

# Hopewell Township Finance Advisory Committee

Municipal Building Court Room  
April 18, 2016

Chairman Welsh called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Members Present:** Welsh, Robinson, Botero

**Members Absent:** Colina, Sauer, Downey, Guleria (Alternate)

**Staff Present:** Borges

**HTC Liaisons Present:** Kuchinski, Brant

**Presenters:** Health Officer Robert English, Police Chief Lance Maloney

## **Prior Minutes**

No prior minutes were available for review. Unreviewed minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

## **Ordinance Amending Fees**

The Committee was provided with copies of a recently passed ordinance amending and supplementing Chapter III, "Law Enforcement," Section 3-1., "Penalty" of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of Hopewell. (See copy attached hereto.) Mayor Kuchinski indicated that the ordinance was based on repeat offenders, and the amount of time spent by the Health and Police Departments on them. The amendment allows for an additional fine (up to \$2,000) for repeat offenders, that fine being calculated separately from the fine (up to \$2000) imposed for the violation of the ordinance itself.

Mr. English spoke to the Committee regarding the issues he has with vacant/foreclosed properties, especially related to the maintenance of those properties. While owners/lenders will pay the taxes on a property so that it does not go to tax sale, they often do not provide for regular maintenance, such as lawn and tree care, gutter cleaning, preventing general deterioration, etc. Due to the health hazards involved (ticks, solid waste, mosquitoes, rodents, etc.), the Township is forced to maintain many of these properties. The Township currently has 40 properties in foreclosure, and 30 that are vacant. Of these current properties, 20 will result in action.

Mayor Kuchinski indicated that this ordinance is a first step in putting teeth into preventing repeat offenders, but that there may be more to do. Mr. English indicated that he spends 20% of his time dealing with the vacant properties, and that a good

portion of the Health Department's budget is spent on lawn/tree maintenance, and securing of structures on these properties, some of which the Township has maintained for five or six years. Mr. English provided an overview of the process initiated when a resident reports an abandoned property, including the violations reports, the notices, and often the summonses, all of which must take place prior to Mr. English taking action on the property (boarding up, lawn maintenance, etc.) Mr. English also discussed liens, each of which requires action by the HT Committee.

Mr. English then spoke to fees for registering a vacant parcel in relation to his department's time spent, and a fee for failure to register such a parcel – in draft stage at this time.

Chairman Welsh thanked Mr. English for his time and presentation.

### **Police Department Fees**

Chief Maloney distributed and presented a document regarding proposed fee changes by the Police Department as follows:

#### **New Fees:**

1. Amend ordinance and initiate a fee to register an alarm system with the police department.
2. Amend ordinance and initiate an application fee for wrecker companies when they apply to be on the approved wrecker rotation list.
3. Amend ordinance and initiate a yearly fee for wrecker companies to remain on the towing rotation list.
4. Amend Deer Management Hunting Permit fee to cover the safety training presentation given by police officer(s) at Deer Management meetings. Increase by \$5.00 per applicant.
5. Initiate a fee for "Letters of Good Standing", etc. (This is not to be confused with Records checks.) Suggested cost: \$5.00 per request.

#### **Increase Fees:**

1. Amend ordinance and increase fee for solicitor's permit application to \$25.00 per application.

#### **Fines:**

1. Amend ordinance and initiate fines for burglar alarms beginning with the 3<sup>rd</sup> false alarm during the calendar year. Currently, summonses aren't issued until the 6<sup>th</sup> false burglar alarm.

All items were discussed, with Chief Maloney providing detail for each. During discussion of Letters of Good Standing (#5 under "New Fees" above), all three members of the FAC indicated that they felt a fee of \$10 would be more appropriate

given the cost involved in issuing such a letter. Regarding the increase to \$25 for a solicitor's permit application fee (under "Increase Fees" above), the FAC indicated that they definitely wished to explore that item further. Chairman Welsh thanked Chief Maloney for his time and presentation, and indicated that the FAC would review the document further, and perform some additional work, such as benchmarking, for the next meeting.

## **Grants**

Ms. Borges distributed a spreadsheet of grants received within the last five years. Ms. Borges reported that she and Mr. Pogorzelski had met with grant writers earlier that day, where they had reviewed the "hot" grants, for which we had either applied, or had no reasonable chance of getting. Ms. Borges noted that we just secured a 2016 DOT grant for \$270K, which will go toward our road program. There was a brief discussion regarding Federal grants, and the onerous requirements that often accompany them.

## **Capital Budget**

Chairman Welsh asked if a Capital Budget history, which had been requested, was ready yet. Ms. Borges indicated that Mr. Pogorzelski had asked the Department heads to send in a report by April 28. Mr. Welsh indicated that the capital budget would be a good topic for the next FAC meeting, so that a multi-year vision which takes into account asset lives could be established in an effort to eliminate "emergencies". Ms. Borges said she will check on the status of those reports.

## **Bulky Waste**

Mayor Kuchinski indicated that he would like the FAC to re-examine the Township's bulky waste program, and to review alternatives. There was brief discussion of possibilities, and the item was added to the FAC's review list.

## **Debt**

Mayor Kuchinski indicated that the Township's debt service is currently 24% of the budget, whereas the League of Municipalities recommends a rate of between 10 and 15% of the operating budget. The mayor pointed out that the 24% this year is down from a previous 26%. Ms. Borges indicated that Princeton has a "Debt and Surplus Policy", which discusses different ratios, different levels, etc., developed in conjunction with a company called Phoenix Advisors. Ms. Borges offered to reach out to Anthony Inverso, of Phoenix, and Mayor Kuchinski offered to ask the League of Municipalities for any additional specifics that may be helpful. The FAC expressed support for these steps.

## **Public Session**

Chairman Welsh opened the meeting to the public. As no members of the public came forward, Chairman Welsh closed the public comment section.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee is scheduled for Monday, May 16, at 7:00 pm.

## **Adjournment**

A motion was made for adjournment by Mr. Botero, seconded by Mr. Welsh, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Robinson, Alt. Rec. Secretary  
HT Finance Advisory Committee.

TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL  
MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND SUPPLEMENT  
CHAPTER III, "LAW ENFORCEMENT," SECTION 3-1.,  
"PENALTY" OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF  
THE TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL

Explanation: Material Bracketed [ ] is deleted  
Material Underlined \_\_\_\_\_ is added

BE IT ORDAINED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Hopewell, Mercer County, New Jersey that Chapter III, "Penalty," is hereby amended as follows:

3-1 PENALTY.

3-1.1 Maximum Penalty.

Any person who shall violate any provision of this Code or other ordinance of the township, where no specific penalty is provided regarding the section violated, shall, upon conviction thereof, be punishable by one or more of the following: a fine not exceeding two thousand (\$2,000.00) dollars or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 90 days or to a period of community service not exceeding 90 days at the discretion of the Judge of the Municipal Court. (N.J.S.A. 40:49-5) (New; Ord. #664-84, § I; Ord. #04-1318; Ord. #06-1371)

3-1.2 Separate Violations.

Except as otherwise provided every day in which a violation of any provision of this chapter or any other ordinance of the township exists shall constitute a separate violation. (New; Ord. #06-1371)

3-1.3 Repeat Offender

Any person, firm or corporation who is convicted of violating an ordinance within one year of the date of a previous violation of the same ordinance and who was convicted for the previous violation, may be sentenced by a court to an additional final as a repeat offender. The additional fine imposed by the court for a repeat offense shall not exceed the maximum fine as specified in Section 3-1.1 of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of Hopewell, but shall be calculated separately from the fine imposed for the violation of the ordinance.

[3-1.3] 3-1.4 Application.

The maximum penalty stated in this section is not intended to state an appropriate penalty for every violation. Any lesser penalty, including a nominal penalty or no penalty at all, may be appropriate for a particular case or violation. (New; Ord. #06-1371)

**[3-1.4] 3-1.5 Minimum Penalty.**

The township committee may prescribe that, for the violation of any particular Code provision or ordinance, at least a minimum penalty shall be imposed which shall consist of a fine which may be fixed at an amount not exceeding one hundred (\$100.00) dollars. (N.J.S.A. 40:49-5) (New; Ord. #06-1371)

**[3-1.5] 3-1.6 Housing and Zoning Code Violations.**

Whenever the municipality seeks to impose a fine greater than one thousand two hundred fifty (\$1,250.00) dollars upon an owner for violations of housing or zoning codes, the municipality shall provide a 30-day period within which the owner may cure or abate the condition as well as an opportunity for a hearing before a court of competent jurisdiction for an independent determination concerning the violation. After the end of the 30-day period, a fine greater than one thousand two hundred fifty (\$1,250.00) dollars may be imposed if a court has not determined otherwise or, upon reinspection of the property, it is determined that the abatement has not been substantially completed. (Ord. #06-1371)

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED** that this ordinance shall take effect upon final adoption and publication in accordance with law.

Date Introduced:

Date Advertised:

Date Adopted:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin D. Kuchinski  
Mayor

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laurie E. Gompf  
Municipal Clerk