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UPPER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2024 – 7:00 PM

*This meeting was held in person and live streamed through the Upper Mount Bethel Township Facebook page.

I.

Supervisor Bermingham called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance were Supervisor Bermingham, Supervisor Friedman, Supervisor Eckman, Supervisor Albert, Township Solicitor Karasek, Township Manager Graziano, and Recording Secretary Cindy Beck.

II.

APPROVE THE AGENDA

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to Approve the Agenda, seconded by Supervisor Eckman. Vote: 4-0.

III.

OPEN SUPERVISOR SEAT-APPLICANT INTERVIEWS

Supervisor Bermingham thanked the applicants for their interest in filling the open seat that was previously held by David Due, who resigned. The candidate that is selected will hold the Supervisor seat for the remainder of David's term, 12/31/2025.

Supervisor Bermingham asked Solicitor Karasek to go over what kind of acceptable questions for the candidates should be. The questions should be centered upon their qualifications, and what they hope to accomplish if selected. Personal questions should not be asked.

Supervisor Bermingham stated that each Supervisor will have the opportunity to ask a question to an individual candidate or for all the candidates. Each candidate will have the opportunity to ask each Supervisor a question. After the interviews are completed, each candidate will have the opportunity to give a final closing statement. Supervisor

Birmingham stated that at that point, he will open it for public comment and asks that public comment pertain to the interviews or the candidates.

1) Supervisor Birmingham's first question is for all the candidates: Why would you want to be appointed a Supervisor of Upper Mount Bethel Township?

Michael Onufrak- Michael stated that because of the lack of transparency, and the inability of the Supervisors to listen to the members of the community. If appointed, I would truly do my best to answer any questions and address the needs of the residents.

Virgil Kasebier-Virgil stated that he has been out of the loop for some time and now would like to get back into it.

Jonathan Erler- Jonathan stated that transparency is important, listening to the residents, accounting, and budgeting, which he could greatly assist with.

Joe Torre-Joe stated that leadership, being a team player, and working together on a solution are his strengths.

Augie Percoco- Augie stated his strengths are strategic planning, budgeting, deal making, cooperation, and listening to the people.

2) Supervisor Eckman's first question is for Michael, Jonathan, and Joe: What brought to Upper Mount Bethel Township?

Michael stated that after looking at multiple properties, they finally ended up in Upper Mount Bethel, it reminded him of where he grew up on Long Island, open space, farmland and a beautiful community.

Jonathan stated that after vacationing in the Saddle Creek area, he decided to move here, he is a very nature-oriented person, and this area was a place where he is in his element.

Joe stated he moved here because it's beautiful, a little piece of heaven.

3) Supervisor Friedman's first question is for all the candidates: What specific thing, as a candidate/supervisor, would you like to be a proponent of and specific thing you'd like to see the Board as a whole do?

Augie stated that he would look at the decisions we make and the impact on the community, mostly from fiscal responsibility, and negotiating contracts.

Joe stated that he agreed with Manager Graziano last week in regard to needing a loader and if appointed, he would like to discuss that more.

Jonathan stated that he would like to see the Board follow through with their promise to be transparent. Jonathan would like to see the Township a more self-sufficient/green environment.

Virgil stated that the first thing he would like to see is a new building.

Michael stated that he would like to see the Board bringing in someone with expertise in a certain area and talk to them. The Board needs to work together.

4) Supervisor Albert's first question is for all the candidates. In your opinion, what is your idea of the balance between sustainable industry and conserving and preserving open space?

Augie stated that we need a balance. We have a lot of open space. There is one area that is dedicated to industrial development. Warehouse space goes for a lot less than industrial space. It's about what is going in and what the impact is going to be. The Township needs ratables. 80% of the Township doesn't pay full tax base, which puts the burden on people who have houses. Negotiating with Mr. Pektor may be required to make sure he understands what the Township needs.

Joe stated he is not for progress but if it means bringing in sustainable jobs for our community, he would be in favor of it. Use of the railroad, not tying up the roads. The Township needs to come up with a solution and a stipulation could possibly be put in place that 75% of the community gets the opportunity for employment first.

Jonathan stated that for sustainable industry he would be more advantageous to go for mom and pops shops, community bread and butter stores. If going green could be profitable, that is something he would look for. If the businesses that do come in and produce jobs for the community, that would benefit the Township.

Virgil stated that we do need more businesses here to keep up with the neighboring municipalities. We have a lot of preserved land.

Michael stated that this is a rural area and would like to keep it as rural as possible. He is not in favor of getting rid of farms. Look at the Township Zoning map, is there another area where commercial development could be. All the buildings proposed are large enough to be warehouses, not manufacturing. The Board will need to decide, what do we want and where do we want it.

Supervisor Bermingham's next question is for all the candidates. What are the three most important things a local government should be responsible for?

Jonathan stated 1) managing the budget, 2) listening to residents' concerns/issues, and 3) maintaining the Township's overall health. It is the Board's responsibility to re-analyze what they are doing, what the people want them to do.

Joe stated 1) safety, 2) keep as rural as possible, and 3) he would like to see everyone get along.

Augie stated 1) fiscal responsibility/managing the budget, 2) accessibility, taking care of the roads, and 3) safety, fire and ambulance services.

Michael stated 1) managing the budget, 2) safety, and 3) community involvement.

Virgil stated 1) safety, 2) roads 3) infrastructure.

Supervisor Bermingham called for a recess at 8:05 pm.

The meeting reconvened at 8:13 pm.

Supervisor Bermingham wanted to thank the volunteer fire departments for working on getting trees out of harm's way throughout the Township and for opening the Fire House as a warming station. Also, a thank you to ladies' auxiliary, the road crew, and to Township Manager Graziano.

Supervisor Bermingham stated he will now give each candidate the opportunity to ask two questions to the Board.

Augie asked, "What are you looking for in a Supervisor"?

Supervisor Friedman stated one who has the best interest in the Township in mind. Supervisor Eckman and Albert stated basically the same thing, as long as we can all work together for the best interest of the Township. Supervisor Bermingham stated that they all might not agree on everything but that doesn't mean they can't communicate with each other, transparency and working together.

Joe didn't have a question but wanted to speak about transparency, honesty, and trustworthiness. Can I trust you? Because you can trust me, I have nothing to hide. I give you my honor, I will work with you.

Jonathan asked newly elected Supervisors Eckman, Albert and Friedman, "what is one thing you did not expect when you took the role of Supervisor"?

Supervisor Friedman responded the amount of time involved and paperwork. Supervisor Eckman responded there's a lot of emails and reading and having more time/freedom to be available when a resident needs something. Supervisor Albert responded that we are the caretakers of the taxpayers' monies, so with every decision we make, we have to have the taxpayers in mind.

Jonathan asked Supervisor Bermingham "is it more difficult leading green other, is it easier moving forward with a council that doesn't know everything just yet, or is it easier to be a member with council that has a lot more knowledge or maybe a little bit stronger minded?"

Supervisor Bermingham responded by saying there are pros and cons to both, knowing there's new set of eyes, fresh ideas, and if you have a seasoned, knowledgeable, individuals, you might have so many different directions, but I am excited about this government right now, we all want what's best for the Township.

Virgil did not have any questions.

Michael asked about the wastewater drip irrigation field on that farm, in his back yard and is curious to hear how the Board feels about that.

Supervisor Eckman responded saying she lives on Potomac St and would like to see everyone in that area protected and to make sure whatever is the right thing is what I would support.

Supervisor Friedman responded saying he does not feel it should go there, but it is up to Zoning Hearing Board.

Michael responded saying he doesn't think it can be put there but whatever pressure could be put on the zoning officer, I think it would be beneficial. Michael's second question is in regard to the Act 537 Plan and it is his understanding the plan was 1990 and is there any idea of how we are moving forward with it. If possible, can the new Board approach Portland about hooking up those homes on Rt. 611 that have an issue.

Supervisor Friedman stated that Portland will not work with UMBT without a 537 Plan.

Supervisor Eckman stated that working with neighboring communities is a good start.

Supervisor Bermingham asked the candidates if they had any final statement.

Virgil Kasebier stated he knows this place extremely well, every road, every bridge, every bordering municipality.

Jonathan Erler stated it is going to take a while to get the town cleaned up and to make us into a nice quiet town again and get it back to a smaller government.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Fred Clark, Crystal Terr., stated he would like to see a new Supervisor that is willing to listen to the concerns of people they may not like or don't agree with. You may learn something you didn't know. A true leader would be willing to talk, choose a true leader.

Eleanor Shelton, Heiden Rd., stated that looking at the candidates, she sees businessmen, financial, green, knowledge of the Township and if even if you don't get selected, she would like to see them engage in some other manner or committee.

Judith Henckel, Robin Hood Rd., commented on the variety of expertise she sees in the candidates. Can we cut back on our needs, be more conservative. Working and planning together with our neighboring communities.

Ron Angle, Million Dollar Hwy, quoted John Adams-two-party system in democracy, concerned citizens and the rest of the Township, and until this mentality changes, the Township is not going to change, there is room for everyone here.

Marty Pinter, Lindsey Lane, commented on a book he read by Doris Kearns Goodwin, a book about President Lincoln filling his cabinet with all his foes, the best way to move forward was to get those folks talking back and forth. You are going to need strong shoulders, because if you make a decision that the affirmation folks do not like, you will be chum in the water.

Ron Angle stated that recently there was a vote taken not to pursue an accounting and legal action against a resident who allegedly didn't account for money and the Board decided that it wasn't worth spending the money to bring that person to justice for the missing money. Now there is another situation in the Township with money missing.

Frances Visicaro, N. Delaware Dr., thanked all the candidates and hopes all if not appointed that they would consider joining another committee to help the town come together and heal.

Recess to Executive Session at 8:52 pm to discuss legal and personnel matters.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting reconvened at 9:30 pm.

Supervisor Bermingham stated discussed in Executive Session was a legal matter and no action will be taken at this time. And there was a discussion on personnel matters regarding the candidates and no action will be taken at this time.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 pm, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Beck-Recording Secretary

Public Comment

Fred Clark, Crystal Terr.

Thank you to all of the candidates for stepping up, there is a lot of talent here. I would like to see a new Supervisor that is willing to listen to the concerns of the people they don't agree with or even like. You might learn something you didn't know, or your position is strengthened. I have talked to people on both sides of the RPL issue and what concerns me is both sides aren't even willing to try because they believe no middle ground can be found. A true leader would be willing to talk. It is my hope that you choose a true leader in this process.

