

**INDEPENDENCE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**  
**Meeting held at the Municipal Building, Great Meadows, NJ.**  
**March 9, 2021            7:00 p.m.**

This is a regular meeting of the Township Committee of Independence Township, Warren County, New Jersey. This meeting was called to order by Mayor Robert Giordano at 7:00 p.m. with the following announcement: "Adequate notice of this meeting was given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by providing a schedule of regular meetings to the Herald Times and The Express Times, posting a copy thereof on the Township bulletin board and filing a copy thereof in the office of the Municipal Clerk." The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was led by Mayor Giordano.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on in-person public gatherings by executive orders of the Governor of New Jersey, meetings of the Independence Township Committee will be held remotely via Zoom. The Zoom platform allows for members of the public to participate via computer, mobile device, or telephone. Both adequate and electronic notice of this meeting have been provided by publishing a revised annual notice in the two official newspapers designated by the Township, posting such notice on the door of the municipal building, and posting such notice on the municipal website. Such notice specifies the time of this meeting and provided instructions on how to access the meeting remotely.

Comments can also be emailed by 3:00 p.m. the day of the meeting to dhrebenak@independencenj.com. Written comments may also be submitted via mail or dropped off at the municipal building. Written comments must be no more than 450 words and must include your name and address. Such comments will be read into the record at the appropriate time.

Live comments will also be accepted during the appropriate times of the meeting via Zoom. If you wish to make a comment during the meeting please use the "raise hand" button on your screen if you are signed in via Zoom. If you are accessing the meeting via telephone, please hit \*9 and the meeting moderator will call on you and identify you by the last few digits of your phone number. You can press \*6 to unmute yourself. Please state your name and address before beginning your comment. The Township reserves the right to mute or remove disruptive meeting participants after an initial warning. Disruptive conduct includes sustained inappropriate behaviors such as, but not necessarily limited to, shouting, interruption, and use of profanity.

Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria, Mayor Giordano, and Debi Hrebenak. Also present were Attorney Leslie Parikh and Engineer Mike Finelli via zoom

**Absent:** None

**KC Signs Demonstration**

**Resolution 21-24**

**SELF-EXAMINATION OF BUDGET RESOLUTION**  
*[as required by DCA]*

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:4-78b has authorized the Local Finance Board to adopt rules that permit municipalities in sound fiscal condition to assume the responsibility, normally granted to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services, of conducting the annual budget examination; and

WHEREAS, N.J.A.C. 5:30-7 was adopted by the Local Finance Board on February 11, 1997; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:30-7.2 through 7.5, the Township of Independence has been declared eligible to participate in the program by the Division of Local government Services, and the Chief Financial officer has determined that the local government meets the necessary conditions to participate in the program for the 2021 budget year.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the governing body of the Township of Independence that in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:30-7.6a & 7.6b and based upon the Chief Financial Officer's certification, the governing body has found the budget has met the following requirements:

1. That with reference to the following items, the amounts have been calculated pursuant to law and appropriated as such in the budget:
  - a. Payment of interest and debt redemption charges
  - b. Deferred charges and statutory expenditures
  - c. Cash deficit of preceding year
  - d. Reserve for uncollected taxes
  - e. Other reserves and non-disbursement items
  - f. Any inclusions of amounts required for school purposes.
2. That the provisions relating to limitation on increases of appropriations pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.2 and appropriations for exceptions to limits on appropriations found at N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.3 et seq., are fully met (complies with CAP law).
3. That the budget is in such form, arrangement, and content as required by the Local Budget Law and N.J.A.C. 5:30-4 and 5:30-5.
4. That pursuant to the Local Budget Law:
  - a. All estimates of revenue are reasonable, accurate and correctly stated,
  - b. Items of appropriation are properly set forth
  - c. In itemization, form, arrangement and content, the budget will permit the exercise of the comptroller function within the municipality.
5. The budget and associated amendments have been introduced and publicly advertised in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Budget Law, except that failure to meet the deadlines of N.J.S.A. 40A:4-5 shall not prevent such certification.
6. That all other applicable statutory requirements have been fulfilled.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution will be forwarded to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services upon adoption.

Mrs. Gesumaria made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-24 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cougle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

#### **Resolution 21-26**

#### **2021 Municipal Budget**

**(See attached)**

Mr. Pennington made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-26 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cougle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

**Minutes Approval: 1.12.21, 2.09.21**

A motion was made by Mr. Cogle to approve minutes 1.12.21 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None recorded

Mr. Cogle advised corrections need to be done on 2.9.21 minutes.

**Consent Agenda:**

**Resolution 21-22**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING AND UPDATING THE PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL WHICH INCORPORATES THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK THEREIN**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Independence seeks to update its Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual to conform with the current policies of the Township.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Independence, in the County of Warren, that the Township of Independence Policies and Procedures Manual is updated as follows:

1. Modification to Section Three to add a Bonding Policy

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of the updated Township of Independence Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual is on file with the Clerk's office; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this Resolution shall be forwarded to the Township Administrator for distribution to all Township employees.

Mr. Cogle made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-22 as written. Mayor Giordano seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None recorded

**Resolution 21-23**

**Redemption of Tax Lien  
Certificate #201603**

**WHEREAS**, on December 1, 2016, Tax Lien Certificate #201603 or property assessed to JOSEPH LIA JR. and known as Block 21; Lot 35.02, Sold to FWDSL & ASSOCIATES

**WHEREAS**, redemption of Certificate # 201603 was made by JOSEPH LIA JR

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Township Committee of the Township of Independence, that the Tax Collector, having received redemption monies from JOSEPH LIA JR, and having received Tax Lien Certificate #201603 from JOANNA SIEDLECKA, assigned lienholder, be authorized to forward said redemption monies to JOANNA SIEDLECKA, assigned lienholder, the amount being \$70,553.36.

**ALSO**, the Premium which was paid by FWDSL & ASSOCIATES be returned to JOANNA SIEDLECKA, assigned lienholder, in the amount of \$18,000.

Mrs. Gesumaria made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-23 as written. Mr. Cogle seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

**Resolution 21-25**

**Title or Subject: APPOINTMENT**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Committee of the Township of Independence that the following appointment is hereby made:

Mary P Robinson-Certified Tax Collector P/T position, rate of \$ 26,520.00 per annum effective April 1, 2021.

Mayor Giordano made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-25 as written. Mrs. Gesumaria seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

**Resolution 21-27**

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR AND COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO MAKE COVID-19 VACCINE AVAILABLE TO THE TEACHERS AND STAFF OF WARREN COUNTY'S SCHOOLS**

**WHEREAS**, providing COVID-19 vaccination to teachers and other school staff will help protect the health of the students, school staff and families of Warren County's school districts; and

**WHEREAS**, the President of the United States of America Joseph Biden has made it a national goal that "every educator, school staff member, child care worker receive at least one shot by the end of the month of March"; and

**WHEREAS**, the County of Warren has surveyed it's public schools and found that over 1500 public school staff are willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible; and

**WHEREAS**, the superintendents of Warren County's school districts have agreed to work with the Warren County Health Department to vaccinate their staff as quickly as possible; and

**WHEREAS**, the County of Warren and its health department are willing to work with any community partners to help meet the President' school vaccination goal in Warren County.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Township Committee of the Township of Independence requests New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy and New Jersey Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli to allocate sufficient COVID-19 Vaccine to the County of Warren so that initial vaccination of all eligible and interested school staff can be completed by end of March 2021.

Mr. Cogle made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-27 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

**Resolution 21-28**

**AUTHORIZING A MASTER PUBLIC WORKS SHARED SERVICES  
AGREEMENT FOR SHARING PUBLIC WORKS EQUIPMENT BETWEEN  
WARREN COUNTY AND THE TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE**

WHEREAS, under the Uniform Shared Services & Consolidation Act N.J.S.A. 40A:65-1 et seq., the County of Warren is authorized to offer public works equipment and public works employees provided by the County to the Township of Independence for public works services, general maintenance and other related services; and

WHEREAS, the County of Warren is desirous of providing those services to the Township of Independence in accordance with the terms of an agreement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Independence, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby accept this offer and authorize the Mayor to execute the agreement provided by the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Mr. Cogle made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-28 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None recorded

**Resolution 21-29**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE OPPOSING THE SIGNIFICANT  
CUTS IN STATE FUNDING FOR DISTRICT 24 SCHOOLS UNDER THE STATE BUDGET  
PROPOSAL FOR FY 2022**

WHEREAS, under the Governor's budget proposal for FY 2022, District 24 schools, which include towns in Sussex, Warren and Morris Counties, are expected to lose nearly \$7 million in State school aid next school year; and

WHEREAS, these suburban and rural school districts have already been consistently hard hit in each State budget in recent years, and

WHEREAS, under the Governor's new plan, Great Meadows Regional School District in particular will experience a cut of approximately 24% in State funding; and

WHEREAS, the reductions are especially harmful to the continued vitality of district schools and programs, and

WHEREAS, the significant funding cuts will severely exacerbate an already difficult year due to the ongoing Covid -19 pandemic when schools are struggling with virtual education, technology costs, and planning for a safe return to classrooms; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the significant state aid cuts in spending, many will be faced with the prospect of having to close schools, cut programs and lay off teachers; and

WHEREAS, State funding is also an influential factor in a district's decision to raise local property taxes; and

WHEREAS, the prospect of heightened property taxes is especially concerning and inequitable during a time when unemployment rates have increased, small businesses are permanently closing, and schools need additional funding to remain open and safe during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of the taxpayers, students, school districts, educational professionals and local communities in District 24, the Township of Independence stands in opposition to these devastating cuts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Independence as follows:

1. The Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Independence hereby declare its disapproval and opposition to the significant reductions in state aid to District 24 schools which will result in connection with the State budget proposal for FY 2021.
2. A copy of the within Resolution will be forwarded to Senator Oroho and Board of County Commissioners of the County of Warren.

Mr. Cogle made a motion to approve Resolutions 21-29 as written. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

#### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

Tax Collector – Report submitted via email  
Construction/Zoning – Reports submitted via email.  
Environmental – Collection of plastic bags. Due to COVID-19 no meeting  
Treasurer – Working on the Budget  
Recreation/Green Acres –Registration for spring sport open.  
Police – Report submitted via email.  
Emergency Services – Chief Snyder gave a report. Captain Vasquez gave a report.  
DPW – Report submitted via email  
Municipal Clerk: Building still closed. Working with the public outside.  
Land Use Board – Meeting in March

#### **PROFESSIONAL REPORTS:**

Attorney Parikh: Report submitted via email. Cannabis Legislation update. Wireless Edge update. Personnel Policy update done. Woodmont working with County

Engineer Finelli: Report submitted via email. Discussed Asbury Road section2 – waiting on weather. Woodmont fully committed to project. Breaking ground this summer.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Ordinance 2021-02**                      *Second Reading/Public Comment*

#### **Chapter 337 Stormwater Control**

Mr. Cogle made a motion to open up discussion on this ordinance to the Public. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

As there were no comments, a motion was made by Mr. Cogle to close the public hearing. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

A motion was made by Mr. Cogle to adopt Ordinance 2021-02 as written. Mayor Giordano seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Ordinance 2021-03**                      *Introduction/First Reading*

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED SALARIES AND  
COMPENSATION**

*Be It Ordained by the Township Committee of the Township of Independence, the following salary ranges, being established for Township employees for the year 2021.*

<b>Administration</b>	
Mayor	\$ 3,000 - 8,000
Deputy Mayor	\$ 2,000 - 5,000
Township Committee Member	\$ 1,200 – 4,000
Municipal Clerk/Registrar	\$ 50,000 - 95,000
Administrator	\$ 8,000 - 15,000
<b>Tax and Finance</b>	
Chief Financial Officer	\$ 20,000 – 42,000
Tax Collector	\$ 20,000 – 40,000
Tax Assessor	\$ 20,000 – 40,000
Payroll Clerk	\$ 1,500 – 3,500
P/T Clerical	\$ 15.00 - 30.00/hr.
<b>Municipal Court</b>	
Judge	\$ 10,000 – 20,000
Prosecutor	\$ 6,000 - 12,000
Court Administrator	\$ 10,000 – 25,000
Violations Clerk / Filing Clerk	\$ 15/hr - \$18/hr
<b>Public Works</b>	
Supervisor	\$80,000 - \$90,000
Truck Driver	\$ 15.00 – 35.00/hr.
Laborer	\$ 15.00 – 28.00/hr.
P/T Laborer	\$ 12.00 - 16.00/hr.
Building Janitor	\$ 12.00 - 16.00/hr.
<b>Building – Zoning</b>	
Construction Official/Fire Sub-Code Inspector/Building Sub-Code Official	\$ 20,000 – 30,000
P/T TACO	\$ 13.00 - 25.00/hr.
Fire Sub-Code Official	\$ 3,000 - 4,000
Electrical Inspector	\$ 5,500 - 8,000
Plumbing Inspector	\$ 6,000 - 9,000
Zoning Officer	\$ 7,000 –18,000
Land Use Board Administrator	\$ 7,500 - 11,000
<b>Recreation</b>	
Recreation Administrator/ Senior Coordinator	\$ 20,000 - \$30,000
P/T Laborer	\$ 14-16.00/hr.
<b>Recycling</b>	
Recycling Coordinator	\$ 500 - 2,000
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Police Chief	\$ 85,000 –119,000
Municipal Department Head Police Director	\$ 60,000 –80,000
Clerk-Typist	\$ 25,000 – 55,000
Police Matron Call out	\$ 50.00-55.00
Matron Hrs. after call out	\$ 20.00-25.00
Emergency Management Coordinator	\$ 1,000 – 3,000
911 Coordinator	\$ 1,000 – 2,000
<b>Police</b>	
Lieutenant	\$ 98,100-102,068
Sergeant/1 <sup>st</sup> . Class	\$ 95,568-99,436
Patrolman	\$ 51,848-93,920
Probationary / Recruit	\$ 44,164-45,948

A motion was made by Mr. Cogle to adopt Ordinance 2021-03 for First Reading. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded.

Second reading and public hearing will be on April 13, 2021

**PUBLIC COMMENT: none**

**BILLS:** A motion was made by Mr. Pennington to pay the bills as presented. Mr. Cogle seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mrs. Kelsey, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: 8:10 pm – 8:13 pm**

The following Resolution was approved at 8:10 p.m. to enter Executive Session with a motion by Mr. Cogle, seconded by Mr. Gesumaria and followed by a unanimous roll call.

**WHEREAS: N.J.S. 2:4-12, Open Public Meetings Act**, 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 Township Committee of the Township of Independence, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, as follows:

The public shall be excluded from discussion of the hereinafter specified subject matters;

The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:

Personnel Matter

It is anticipated at this time that the above matter will be made public upon completion of the matter discussed.

A motion was made by Mrs. Kelsey at 8:13 p.m. to exit the executive session, seconded by Mayor Giordano followed by a roll call of all ayes

Mayor Giordano stated that Personnel Matter issues were discussed and no action will be taken at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT:** A motion was made by Mr. Cogle to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Mrs. Kelsey seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Cogle, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Kelsey, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano  
Nays: None recorded  
Abstain: None recorded

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah M. Hrebenak, RMC/CMR  
Municipal Clerk