

BYRAM TOWNSHIP SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING - JULY 10, 2018
REGULAR SESSION – 10:00 A.M.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Rubenstein called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

Adequate notice of this meeting has been made in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

ROLL CALL

Councilman Gray, absent; Councilwoman Kash, absent; Councilman Olson, here; Councilman Roseff, here; Mayor Rubenstein, here. Also present was Township Manager Joe Sabatini, Tax Assessor Penny Holenstein, Zoning Officer Tom Dixon and Municipal Clerk Doris Flynn.

FLAG SALUTE

DISCUSSION – DCA Construction Services Presentation by Jack Templeton

Jack Templeton, DCA Regional Office Supervisor, has worked in code enforcement for 16 years at DCA. Philosophy is to get inspections done and not hold up contractors from working, which is why they do next day inspections.

There is a Northern and Southern Office. Twenty-four towns in Warren, Hunterdon and Sussex are handled by the Northern office. The files remain in the local offices in Sussex County. A construction official comes to the towns several times a week for a couple of hours. Subcode officials come to all the local offices from 8-10 a.m. Monday-Friday to do plan review. Jack could not answer how many times a week they would be in Byram.

Alex asked if staff has increased over the last 10 years because the DCA is now doing more towns. Jack stated that they have not increased staff, with the exception of the addition of one person since the new Governor has taken office, but decisions to hire are not made at the Regional office--they are made in the DCA office in Trenton. Byram would be the largest municipality in the Northern region. It adds a significant workload. Alex asked if Jack thought the DCA could handle our town with the staff they have. Jack thought it would be a struggle, especially with the clerical staff and construction officials. Alex and Joe asked if our technical assistant could be the TACO but was told that could not happen because she is not an employee of the State.

Jack stated that DCA did 4776 permits and 805 updates in the 24 municipalities out of the Northern office in 2017. He stated that the State does not solicit towns to come to the State. If a town requests to come to the State, they have to take them.

Subcode officials can issue permits for work that doesn't need plan review. The Northern office has 22 personnel – 3 clerical (one who travels to other offices), 4 construction officials, 1 supervisor, 5 building inspectors, 4 electric, 2 fire, 3 plumbing. One of the construction officials is retiring in 3 weeks. A member asked if there were plans to replace him. Jack stated that as of now there are no plans to replace the construction official that is retiring.

Joe stated that our technical assistant works 28 hours a week and is constantly busy. He does not feel the residents of Byram will be sufficiently serviced by only have a Construction Official in our offices a few times a week for 2 hours without having a technical assistant in the office.

Penny asked how long a permit remains open before it is closed. Penny has concerns about having a reduced amount of adds. Jack stated that they have a lot of back up of open permits. In the winter, subcode officials try to do follow up.

Scott asked how much revenue was received from Andover. Jack stated that \$92,000 of revenue was received from Andover Township in 2017.

Harvey questioned what the State does with the increase in revenue from additional towns and the potential revenue they would receive if Byram went to the State. Harvey stated that it should be used to increase staff at the DCA.

Joe asked what software the State uses. They use Permits NJ. Joe asked if they transfer the data from Road Runner to Permits NJ. The data does not get transferred. The open permits will remain here and a certificate of approval can be issued through Permits NJ. Jack stated that Permits NJ is web-based and he thinks that Township would be able to access it to get information.

Jack stated that it makes sense for small towns to come to the State; but Byram is a large town and he can see that it could be an issue for our municipality. The State used to be self-supporting but since the Highlands Act, new home construction dropped dramatically.

Joe asked questions about enforcement and wanted to know if the subcode officials are checking to see if permits have been taken out when they see work going on in the field. Jack stated that he thought the construction officials would call into their office to see if a permit was taken out. Joe asked how does the interfacing work with the Zoning Department. Jack stated that the Construction Official will work with the Zoning Officer and also interface with the Planning Board. Resolutions can be emailed to the Construction Official and he will pay close attention to the conditions and not close out a permit unless conditions are met. The Construction Official will keep track of prior approvals before issuing a permit and issuing a CO.

Alex asked Jack when he will be retiring. He feels he will retire within 2 years. Alex asked if there was a succession plan for his position, and Jack said that he wasn't aware of any.

Joe asked Jack to confirm that the State does not charge construction fees for municipal projects and schools. Jack confirmed that Joe was correct.

Doris questioned Jack on OPRA requests. He stated that the Construction Officials would be responsible for OPRA's. They would have to look at Byram's open and closed files for the record.

Penny talked about the working relationship between our Fire Prevention Officer and Construction office to make sure there isn't any open permits before a smoke cert is issued when someone is selling a house. Jack stated that it is possible for that continue if we went to the State.

Joe and Alex stated that the Township would like to sit down with John Terry and Kevin Lucky to discuss increased staffing to be able to handle Byram Township. Joe asked if the State would consider bringing on our technical assistant full time and using our office as a base for the Sussex County municipalities. It would be a good location for the State.

The Council needs to make a decision at the August 14 meeting if we wanted to move to the State for January 1, 2019. If we are moving to State, we have to notify Netcong by September 1 that we would not be servicing them beyond December 31, 2018.

Contacts at the State:

John Terry, Assistant Director DCA – 609-984-7850
Kevin Lucky, Assistant Director DCA
Ed Smith – Director of DCA
Sheila Oliver – Commissioner

Motion by Councilman Olson, second by Councilman Roseff, to open to the public. No comments were made. Motion by Councilman Olson, second by Councilman Roseff to close to the public.

Jack asked that the minutes be sent to John Terry once approved.

Alex thanked Jack for coming and speaking to us. Alex appreciated his candidness, and Scott agreed.

Scott said that we have to find a balance. He is concerned that the permits will cost more and the service will be less. We need to research the State's fee schedule and compare it to ours.

Joe stated that the Council has decisions to make, especially regarding keeping or giving notice to Netcong. Alex suggested that it may be time to have a round table discussion with several other towns to see if we could consolidate construction services, and/or possibly other services.

Harvey reviewed the revenue figures of 2017 and 2018, and noted that the revenue for the 1st 6 months is much lower than last year at this time.

Joe suggested forming a subcommittee to engage in further discussion with John Terry and Kevin Lucky. Scott and Alex said they were interested. We can make a motion at the next meeting. Doris will call DCA tomorrow and see if we can get a meeting with Kevin Lucky and the director at Asbury office.

ADJOURN

On the motion of Councilwoman Olson, second by Councilman Roseff and with all members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm. Motion carried.

Doris Flynn, Municipal Clerk

Alexander Rubenstein, Mayor