

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
MEETING – February 3, 2025**

Mayor Mueller *calls the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.* announcing that all laws governing the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting has been duly advertised.

PRESENT: Mayor A. Mueller, Deputy Mayor V. Panico, Mr. J. Albanese, Mr. J. Heller, and Mr. J. Huelsebusch

ALSO PRESENT: Administrator R. Sheola, Municipal Clerk K. Parker, Attorney C. Corsini

ABSENT: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Clerk read the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION
EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et seq.*, the Open Public Meetings Act, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist and desires to authorize the exclusion of the public from the portion of the meeting in accordance with the act;

NOW, THERFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Readington, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of and action upon the specified subject matter as set forth in the following Exhibit “A.”

EXHIBIT A

<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Basis Of Public Exclusion</u>	<u>Date Anticipated When Disclosed to Public</u>
Administration	Personnel	Certain information at the discretion of Township Committee tonight.... other .
Police Department	Personnel	“ “ “
Readington Library	Personnel	“ “ “
Department of Public Works	Personnel	“ “ “
ECHO UNIT (Block 13, Lot 25)	Contract Negotiations.....	“ “ “
Shared Services Agreement	Contract Negotiations	“ “ “
(County of Hunterdon – Gasoline)		
Shared Services Agreement	Contract Negotiations	“ “ “
(County of Somerset – DPW)		
Block 46, Lot 6 (Dowling / Volk).....	Contract Negotiations	“ “ “
Block 1, Lot 1 & Block 3, Lot 1),,,.....	Contract Negotiations	“ “ “
(SQ Properties LLC)		

Executive Session Minutes..... Attorney-Client Privilege..... “ “ “
• January 21, 2025
• January 29, 2025

Affordable Housing..... Potential Litigation..... “ “ “

It is anticipated at this time that the stated subject matter will be made public on or about the time set forth in Exhibit “A.”

2. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to adopt this resolution, seconded by Mr. Albanese with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

The meeting reconvened at 7:30 p.m.

Mayor Mueller led those present in the *Salute to the Flag*.

Executive Session:

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to amend the executive session agenda to add *Litigation / 388 Readington Realty Holdings LLC and Contract Negotiations / Construction Project*, seconded by Mr. Albanese with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Personnel / Administration

Administrator Rich Sheola gave a summary of his career and announced that he will be resigning from his position as Township Administrator. The Committee members thanked him for his service and wished him the best in his future endeavors.

Mr. Heller expressed his disappointment that the information was received late in the day today.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to accept the resignation and consulting agreement for Richard Sheola, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

- Mr. Albanese -Aye
- Mr. Heller - Nay
- Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
- Mr. Panico - Abstain
- Mayor Mueller - Aye

Personnel / Police Department

The following resolution was offered for consideration:

#R-2025-53

TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON

HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

WHEREAS, the Readington Police Department had a vacancy in the rank of Chief of Police; and

WHEREAS, the Police Department, in order to maintain a chain of command, there must be a senior command officer in charge of the daily operations of the Department; and

WHEREAS, the Township Administrator as Appropriate Authority has appointed Lt William DuFosse’ as Officer in Charge, effective February 1, 2025 for a period of six months, not to extend past August 1, 2025; and

Resolution #R-2025-53 cont'd:

WHEREAS, in recognition of the additional responsibilities as Officer in Charge, the Township Committee hereby increases Lt. William DuFosse's salary by an additional \$1,500.00 per month as a stipend effective February 1, 2025;

BE IT RESOLVED, this Resolution shall confirm the adjustment of Lt William DuFosse's salary as per the above.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to adopt this resolution, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

- Mr. Albanese -Aye
- Mr. Heller - Aye
- Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
- Mr. Panico - Aye
- Mayor Mueller - Aye

Personnel / Readington Library

Mayor Mueller stated that the Whitehouse Library will be closed on Thursdays due to staffing shortages.

Personnel / Department of Public Works

The following resolution was offered for consideration:

#R-2025-54

RESOLUTION APPOINTING LABORER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - BRAGGER

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Works – Buildings & Grounds has a vacancy for a Maintenance Worker -1 position; and

WHEREAS, the Department has posted the vacancy internally; and

WHEREAS, there were a number of applications and after interviews with the Director of Public Works, Assistant Director of Public Works and Township Administrator, it is the recommendation to hire Daniel Bragger as Maintenance Worker - 1 for the Department of Public Works in accordance with the contract in place at this time, effective February 4, 2025; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Readington Township to hire Daniel Bragger as Maintenance Worker-1 for the Department of Public Works – Buildings & Grounds contingent upon successful completion of the requisite pre-employment physical.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to adopt this resolution, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

- Mr. Albanese -Aye
- Mr. Heller - Aye
- Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
- Mr. Panico - Aye
- Mayor Mueller - Aye

Contract Negotiations / ECHO Unit (Block 13, Lot 25)

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

Contract Negotiations / Shared Services Agreement / County of Hunterdon (Gasoline)

A ***MOTION*** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the shared services agreement with the County of Hunterdon as a backup fuel source, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese -Aye
Mr. Heller - Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
Mr. Panico - Aye
Mayor Mueller - Aye

Contract Negotiations / Shared Services Agreement (Somerset County DPW)

A ***MOTION*** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the shared services agreement with Somerset County Department of Public Works for mutual use of equipment and personnel as needed, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese -Aye
Mr. Heller - Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
Mr. Panico - Aye
Mayor Mueller - Aye

Contract Negotiations / Block 46, Lot 6 (Dowling/Volk)

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

Contract Negotiations / Block 1, Lot 1 and Block 3, Lot 1 (SQ Properties LLC)

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

Attorney-Client Privilege / Executive Session Minutes / January 21, 2025

A ***MOTION*** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 21, 2025 for content only, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Attorney-Client Privilege / Executive Session Minutes / January 29, 2025

A ***MOTION*** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 29, 2025 for content only, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Potential Litigation / Affordable Housing

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

Litigation / 388 Readington Realty Holdings LLC

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

Contract Negotiations / Construction Project

Mayor Mueller stated that this matter remains in Executive Session.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Mueller read the following statement:

All items listed with an asterisk "" are considered to be routine by the Township Committee and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a committee member or citizen requests, in which event the item will be removed from the General Order of Business and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.*

Mayor Mueller requested to remove *Item #1* from the Consent Agenda.

1. * **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** of meetings of January 21 and January 29 (2025)
2. * ***State of NJ Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program Enabling Resolution for Supplemental Funding Request – Amended***

The following resolution was offered for consideration:

#R-2025-55

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
GREEN ACRES PROGRAM**

ENABLING RESOLUTION for SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program (“State”), provides loans and/or grants to municipal and county governments and grants to nonprofit organizations for assistance in the acquisition and development of lands for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Readington has previously obtained Green Acres loans of \$3,250,000 and Green Acres grants of \$8,525,000 from the State to fund the following project(s):

#1022-96-066 Greenway Planning Incentive; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Readington desires to further the public interest by requesting an additional Green Acres grant of **\$1,183,000** to fund the project(s); and

WHEREAS, the State shall determine if the supplemental funding request is complete and in conformance with the scope and intent of the Green Acres Program, and notify the applicant of the amount of the awarded funding; and

WHEREAS, the applicant is willing to use the State’s funds in accordance with its rules, regulations, and applicable statutes, and is willing to enter into an Amendment of the Agreement with the State for the above-named project;

WHEREAS, on January 21st, 2025, the Township adopted Resolution #R-2025-39, for the supplemental funding request from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for a grant request of \$1,000,000;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Township Committee rescind Resolution R-2025-39.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Readington does hereby authorizes the following action:

1. Adam Mueller or the successor to the office of Mayor is hereby authorized to:
 - (a) request such a loan and/or such a grant,
 - (b) provide additional information and furnish such documents as may be required, and
 - (c) act as the authorized correspondent of the above-named applicant; and
2. The applicant agrees to provide the local government/nonprofit share if a match is required.
3. The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations in its performance of the project.
4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

3. * *Release of Security Deposit (Netflix Productions)*

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the Consent Agenda (with the removal of item #1), seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese -Aye
Mr. Heller - Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch - Aye
Mr. Panico - Aye
Mayor Mueller - Aye

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC for items listed on the agenda only

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE / OTHER INFORMATION

1. Memorandum dated January 15, 2025 from Jennifer Ader, Municipal Clerk of Tewksbury Township, in the matter of a **Resolution Expressing the Support of the Township Committee of the Township of Tewksbury for H.R. 4333 and Senate Bill No. 1631**. No action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Request from Raritan Headwaters for a Clean Communities Contribution**

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to approve the \$1,000 contribution to Clean Communities, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese -Aye
Mr. Heller -Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch -Aye
Mr. Panico -Aye
Mayor Mueller - Aye

2. **Request to Waive Permit Fees for Food Trucks - email from Dr. Jonathan Hart, Readington Township Public School District**

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Panico to waive the food truck permit fees for the Readington Township Public School District, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese -Aye
Mr. Heller -Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch -Aye
Mr. Panico -Aye
Mayor Mueller - Aye

3. **Resolution Authorizing the Purchase of Pedestrian Activated, Solar Powered, LED Pedestrian Crossing Signs**

Mayor Mueller provided an overview of the safety improvement project along Main Street in Whitehouse Station.

The following resolution was offered for consideration:

#R-2025-56

**TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON
RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Township of Readington has 5 pedestrian crosswalks along Main Street in the Whitehouse section, and 2 crosswalks along Main Street in the Three Bridges section of the Township, and

WHEREAS, those 7 crosswalks have been identified for certain safety improvements;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Township Committee of Readington Township hereby authorizes the purchase of pedestrian activated, solar powered, LED pedestrian crossing signs and associated hardware from National Highway Products, Inc. in the amount of \$42,087.22. Furthermore, the Township Committee would like to thank the Hunterdon County Commissioners for funding this initiative through an infrastructure grant supported by the American Rescue Plan Act.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Mueller to adopt this resolution, seconded by Mr. Panico and on Roll Call vote the following was recorded:

Mr. Albanese	-Aye
Mr. Heller	- Aye
Mr. Huelsebusch	- Aye
Mr. Panico	- Aye
Mayor Mueller	- Aye

4.* State of NJ Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program Enabling Resolution for Supplemental Funding Request – Amended

This matter was addressed under the Consent Agenda.

5. * Release of Security Deposit (Netflix Productions)

This matter was addressed under the Consent Agenda.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Administrator Sheola stated that he had nothing further to report.

ATTORNEY’S REPORT

Attorney Corsini stated that he had nothing further to report.

ENGINEER’S REPORT

Engineer O’Brien reported that surveying work on Pulaski Road Section 4 is scheduled for the week of February 17. He also stated that he submitted the list of 2025 road improvements to the Administrator for review. Additionally, he noted that the Department of Public Works evaluated the portable flow meters used by Lebanon Borough but does not recommend their use, so they will explore alternative options. Lastly, he discussed the Watershed Improvement Plan, which is due by January 1, 2026.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

JOHN ALBANESE

Mr. Albanese reported that the social services office was able to provide gifts to 207 individuals this holiday season through donations from the Community.

Mr. Albanese reported that the social services office provided gifts to 207 individuals this holiday season, thanks to donations from the community.

JONATHAN HELLER

Mr. Heller stated that he had nothing further to report.

JUERGEN HUELSEBUSCH

Mr. Huelsebusch requested approval to retain NJ Conservation Foundation to prepare project reference maps for the Green Acres pre appraisal fact sheet and noted that a cost proposal would be submitted at the next meeting.

ADAM MUELLER

Mayor Mueller reported that Three Bridges Fire has a new chief, Justin Pickett, and emphasized the need for volunteers across all emergency services. He also stated that more information will be provided regarding the budget schedule and shared services offered by the County.

VINCENT PANICO

Deputy Mayor Panico reported that the Museums will hold their Reorganization on February 6, and book lockers will soon be installed at the Whitehouse Library. He also noted that middle school civics students will create messages for the police signboard for Super Bowl Sunday.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Rene Rao thanked Administrator Sheola for his service and asked about the locations for the LED crosswalk signs on Main Street.

COMMENTS FROM THE GOVERNING BODY

Mr. Heller and Mr. Albanese discussed using Open Space Trust Funds for essential repairs to Township-owned buildings and historical structures. The Committee considered other options, including a potential referendum in the November election and the possibility of securing additional grants. The Township Attorney was asked to conduct a legal review of the fund's allowable uses for further discussion at the next meeting.

As there was no further business, ***A MOTION*** was made by Mr. Panico at 8:25 p.m. to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Huelsebusch with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Submitted by:

Karin M Parker, *RMC*
Municipal Clerk