

MARCH 25, 2017
HOPE FORUM

A meeting of the Hope Township Committee convened at 9 a.m. at the Hope Township Municipal Building with the following members present: Mayor Timothy McDonough, Deputy Mayor George Beatty, and Committeeman Christopher John Kruk. Also present was Municipal Clerk, Judith Fisher, RMC.

Under the provisions of the “Open Public Meetings Act”, adequate notice of the meeting had been provided by publishing notice in The New Jersey Herald and by posting notices in the Hope Post Office and on the Township bulletin boards.

The flag saluted and roll call taken.

Mayor McDonough thanked all for their participation in the forum. He introduced Judy Fisher, Municipal Clerk and Robyn Keggan, Deputy Clerk. An introduction by those in attendance was provided.

Board of Education – Rose McGuire

An update was provided on the 2017-2018 budget. There will be no planned increase in the tax levy and no cuts to Pre-K-8 staffing or programs planned for the year. Increases in area of special education for staffing and professional development; improvements to the marquis sign, room divider for all purpose room and ongoing maintenance for the overall school facility. The public hearing will be held on April 25, 2017 at 7 p.m. There is a board vacancy for those interested. Interviews will be conducted in a couple of the weeks for a new principal. PTA will sponsor upcoming Talent Show and Carnival, Run at Swayze Mill Park on May 7th, Red Ribbon Week May 15-19. School Board is looking to start an educational foundation connected to the community to offer more to the students.

New Jersey State Police, Hope Barracks – Lt. Aiello

Lt. Aiello provided a background history on the State Trooper Barracks and its staffing. He had reviewed last year’s statistics for Hope, noting the township has not been affected like other towns with respect to burglaries and heroin epidemic. Colonel Fuentes is organizing outreach meetings. Lt. Aiello would like to see the return of State Troopers involvement in the schools which due to short staffing is difficult. He explained 9-1-1 calls vs. business calls and when each is appropriate. He stated citizens have been very supportive and asked the Committee to seek the help of the State Police for any issue. The Committee thanked him for his service.

Planning Board – Marvin Fish

It has been a very quiet year for the Planning Board. There were two subdivision applications and the Singh gas station application at the intersection of Route 80 is still pending. The major item this year has been the re-examination of the Master Plan. The Planner is currently drafting a report based on the public hearing, which may result in revisions to the plan. One issue the Board is working on is the Fair Share Housing Plan, its formula and the financial impact. The Board also heard the St. John’s cemetery application, which was a very detailed, lengthy process.

Zoning Board of Adjustment – Tom Gabel

During 2016, the Zoning Board heard five applications with one still ongoing. All applications were granted with minor changes. The Singh gas station application was originally before Zoning and is now being heard by the Planning Board. The Zoning Board has two vacancies for those interested. Business this year has been slow to this point. Brian Kathenes, Vice-Chairman, thanked the Chairman, Board Engineer, Secretary, Planner and Attorney for their work and service.

Environmental Commission/Green Team – Monica Sobon

The Environmental (EC) and Green Team work actively with the township to reduce, reuse, recycle, rescue, buy local and be healthy. In 2013, they were the second organization in Warren County to obtain Sustainable Jersey certification; recertification was earned in 2016.

They have applied for a grant to update the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) and obtained a grant from ANJEC in 2015 to resurface Swayze Mill trail.

The EC sponsors a give-away for the township dinner, provide an informative table at the town picnic, a Book Nook at the Municipal Building, provided trash and recycling containers to Hope School Green Team when they studied wetlands and bat houses when they studied bats. The Green Fair will be held on Saturday, April 8th including electronics collection, paper shredding, textiles and housewares collection, project medicine drop, vendor information, raffles, and local businesses. “Value This” host and certified appraiser will also be on hand. Hope EC works with neighboring ECs and future efforts will include updating the ERI, engaging the community, monitoring and supporting projects that encourage a healthy, sustainable and fun environment.

Recreation/Cultural Events – Patti Whitmore

Xmas Craft Market, Halloween, Tree Lighting and all current events will continue. There is an increased need for fundraising. Proposed for this year are the following events: Movies in the Park - Summer Craft Market – Summer Farmer’s Market – fundraising Motorcycle Rally.

Xmas Craft market – parking has been an issue, there is also a need for internet for credit card purchases. A Facebook page has been set up for information and communication.

Mrs. Whitmore thanked the 55+ Club for their assistance at Halloween.

Recreation may be able to work in conjunction with the school for a Movie Night.

Historic Preservation Commission – Bob May

There are two Commission vacancies for those interested. The Historic Commission monitors the Historic Preservation District Ordinance and reviews applications for exterior and landscaping changes to homes and businesses. Two applications have been reviewed this year. They are currently researching ordinances from other municipalities for local ordinance updates. They are also reviewing the application format. The Commission has helped to minimize traffic through the town. Hope historic district is a top 10 endangered site.

Agricultural Advisory Board – Bob May

The Board consists of three members. Over the last couple of years, momentum has been building in the program. To date, 18 farms have been preserved, totaling 1427 acres. Another farm is moving toward closing with 23 acres, and an additional project is coming up for review. The Planned Incentive Grant of \$1,250,000 grant from the State is used with open space funding and County funding toward buying development easements on approved farms. The Board works with the County, State, Land Conservancy and Ridge and Valley Conservancy programs. Sandy Urgo, a consultant for the Land Conservancy has been instrumental in moving projects forward.

Hope Area Chamber of Commerce – Christopher John Kruk

New website: hopeareachamber.com

The Chamber is a way for businesses to meet and share ideas and an advocate for businesses in the township. There is a current need for high speed internet. The Chamber provides a Green Fair booth to display the business environment in Hope. In May, they will hold a business check-up meeting at the Inn – to check finances, taxes, legislation, sales and marketing. They have a Hope Area Chamber you tube video – depicting the benefit of chamber membership. The County has an Economic Development Committee – similar to the Green Team but for business, and they are working to grow business in the County.

Hope Volunteer Fire Department – Mike Marino/Christopher John Kruk

Year to date there are 30 active members including probationary and junior members. Year to date there have been 41 calls - 19 accidents, most on Rt. 80, 6 mutual aid calls. The man hours through February – including calls, work details and drills - 550 hours. One member is currently in fire school – 6 months for three days per week. A fundraiser raffle is being held and will be drawn around July 4th for a grill. Please check their Facebook page for more information.

Mr. Kruk noted the strong relationship between the fire department, First Aid Squad, State Police and surrounding departments. All work very well together when on calls and have good communication regarding coverage and other matters. The department is an integral part of the community and opens for the Craft Market, Rabies Clinic, Tree Lighting, Blood Drives, Appreciation Dinner, car show, shelter, emergency generator, to clear roads, provide water, animal rescues, and ice rescue equipment.

State Park Police: Bill VanHederen (spelling?)

Mr. VanHederen has been recently promoted and will be overseeing the Hope Garage for Warren County Road Department. He provided a background history on his career to this point. He offered his assistance in any way needed. The Committee wished Mr. VanHederen the best in his new position.

Township Engineer – Ted Rodman

Mr. Rodman has served as Township Engineer for 42 years.

Hope has received \$180,000 in State aid for overlay on Jenny Jump Road this year. The township has submitted for \$142,000 for next year to address Birch Ridge Road. Overlay has been completed on Smith Green Street - \$91,000. The Township has applied for generator grants for the grange and DPW garage. They have replaced 27 catch basins throughout the town and are currently working on a salt shed project. Mr. Beatty spoke about the salt shed project and also the possibility and location of a cell tower. Birch Ridge Road needs to be repaved. The Committee is currently considering hiring two part-time workers this summer. Landscaping contractors were subcontracted, and also used to assist with snow removal. The equipment is in good shape and the town is currently doing a full inventory for a three to five-year projection plan.

Hope 55+ Club – Annette Morris

Open to anyone 55 and over. The club meets at the Municipal Building at 12:30 on the second Monday of every month. It is a social club that feels service to Hope is an important part of their program. The club runs the concession stand on opening day of baseball during the parade, grills during the fishing derby, town picnic – would like to bring back the cake baking contest, assist at Halloween and serve food at the Community Center and Xmas Craft Market, and make a monthly donation to the St. John's food pantry. They host speakers on occasion - entertainers – trips – plays – talent show and games. Monica Sobon has joined the group and is liaison to the Environmental Commission. Ms. Morris thanked the town for their meeting place and Judy, Robyn and Don for their continued support.

Township Committee:

Mr. Beatty noted a decrease in sports participants and the challenge to keep all active. They have good coaches and field facilities. He spoke about a practice field for upcoming t-ball players. A removable batting cage will be installed at Swayze Mill Park for the season. The Community Center will be eliminating all sports after the spring softball/baseball season due to damage. Repairs will be made and then only men's and children basketball will utilize the center. They are trying to include a fly fishing seminar or professional fisherman at the upcoming fishing derby. He briefly discussed the upcoming referendum for the uses of open space funding.

Mr. Kruk supported the referendum to use open space funding to preserve what the town already has. As far as recruiting for township boards and commissions – he suggested offering special aspects of the boards to make individuals interested and want to be a part of it.

Mayor McDonough handed out 2017 budget information to those in attendance. The budget has increased slightly, \$29 per household assessed at \$300,000 and \$19 per household assessed at \$200,000. The Construction Office will become part of the Department of Community Affairs and they will run the Hope Construction Department. Permit fees will go directly to the State and there will be no expense to the township.

Paving will be conducted on Route 521 from the blinking light to Blirstown. All four ramps at Route 80 interchange will be paved using anti-friction material and will be closed at night; State Police will monitor project. All ramps now have stop signs installed, the most important being the one towards Blirstown onto Route 521.

Mr. Tom Gabel informed the Committee about the Ash trees and their proximity to the roads. The Ash trees are dying due to Emerald Ash Borer and this will need to be considered and addressed in the next couple of years.

Upcoming Events:

10th Annual Parade – April 22nd

Grange Easter Egg Hunt – April 8th at Swayze Mill

Green Fair – April 8th

Fishing Derby – May 21st

Clean Up – May 8th-13th

On behalf of the Committee, Mayor McDonough thanked all for their attendance and participation.

Seeing there was no other business for tonight, this meeting of the Hope Township Committee was adjourned at 10:50 a.m. on a **motion** made by Committeeman Kruk, seconded by Committeeman Beatty. In a voice vote, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith M. Fisher RMC
Municipal Clerk