

**MINUTES
HOPE TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
REORGANIZATION MEETING
FEBRUARY 5, 2024**

The reorganization and business meeting of the Hope Township Planning Board was held on Monday, February 5, 2024. Attorney Roger Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced that notice of the meeting was given in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act – This meeting has been advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.” He then led the Board in the pledge to the flag.

Swearing in of Board Members:

Attorney Thomas administered the oath of office to Donna Marie and Matt Koski.

Roll Call:

Members present: Brad Bartow, John Koonz, Matthew Koski, Steve Larena, Timothy McDonough, Donna Marie, Robert May, Terry Urfer.

Members absent: Chris Maier and Betsy Peterson.

Also Present: Attorney Roger Thomas and Board Secretary Robin Keggan.

Reorganization:

Election of Chairman

Attorney Thomas called for a nomination for Chairman. Mr. Bartow made the motion to nominate Steve Larena for Chairman. Motion seconded by Mr. Koonz. With there being no further nominations, the nominations were closed. In a roll call vote, all were in favor of nominating Steve Larena as Chairman, with Mr. Larena abstaining.

Election of Vice Chairman

Chairman Larena called for a nomination for Vice Chairman. Mr. Koonz made a motion to nominate Mr. May. Motion was seconded by Mr. Koski. With there being no further nominations, the nominations were closed. In a roll call vote, all were in favor of nominating Robert May as Vice Chairman, with Mr. May abstaining.

Appointment of Board Professionals:

The Planning Board professionals of Roger Thomas, Board attorney; French & Parrello, Board Engineers, Heyer and Gruel and the Board Secretary, Robin Keggan, were re-appointed to their positions on the Planning Board by a consent agenda motion, which included adoption of the Resolution naming Board Professionals, made by Mr. Urfer and seconded by Mr. Koonz. In a roll call vote, all members were in favor of retaining the Board professionals.

Designation of Meeting Dates, Time, Place/ Adoption of the Official Newspaper

The Resolution was distributed to all Board members with the dates and time (7:00 PM) for meetings to be held at the Hope Township Municipal Building, 407 Hope-Great Meadows Road, Hope Township, Warren County, NJ unless designated/advertised and announced elsewhere. The official newspapers being the same as the Governing Body: the NJ Herald and the Express Times-NJ Zone edition. A discussion and roll call vote took place regarding changing the time of the meetings to commence at 6:30 PM, ending promptly by 9:30 PM.

Mr. Urfer made the motion to designate the Date, Time (being moved to 6:30PM) and Place as distributed and to designate the NJ Herald and the Express Times NJ Zone edition for the publication of legal notices and to receive notices pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, the same as the Governing Body. Motion seconded by Mr. May. In a roll call vote of: Mr. Bartow – no; Mr. Koonz – no; Mr. Koski – no; Mayor McDonough – yes; Ms. Marie – yes; Mr. May – yes; Mr. Urfer – yes; Chairman Larena – yes; the motion passed to change the start time of the meetings to 6:30, ending promptly by 9:30. All dates were accepted, noting that July is always a tricky meeting if we hold one due to the holiday, but that will be dealt with if necessary. The Secretary will amend the Resolution to reflect the new start time.

Correspondence:

Correspondences from various professionals and organizations were noted, those being: Reviews of the BWC Trout, LLC application submitted by Stefanie Williams, FPA and Megan Stanley, Heyer Gruel; a letter from the County re: NJ Realty Group dated December 21, 2023; the Warehouse Zoning Analysis prepared by Heyer Gruel; a memo from the POP Zone Subcommittee and correspondence dated January 12, 2024 from Stefanie Williams, FPA to George Boesze and copied to Board professionals and applicant St. John the Baptist's attorney.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of November 6, 2023 were distributed prior to the Board meeting. Mr. Bartow made the motion to adopt the minutes. Motion seconded by Mr. May. In a voice vote, all were in favor of adopting the minutes, except for Mr. Koonz and Mayor McDonough, who were not present at the November meeting and abstained.

Unfinished Business:

An update and discussion on the work that the POP Zone Subcommittee has been working on was had. Mr. Urfer and Mayor McDonough advised the Board members that a rough draft ordinance was being prepared by Township attorney Michael Selvaggi at this time, incorporating all of the thoughts, definitions, etc. that the Township Committee and Planning Board felt necessary to be put into the ordinance. Once that draft comes back to the Committee, they will review it for content to ensure that it meets the criteria given to Mr. Selvaggi. Mr. Bartow noted that he wanted to be sure that the Planning Board members were all given the chance to look over the ordinance again to ensure that it meets

the approval of the Board and he was given the assurance that that will be the case. Mr. Koonz noted that he thought it was a good idea to have the attorney and/or other Board professionals come up with the definition of “warehouse” so that if something were to come of it down the road, they would feel comfortable defending the Township’s position. Mr. Urfer and Mayor McDonough stated that that is why the Township attorney is currently involved and that is the Committee’s intention.

Chairman Larena noted that perhaps Mr. Selvaggi could attend a Planning Board meeting if the second ordinance draft does not meet the requirements of the Board in order for him to have a clear understanding of what the Board is asking to be put into the ordinance. Ms. Marie noted that the more work the subcommittee can do the better in order to not have to pay Board professionals for this work. Ultimately, once the ordinance is written and approved by the Committee and Planning Board, it will be passed on to the Board Planner for review.

Other Business:

Michael Starcev was in attendance regarding the St. John the Baptist application. Mr. Thomas discussed the various items that the Board engineer pointed out in her letter addressed to the Hope Township zoning official and copied to the applicant’s attorney and Board professionals in order to give Mr. Starcev a clear understanding of what must be done moving forward. Ms. Williams noted several discrepancies in place that varied from the approved site plan and Resolution for this application. Ultimately, the applicant will need to have discussions with their own professionals to determine the manner in which they will proceed. If they intend to leave the items addressed in the letter as is, they will need to submit new site plans to the Board and also possible go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. If they rectify the discrepancies to come into compliance with the approved as-builts and Resolution, then any further Board appearances may not be necessary. At this juncture, the Planning Board is not in a position to give a Certificate of Approval to this application.

Mr. Rogers and Mr. Urfer both also noted that perhaps it would be a good idea for the Township to reorganize the Zoning Board of Adjustment due to this development. Mayor McDonough agreed that that should be done and the Secretary will reach out to set up a reorganization meeting for them. Mayor McDonough noted that the ultimate goal is to still merge into a Land Use Board, but that may not occur until later in the year or possibly next year. He would like the members of both Boards to attend a meeting and give their thoughts on the idea of the Boards merging.

Bills:

French & Parrello	
Re: BWC Trout LLC (12/1/2023)	\$4,314.75
Re: BWC Trout LLC (1/19/2024)	\$ 369.00
Re: St. John the Baptist (1/19/2024)	\$ 399.75
Re: St. John the Baptist (12/1/2023)	\$ 369.00
Dolan & Dolan	
Re: BWC Trout LLC (11/27/2023)	\$ 687.50

Re: BWC Trout LLC (1/30/2024)	\$ 662.79
Heyer, Gruel & Associates	
Re: BWC Trout LLC (11/1/2023)	\$ 540.00
Re: BWC Trout LLC (12/1/2023)	\$1,552.50

Mr. Urfer made the motion to approve the vouchers/bills for St. John the Baptist. Motion seconded by Mr. Bartow. In a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Mr. Urfer made a motion to table the vouchers/bills submitted for BWC Trout, LLC due to there not being enough members in attendance that could vote on them due to the many recusals of members on the Board pertaining to this application. The motion was seconded by Mr. May and by roll call vote all were in favor.

Open to the Public:

Chairman Larena opened the meeting to the public. Mr. Iulo mentioned that he had read the Master Plan and would like to know when the work on that will begin. The Board noted that work is just beginning on that, and there will be many open meetings for the public to give their thoughts and comments on the work to be done. He also questioned the banning of warehouses for the time being until and appropriate ordinance can be written, to which it was made known that the Planning Board could not and would not be able to do so due to the fact that the ordinances are what guide and enforce those types of things, you cannot just vocalize that you are banning something without the proper ordinance to go in place.

Adjournment:

With there being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Bartow and seconded by Mr. Koonz to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 pm, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted:

Robin L. Keggan
Board Secretary