

BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
WASHINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES – November 17, 2014

The Regular Meeting of the Borough Council of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey was held in the Council Chambers of Borough Hall at 7:00 P.M.

Mayor McDonald read the following statement into the record:

“The requirements of the ‘Open Public Meetings Law, 1975, Chapter 231’ have been satisfied in that adequate notice of this meeting has been published in the Star Gazette and posted on the Bulletin Board of Borough Hall stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting as required by law.”

Mayor McDonald led everyone in the flag salute.

Roll Call: Jones, Thompson, Conry, McDonald, Gleba, Torres (arrived at 7:05p.m.)

Absent: Higgins

Also Present: Patricia Titus, Acting Municipal Clerk,
Leslie Parikh, Municipal Attorney

MINUTES:

Regular Meeting – November 05, 2014

Motion made by Gleba, seconded by Conry to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of November 05, 2014.

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0
Motion Carried

COUNCIL APPEARANCE:

Shade Tree Commission - Ms. Kathy Halpin

Ms. Halpin thanked the Borough Council and the Borough Manager on behalf of the Shade Tree Commission for increasing the commission's budget by \$2,000 for the year 2014. The Shade Tree Commission respectfully requests the same budget for 2015 or if there are any extra funds an increase would help with the maintenance of many trees that exceed the current budget. The Shade Tree Commission will apply for a maintenance grant if offered by the State of New Jersey. There are only three volunteers

on the commission and there should be five so more volunteers would be helpful.

Councilman Thompson asked why the trees in the park were being cut down. Ms. Halpin replied that they are being cut down because they were in bad shape. Councilman Thompson feels there are other trees throughout town that are in worse shape that should have priority. Ms. Halpin replied that was the park project for the year. Councilman Thompson asked what the commission's priority is for the year 2015. Ms. Halpin replied that she has some estimates that were sent out for bid on trees throughout town that are hazard trees. Ms. Halpin added that in 2008, the commission planted fifty six trees paid for by a Tree City USA grant and that was the last time new trees were planted. The Shade Tree Commission currently has one thousand thirty trees which does not include the park and two hundred eighteen vacant planting sites. Ms. Halpin added that there is potential for the commission to get some trees donated from the Penny Toss Farm but they are large trees and the commission would encumber the cost of digging the holes for the trees which can only be placed in certain places. Ms. Halpin provided Council with a maintenance list including replacement trees and those listed for removal and trimming. Ms. Halpin added that she would like to start a maintenance program to systematically trim the town but there has never been enough funds to get it started. Belvidere Avenue, Carlton Avenue and Stewart Street were done this year.

Business Improvement District Annual Budget – BID Executive Director, Sandi Cerami

Ms. Cerami began by thanking the Mayor and Council once again for the cooperation and support that is continually given. Ms. Cerami added that she received a certification as a Business District Manager thru Rutgers Business District Management Certification Continuing Education Class. Through this class, Ms. Cerami was in contact with so many other Business District Managers throughout the country as well as the Director of the Business District Institute. Ms. Cerami learned that the districts that had the most success were the ones that had a solid ongoing relationship and cooperation with their Council and with their staff and administrators as well. Ms. Cerami thanked Deputy Mayor Jeanine Gleba who served as the Council Representative on the BID's Board of Directors.

Ms. Cerami added that the Festival in the Borough had strong attendance this year, estimated at about five thousand people. This event was the winner of the Best Festival for the Skylands Region, which is an award given from the Business District Management Institute. Upcoming Events planned by the BID are Small Business Saturday which will take place on November 29th. The BID signed up to be a Neighborhood Champion through American Express who provided lots of free giveaways for the event. There will be free face painting for children, and a DJ on the street to help attract attention, and Santa will be in and out of all the businesses. The Hometown Holiday will be on Saturday, December 6th which will begin at 4:00 p.m. with the tree lighting at Borough Hall and then the procession led by the Warren Hills Regional High

School Marching Band which will lead down to the pocket park for the ribbon cutting with a tree lighting there as well.

Ms. Cerami added that the parking lot improvement project was a high priority and paying off the parking lot loan was critical to the solvency of the BID's operation and maintaining the BID's high level of service and programs to everyone. The pocket park is finally done and Ms. Cerami added that there will be additional fundraising efforts in 2015 to add a roof to the stage area. Ms. Cerami thanked Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer, adding that he has been very responsive and cooperative in helping the BID keeping the business district looking nice. Mayor McDonald stated at this time that Paramount has applied for and received permits to renovate #14. Mayor McDonald added that it is a positive step but still doesn't include the other two properties that they own.

Ms. Cerami added that she was pleased that the BID has a flat budget this year for 2015. The BID will be raising additional income through sponsorships of their events, fundraising, donations, and exhibitor registrations. Councilwoman Gleba thanked Ms. Cerami for all of her hard work and stated that it was an honor being on the BID's Board of Directors and wished the BID continued success.

AUDIENCE:

Mayor McDonald opened up the audience portion for remarks, petitions, statements, and testimony from guests.

Reverend Bauknight – Mt. Pisgah Ame Church

Mayor McDonald stated that the Borough does not have a definite date for the repaving project on North Lincoln Avenue but it is still on schedule. Reverend Bauknight asked when the paving project of the Warren Hills Middle School parking lot and driveway will be done. Mayor McDonald replied that he will get that information from Manager Blanchard when she returns to the office. Reverend Bauknight added that there are utility markers on the street. Councilwoman Gleba replied those markers are probably in preparation of the paving project. Reverend Bauknight asked if there was an extension to the Council as far as having residents who are available to inform the Council of Borough happenings. Mayor McDonald replied that there is nothing official, however any resident may contact a Council Member, Manager Blanchard or appear before Council during the audience portion. There are also municipal service request forms on the website for any issues that may arise. Reverend Bauknight added that she got the number of the abandoned home near the corner of Lenape Trail and it is number 82.

Ms. Deborah Franklin – 145 North Lincoln Avenue

Ms. Franklin stated that when she appeared at the October 21st Council meeting she was

told they were probably going to start paving North Lincoln Avenue the beginning of November. Mayor McDonald replied that the project is still on and the last he heard it may happen in the second or third week of November. Ms. Franklin expressed concern that the project hasn't been started. Ms. Franklin asked if we lose the grant if the project doesn't happen by a certain time. Attorney Parikh replied that usually with grants you have one year to use the funds but noted that there are other conditions that need to be met for the grant as well. Councilman Torres added that if the project doesn't get completed before winter, it will be done in the spring. Ms. Franklin asked if the paving project at the Warren Hills Regional Middle School would have any kind of impact on the North Lincoln Avenue paving project. Mayor McDonald replied that they are two separate projects and the Warren Hills Regional Middle School project should have no impact on the North Lincoln Avenue paving project.

Hearing no further comments from the audience a motion was made by Torres, seconded by Conry to close the audience portion of the meeting.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

REPORTS:

A motion was made by Gleba, seconded by Torres to receive and file the following reports:

Council Discussion:

Councilman Torres asked if it was possible see a column or something added to list in regards to which violations have had resolution or if the violation is still in progress. Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer added that just because there has been resolution to the violation does not mean that the violation has been abated. Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer added that it would be a lot of work to produce a list mainly due to process within the courts, some violations are over sixteen months old. Councilman Torres replied that if these items are not mentioned at a Council Meeting then Council does not know about them. Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer replied that the major problems going on at the time are provided in the narrative update report.

1. Code Enforcement Report – October 2014
2. Office of Emergency Management – October 2014
3. Municipal Court Report – October 2014
4. DPW Report – October 2014

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS:

Condemned / Abandoned Properties

Mayor McDonald stated that Council has a memorandum on condemned / abandoned properties and Attorney Parikh is here to answer any questions. Councilwoman Gleba asked what Attorney Parikh recommends as the most effective way to handle the properties since in the past the abandoned properties list was done away with due to cost. Attorney Parikh stated that in respect to the abandoned properties, it is going to be expensive to implement however there have been some recent changes in legislature that make it easier and more cost effective. Attorney Parikh added that there are mechanisms that provide the municipality the ability to take over the property and have a special tax sale which could have certain conditions which require the buyer to maintain the properties and bring the property back up to code. Councilman Jones commented that it could be a lengthy process that may take up to a year and a half to two years to see any progress on the abandoned homes. Attorney Parikh will research the topic further answering any questions that Council may have and provide that information to Manager Blanchard for discussion at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Procedure for Redevelopment Plan Ordinance (Two options)

Council Discussion:

Mayor McDonald suggested forwarding this ordinance to the Planning Board and also the Board of Adjustments for their review and comments. Attorney Parikh added that normally when a municipality has these redevelopment plans there is a mechanism in place that allows for the zoning officer to enforce the aesthetics if they are not complied with. The concern with the Borough's redevelopment plan, is that there is no mechanism within the plan to allow the zoning officer to enforce the aesthetics and there should be. Attorney Parikh will research the statute further to see if an amendment to the ordinance is necessary and report back to Manager Blanchard and Council.

A motion made by Torres, seconded by Conry to forward the Procedure for Redevelopment Plan Ordinance to the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustments.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

Resolution #142-2014 Redemption of Tax Sale Certificate

RESOLUTION #142-2014

A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE

As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on December 15, 2013 to JNY RE, LLC 42 Huntington Rd, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920, in the amount of \$181.93 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2012 in the name of Adams, Jeffrey B. & Donna L. as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 90 Flower Avenue, Block 44 Lot 8, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #13-00020; and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 11-5-14 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, EastWest Bank on behalf of Lereta Tax Service, claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by JNY RE, LLC by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$3,509.51, which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #13-00020.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 17th day of November, 2014 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to JNY RE, LLC 42 Hunting Rd, Basking Ridge, NJ 08865 in the **amount of \$3,509.51**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 44 Lot 8 from the tax office records.

Resolution #143-2014 Redemption of Tax Sale Certificate

RESOLUTION #143-2014

A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE

As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing

district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on November 7, 2014 to FWDSL & Associates LP, 5 Cold Hill Rd S Ste:11, Mendham, NJ 07945, in the amount of \$693.98 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2013 in the name of Zack, Michael E. & Nancy L. as supposed owners, and in said assessment and sale were described as 29 South Lincoln Avenue, Block 98 Lot 12, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #14-00069; and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 11-10-14 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, Michael Zack claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by FWDSL & Associates LP by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough the amount of \$707.86 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #14-00069.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 17th day of November, 2014 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to FWDSL & Associates LP, 5 Cold Hill Rd S Ste: 11, Mendham, NJ 07945 in the amount of **\$2,007.86** (This amount consists of \$707.86 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$1,300.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 98 Lot 12 from the tax office records.

Resolution #144-2014 Redemption of Tax Sale Certificate

RESOLUTION #144-2014

A RESOLUTION FOR REDEMPTION OF TAX CERTIFICATE

As per N.J.S.A.54:5

KNOW ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENTS THAT, WHEREAS, lands in the taxing district of Washington Borough, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, were sold on November 7, 2014 to FWDSL & Associates LP, 5 Cold Hill Rd S Ste:11, Mendham, NJ 07945, in the amount of \$704.32 for taxes or other municipal liens assessed for the year 2013 in the name of Robinson, Darlene R. as supposed owner, and in said assessment and sale were described as 79 Washington Square Circle, Block 73.01 Lot 22, which sale was evidenced by Certificate #14-00045; and

WHEREAS, the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of the Borough of Washington, do certify that on 11-10-14 and before the right to redeem was cut off, as provided by law, Darlene Robinson claiming to have an interest in said lands, did redeem said lands claimed by FWDSL & Associates LP by paying the Collector of Taxes of said taxing district of Washington Borough

the amount of \$718.41 which is the amount necessary to redeem Tax Sale Certificate #14-00045.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on this 17th day of November, 2014 by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Washington, County of Warren to authorize the Treasurer to issue a check payable to FWDSL & Associates LP, 5 Cold Hill Rd S Ste: 11, Mendham, NJ 07945 in the amount of **\$2,018.41** (This amount consists of \$718.41 Certificate Amount redeemed + \$1,300.00 Premium).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Tax Collector is authorized to cancel this lien on Block 73.01 Lot 22 from the tax office records.

Resolutions #142-2014, #143-2014, and #144-2014 were moved on a motion made by Torres, seconded by Conry and approved.

Roll Call: Thompson, Torres, Jones, Conry, McDonald, Gleba
Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

VOUCHERS:

Mayor McDonald entertained a motion to approve the vouchers and claims in the amount of \$778,145.07

Motion made by Conry, seconded by Thompson to approve the vouchers.

Council Discussion:

Councilman Thompson asked about the water charge on page eight at Vara Field.
Councilwoman Conry replied that there was a leak due to the old pipes but it is fixed now

Roll Call: Torres, Conry, Jones, Thompson, McDonald, Gleba
Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Abstain: (1) Thompson – Fire & EMS
Motion Carried.

RECAP:

Mayor McDonald will find out the status of the North Lincoln Avenue paving project from Manager Blanchard. Ms Titus will inform Manager Blanchard that the address of the abandoned property is 82 Lenape Trail. Ms. Titus will have Manager Blanchard put

the topic of condemned / abandoned properties on the agenda for the next meeting and forward the Redevelopment Ordinance memo to the planning board and board of adjustments for comments. At this time, Ms. Cerami asked if Council needed to vote and give formal approval of the BID budget. Mayor McDonald replied that the approval of the BID budget can be added to the next meeting agenda.

COUNCIL REMARKS:

Councilwoman Gleba wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and hoped everyone comes out for Hometown Holiday and the ribbon cutting for the pocket park on Saturday, December 6th. Councilwoman Gleba thanked Ms. Cerami and the BID for all of their hard work. Councilwoman Gleba asked that Manager Blanchard provide a year end status on all of the Borough's outstanding litigation. Councilwoman Gleba also added that Council will wait until next meeting for executive session for professional evaluations.

Councilman Thompson wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving

Councilman Jones would like update on the Millpond Dam as well as the crosswalk on Route 57. There were also some issues that came up with the sewer project which need to be voted on to proceed. Mayor McDonald replied that Manager Blanchard will provide a report on items that have been accomplished as well as items that are still open and goals for the upcoming year. Mayor McDonald added that this report is usually given some time in February. Councilman Jones noted that he had something to discuss in executive session but would prefer to wait until Manager Blanchard was present. Councilman Jones wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Councilman Torres also wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. Councilman Torres updated Council that the mess on the corner of Broad Street and Route 57 near Sal's Pizza has been cleaned up however there was a lot of garbage out there this past week. Councilman Torres noted that the garbage was not from Sal's Pizza but from an apartment upstairs which has also since been cleaned up.

Councilwoman Conry wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. Councilwoman Conry noticed in the Manager's Report that Manager Blanchard did get approval for a no thru traffic sign over in the area of Youmans Avenue and The Dollar Store. Councilwoman Conry asked Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer about a trailer that is regularly parked on Youmans Avenue. Code Enforcement Officer Bescherer replied that it was moved last week and utilized. Councilwoman Gleba replied that once the new streets ordinance takes effect the trailers will not be able to remain on the streets any more. Councilman Torres added that the new ordinance should be introduced at the next Council meeting.

Mayor McDonald wished everyone a safe, happy and healthy Thanksgiving. Mayor McDonald stated that he had a meeting with Assemblyman John DiMaio and they had the

opportunity to walk downtown and toured some of the buildings that are not up to par. Mayor McDonald asked Assemblyman DiMaio for any assistance that he thought his office could provide. Mayor McDonald added that he will be at the League of Municipalities meeting starting tomorrow.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business, a motion was made by Jones, seconded by Conry to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

Mayor Scott McDonald

Kristine Blanchard, RMC Borough Clerk