by only keeping true debt minus open space in the budget, there would be more transparency for the public. Mr. Wang-Iverson asked if this was something that Mr. Trasente could work on; Mr. Trasente said that this should be done during budget time, it could be addressed by a debt service sheet, and it was important to make sure that the State can tie figures into the audit and budget.

Deputy Mayor Sageser asked about having a referendum and raising the open space tax to five cents, i.e., would it be under the budget cap. Mr. Trasente said that this would completely separate, that the Township would have to adopt an ordinance to raise the tax to five or six cents, and it would be just for open space debt. Mr. Trasente suggested that this is something that the Township Committee may want to consider in the future because of the lower assessed value in the municipality. He felt that most people want more open space, and by taking it out of the budget and isolating it as a separate fund, the tax could be used to cover all open space debt and eliminated or reduced when the Township didn't want to buy more land.

Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to accept the resignation of CFO Nick Trasente. Mr. Matheny said that the motion includes having Mr. Trasente stay on in the capacity of the Acting CFO for a reasonable amount of time, to

which the governing body agreed. Mr. Trasente said that this would depend on the impact on his new job. He would be willing to stay until the end of the year, but he would not be able to do it if it becomes impossible with his new job. He commented on “not wanting to short-change” the Township.

Attorney Kopen said that she spoke with Board of Health representation and adding a phrase or two to the existing nuisance ordinance to cover property maintenance is not an appropriate option.

Ms. Kopen left the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Mr. Trasente said that he will be attending a finance meeting in two weeks and will “get the word out” about the available position in East Amwell, and he also left the meeting.

2) 8/21 Resignation of DPW Employee Grochowicz & Possible Appointment of New DPW Employee: Mr. Matheny explained that the employee worked for a week and felt it wasn't for him, i.e., making the same amount of money as he did in farming. Mr. Mathews felt that there may have been a “disconnect” or a communication problem. Mr. Matheny explained that the other members of the crew did not see a problem and were “stunned” when the resignation came through.

Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to accept the resignation.

Mr. Matheny explained that there was one applicant from the previous group that may be a good candidate. He was interviewed by both he and Mr. Kadezabek, who was pleased with the individual. References and prior employer information must be checked, but Mr. Matheny asked about being authorized to hire the individual, based on the Mayor's input and provision of a memo outlining his recommendation after reference checks. The base salary is \$18.57 per hour.

Mr. Mathew said that he would agree if the applicant was also interviewed by the liaison to the department because he “sensed a problem with interviewing, retaining, and hiring people” and did not want a gap in communication to occur. Mr. Matheny did not agree with this suggestion, stating that Raritan Township pays \$36.00 per hour while East Amwell pays \$18.00 per hour, which is the reason DPW laborers would leave here. He noted that Mr. Trasente was leaving because of a better job.

Mayor Kneski said that he would sit down with the Administrator to review the credentials of the candidate and does not wish to personally interview the candidate. Mr. Mathews believed that more active oversight by the Township Committee on various responsibilities could not hurt. Deputy Mayor Sageser stated that the candidates are also interviewed by the DPW Superintendent as part of the hierarchy.

3) Property Maintenance: Mayor Kneski noted that he asked the Deputy Mayor to pull something together, which the Mayor has not yet had a chance to review until late. He asked that it be circulated to the governing body and be put on the agenda for the next meeting. Deputy Mayor Sageser stated that he took the material collected by the Clerk, focused on comparable towns, and pulled the best of the ordinances together. The Mayor asked Deputy Mayor Sageser to provide the document to the clerk for circulation. Mr. Mathews asked if there would be a policy statement to define objectives; Deputy Mayor Sageser said yes.

Mr. Matheny mentioned that the Clerk has been dealing the Manners Road complaint and emails from Mr. Kanach; the bank bought the property, has done some mowing, but needs to do more. The Clerk is following up on this.

4) MA 2014 NJDOT Application: Mr. Matheny explained that this is a new application for roads, based on a previous application, including Stony Brook and part of Lindbergh Roads. The Township has not been successful the past few years, and the engineer strongly recommended the submission since the sidewalk project is complete and the Township may be likely to receive funding this year. There is only \$60 left in the engineering line, but additional

funding could be taken from Roads OE. The intent is to have the engineer complete the application for submission at a cost not to exceed \$418.

Mr. Mathews did not recall Stony Brook Road being on the priority list, and Mr. Matheny explained that the engineer uses different criteria for submitting grant applications, e.g., NJ DOT may not pay for a priority road such as Sandra Road since it is not a high traffic area and in a residential zone. The engineer thought that the State would look favorably on this project since it was submitted in the past (but not approved because of lack of state funding).

Further discussion included the following: Mr. Wang-Iverson asked if through roads were preferred; Mr. Matheny said he was not sure of the criteria except that well traveled, visible roads are recommended for consideration; Lindbergh is well traveled and Stony Brook is in disrepair; Mr. Mathews thought that Stony Brook was Hopewell Township’s Road, and Mr. Matheny said part belonged to East Amwell, which the Township must maintain; Mayor Kneski provided anecdotal information about a multi-jurisdictional road (i.e., Montgomery, Hillsborough, etc.) and state grant funding.

Mr. Mathews was not satisfied and said that he would continue to find the information about maintenance of the road by Hopewell Township. He recalled correspondence from Mr. Taft that he did not want to see the road repaired. He also felt that the road is one that is less traveled and a dirt road on one end, and he did not see why it was top on the list. Mr. Matheny explained that East Amwell’s portion of the road is in disrepair, and the Township is required to maintain it for safety purposes; the engineer felt that this project would get funded. Mr. Mathews asked if the dirt part of the road was our part; Mr. Matheny understood that to be so, and this was submitted last year. Mr. Mathews asked that a copy be provided to him electronically and suggested revisiting the roads on the application for a road that is a priority. Mr. Wang-Iverson asked if the suggestion was to hold the application, knowing that the grant application is due on September 20 and the expert says that this is a road that could be funded. Mr. Mathews said that he would like to have more information on this, stating that this is the first time he has seen this, there was a plan submitted before, and Stony Brook was not on the priority plan. Mr. Matheny explained that roads for which the Township has received grants before were not on the road plan either, e.g., Dutch and Rocktown Roads.

Mayor Kneski agreed that he wanted to follow the 5-year plan put in place a few years ago, adding that the plan is in flux with nothing in stone. Mr. Wang-Iverson again asked whether Mr. Mathews was suggesting not to submit the grant due by September 20th. Mr. Mathews asked for more information tomorrow in order to look at it, and perhaps roads will be changed. Some Committee members and the Administrator noted that the application was submitted previously (i.e., a re-submittal only). Mr. Mathews asked what the point was of having a plan; Mr. Matheny said that the road plan is for roads for the DPW to repair, and grants have different criteria. Mr. Mathews concluded that he would go with what was being proposed, but he wanted to see the criteria and the details. Mr. Matheny will have the engineer forward all his information to the governing body; he explained that there was no action necessary, and the intent was to notify the governing body of the application. There was a consensus to submit the application. Mayor Kneski spoke about the potential not to be able to get grants from the state in the future and taking advantage when funding is available is important. He did speak off-line with Mr. Matheny about the grant application prior to tonight, and he felt that the application should be submitted, even taking Stony Brook out, if necessary.

Mr. Matheny spoke about the engineer’s attempt to leverage funding to “get the best bang for the buck” in repairs; Mr. Wang-Iverson spoke about the engineer’s advice, based on his experience a the state, among other comments.

5) Request from Clerk for Resolution Authorizing Payment for Additional Services Due to Special Elections in August and October 2013: The County Clerk’s Office has provided information to municipal clerks regarding reimbursement for overtime by the state for the two special elections to fill Congressman Lautenberg’s seat. The Clerk was here from 4:45 a.m. – 8:30 p.m. in August and anticipates the same hours in October. The resolution (also adopted by other municipalities) is based on extra hours beyond the regular work-day and is a reimbursable expense.

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RESOLUTION #103-13

Pursuant to the Governor’s Commitment to Reimburse, Authorizing an Additional 17 Hours of Pay for Teresa Stahl, Township Clerk, to Cover the Additional Elections for the Year 2013

WHEREAS, Governor Christie signed an executive order adding two additional elections for the year 2013 to be held on August 13th and October 16th; and

WHEREAS, the State Division of Elections will be reimbursing all additional expenses related to conducting these additional elections; and

WHEREAS, Teresa Stahl, Township Clerk, will need to work an additional 17 hours total to perform these duties in addition to her regular hours on those days.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Township Committee Township of East Amwell, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, approves the payment of 8 additional hours of pay at a rate of \$31.48 per hour and 9 hours at \$47.22 to cover both of special elections for the office of State Senator.

By Order of the Township Committee,

Peter Kneski, Mayor

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Motion by Mr. Mathews, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously.

6) Complaint about Stony Brook Road Detour: Mayor Kneski asked Mr. Matheny to provide an update on his activities after the complaint at the last meeting. Mr. Matheny attended a seminar the next day and met a representative from Hunterdon County Engineering (with whom he worked on the Sidewalk Project); he was told that the County was responsible for all the bridges and the County representative was told about the traffic coming down Snyderstown. Mr. Matheny was told that Hunterdon County is spearheading the Route 518 project, which starts in Hopewell (also referencing a call to the Hopewell Township engineer for confirmation). Mr. Matheny also called the NJSP for assistance and enforcement; also, the Township put the speed drone in place on Snyderstown. Mr. Matheny did a site inspection of the detour, explaining that Mercer County is now repaving Route 518. While he did not talk to the new Director of Hunterdon County Engineering, he did speak with a representative the following day after the Township Committee meeting. He noted that the County is responsible for their own signage. Mayor Kneski also called the Mercer County Engineer, who advised him that Hunterdon County was the lead.

CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION OPPOSING S-1085, FORESTRY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ON STATE OWNED LANDS (SEE AUGUST 8, 2013, MINUTES FOR BACKGROUND)

Committee members agreed to table discussion until the next meeting. Mr. Mathews noted that it involves logging, similar to forest management for farm-assessed properties, with the intent to make the woods healthier by trimming and cutting.

NEW BUSINESS - None

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, said that she specifically spoke with the new Hunterdon County Director of Roads and Bridges, Tom Mathews, and with Jim Martin, and she was told that Mercer County was lead agency on the Route 518 project. They advised her that they have 4-ton limit signs to control truck traffic, but they were not contacted by the Township. She commented on attending meetings for two years hearing that Mercer County was the lead, and that Hunterdon County would lend the signs at no cost.

Ms. Gavigan suggested, that when looking for a new CFO, that the Township consider an option of hiring a CFO/Treasurer/Administrator, or a Clerk/Administrator/CFO, or training an in-house Administrator or CFO/Treasurer. She commented on East Amwell being a small town.

Ms. Gavigan spoke about the Clerk's ability to receive state money and asked that the governing body also be fair to the current DPW Superintendent and/or his replacement by providing compensation for overtime without the 300-hour requirement.

Ms. Gavigan spoke about Stony Brook Road, recalling that a resident named David lived up there and wanted it to remain dirt. She also mentioned other residents who want to keep dirt roads, such as Rocktown Road. She agreed that the Township should submit the grant, but she suggested that some "folks are very particular" about the roads.

Les Hamilton, 23 High Mowing Road, spoke about the two dirt roads in the township, saying that residents on those roads want them safe but don't want to make them wide and become thoroughfares. Mr. Mathews commented on a movie made on Lindbergh Road two years ago, with the cast looking for rural roads. Other Committee members commented on the rural character of the township, with Mr. Hamilton stating that the dirt roads and trees are very much appreciated.

Motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to close to the public.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

TREASURER'S OFFICE provided the bills of the evening. Motion by Deputy Mayor Sageser, seconded by Mr. Wang-Iverson, and carried with one abstention, Mr. Mathews, to approve the bills of the evening.

There were no resolutions offered by the Treasurer.

TAX COLLECTOR HYLAND provided her August report but no resolutions.

COURT ADMINISTRATOR HOOVEN presented her August report.

DPW REPORT: The August DPW report was noted. Mr. Mathews said that he has been receiving some comments from residents while he is visiting them. He shared several of them: 1) 4 Dutch Lane – there is some drainage from the resident's driveway down to Wertsville Road. The resident has a solution, and he would like to have the DPW look at it. 2) 115 Van Lieus – Mr. Mathews showed a video, which he took after heavy rain. The project started with Engineer and O'Neal and with (former DPW Superintendent) Wayne Marion, but was never completed. The video showed Mr. Luster explaining problems with a flood across his driveway up to his house. 3) 29 Larsen Lane has a large "sink hole" near a drainage pipe. Deputy Mayor Sageser said that there is one on Welisewitz Road also. Mr. Matheny will ask the DPW to look at these areas.

Deputy Mayor Sageser asked if the Township has a new mower yet, noting that he was behind some equipment with "a very good job" being done. Mr. Matheny explained that it is on order, i.e., the tractor is in, but Alamo has to deliver the mower. The DPW is still using the older mower, but the mower arm is cracked and no parts are available. The equipment will be sold, either in whole or part.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence was noted without comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion by Mr. Wang-Iverson, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 11:11 p.m.

When tape ended, the Deputy Clerk asked the Mayor about a motion to hire the DPW employee; Mayor Kneski said that the Mayor could authorize the Administrator to interview.

Taken from the Tape
Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk