

INDEPENDENCE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
Meeting held at the Municipal Building, Great Meadows, NJ.
March 14, 2023 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.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Stuber, Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Gesumaria, Mayor Giordano, and Dena Hrebenak. Also present were Attorney Leslie Parikh and Engineer Mike Finelli.

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

Minute Approval: 2.14.23

A motion was made by Mr. Pennington to approve minutes 2.14.23 as written. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Tax Collector – Report submitted via email

Construction/Zoning – Reports submitted via email.

Environmental – No meeting

Treasurer – Working on Budget

Recreation/Green Acres – Adult Community going well. Bus trip planned for November. Spring Sports are starting.

Police – Report submitted via email. Officer in Charge Prell gave a report.

Emergency Services – Sam Vasquez gave a report on squad. No fire house breakfast in April.

DPW – All is going well. Demo on a hot box. A lot of salt used during the last 2 storms

Municipal Clerk: Everything going well. Tree recovering program - 220 tree seedling to be disbursed on April 21 from 9-12 at the Municipal Building.

Land Use Board – Meeting next week

PROFESSIONAL REPORTS:

Attorney Parikh: Spoke on Drug Policy

Engineer Finelli: Spoke on Russling Road Section 2 & 3 Project, Woodmont Building 1 co certificate, Flood Damage Ordinance and MS4 permit. Grant available for the MS4 permit up to \$25,000.00.

Introduction of 2023 Budget Resolution 23-23

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

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

Public hearing - April 11, 2023

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution 23-24

Title or Subject: Salaries 2023

Be It Resolved by the Independence Township Committee that the following salaries shall be paid to Township employees, effective January 1, 2023 unless otherwise noted.

Administration	
Mayor	\$ 8,084
Deputy Mayor	\$ 4,131
Township Committee Member	\$ 3,451
Municipal Clerk/Registrar	\$ 95,567
Administrator	\$ 11,878
Tax and Finance	
Chief Financial Officer	\$ 40,598
Tax Collector	\$ 27,795
Tax Assessor	\$ 28,922
Payroll Clerk	\$ 3,346
P/T Clerical (1)	\$ 27.26/hr.
Municipal Court	
Judge	\$ 19,202
Court Administrator	\$ 15,855
Violation Clerk (2)	\$ 17.11/hr.
Violation Clerk	\$ 16.03/hr.
Filing Clerk	\$ 16.03/hr.
Public Works	
Supervisor	\$ 89,172
Truck Driver 1	\$ 31.41/hr.
Truck Driver 2	\$ 24.41/hr.
Truck Driver 3	\$ 23.95/hr.
Construction/Zoning	
Construction Official	\$ 12,000
TACO	\$ 21.48/hr.
Building Subcode	\$ 11,275
Electrical Sub Code Official / Electrical Inspector	\$ 6,803
Plumbing Sub Code Official / Plumbing Inspector	\$ 6,150
Fire Subcode	\$ 6,663
Zoning Official	\$ 16,298
Vacant and Abandoned Property Stipend	\$ 7,231
Land Use Board Administrator	\$ 9,540
Recreation/Seniors	
Recreation Director	\$ 21,381
Public Safety	
Chief of Police	\$ 111,221
Clerk-Typist	\$ 47,150
Police Matron Call Out	\$ 57.86/2 hr
Matron Hrs, After Call Out	\$ 23.15/hr.
Emergency Management Coordinator Stipend	\$ 2977
911 Coordinator	\$ 1673

Resolution 23-25

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TAX COLLECTOR TO TAKE THE NECESSARY ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION TO CANCEL PROPERTY TAXES ON BLOCK 11, LOT 24, 128 US HWY 46,

**A 100 PERCENT TOTALLY AND PERMANENTLY DISABLED
UNITED STATES VETERAN**

WHEREAS, NJSA 54:4-3.30 provides, in pertinent part, that the dwelling house and the lot whereas the same is erected of any citizen or resident of this State, now or hereafter honorable discharged from active service in time of war from any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States who has been or shall be declared by the United States Veterans Administration to be 100 percent permanently disabled may make claim for exemption from real estate taxation of such person's real and personal property; and

WHEREAS, Alfredo Feliciano, Jr. of 128 US HWY 46 in the Township of Independence has submitted an application for real estate tax exemption as a 100 percent permanently and totally disabled veteran and has submitted documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs office in Washington, DC confirming said 100 percent permanent and total disability as of December 23, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Feliciano, Jr. aforementioned real estate has been deemed totally exempt as of January 18, 2023, the date of purchase of his residence in the Township of Independence, as a result of the foregoing by the Township of Independence Tax Assessor; and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector, Toni Theesfeld, has requested that the necessary administrative action be taken to cancel the taxes on this property from January 18, 2023 through March 14, 2023 in the amount of \$1290.01 to the Township of Independence from January 18, 2023 through the calendar year 2023; and

WHEREAS, the request was duly considered by the Township Committee as its regular meeting held on March 14, 2023 at which time the Township Committee deemed the recommendation to be proper and justified;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this 14th day of March 2023 that the request of the Tax Collector, Toni Theesfeld, has been granted to make the necessary administrative action to cancel the taxes on this property from January 18, 2023 through March 14, 2023 in the amount of \$1290.01 to the

Township of Independence for calendar year 2023, for Alfredo Feliciano, Jr., a 100 percent totally and permanently disabled veteran; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Tax Collector is hereby authorized to process the cancellation in said amount following receipt of a true copy of this resolution.

Resolution 23-26

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 Cannabis, Alcohol, Substance Testing

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.

Mrs. Gesumaria made a motion to approve Resolutions 23-24 thru 23-26 as written. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

Resolution 23-27

Title: 50/50 Raffle

WHEREAS, Independence Twp Vol Fire Dept is registered by the State of New Jersey to operate legalized games of chance, (224-9-21561) and,

WHEREAS, they have submitted applications for a 50/50 Raffle to be held on 10.19.2023 and all fees have been paid,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Independence, that RA# 2023-06 be issued to Independence Twp Vol Fire Dept.

Mrs. Gesumaria made a motion to approve Resolutions 23-27 as written. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None
Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

ORDINANCE:

2023-03 Second Reading/Public Comment

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE INCLUDED AS CHAPTER 356, "TAXATION," OF THE TOWNSHIP CODE TO ESTABLISH ARTICLE I, "100% DISABLED VETERAN TAX REFUNDS"

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

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

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

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

A motion was made by Mrs. Gesumaria to adopt Ordinance 2023-03 as written. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

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

OLD BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS: none

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mrs. Tomlinson clarified that she had sent OPRA and questioned on why it was not received.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 7:29 pm – 8:10 pm

The following Resolution was approved at 7:37 p.m. to enter Executive Session with a motion by Mrs. Gesumaria, seconded by Mr. Pennington 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

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 Mayor Giordano at 8:10 p.m. to return to regular session, seconded by Mr. Pennington.

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

A motion was made to give the Construction Sub Code Officials (Building/Fire, Plumbing, Electrical inspectors) a stipend of \$2,000.00.

Mrs. Gesumaria made a motion to approve Resolutions 23-27 as written. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Mrs. Gesumaria to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. Mr. Stuber seconded the motion with roll call as follows:

Ayes: Mr. Pennington, Mr. Stuber, Mrs. Gesumaria, and Mayor Giordano

Nays: None recorded

Abstain: None

Absent: Mrs. Kelsey

Respectfully submitted,

Dena M. Hrebenak, RMC
Municipal Clerk/Administrator