

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Commercial, held on Monday, May 15, 2023, at 5:00 P.M., at the Township Hall, 1768 Main Street, Port Norris, NJ. The meeting was open to the public.

Those present:

Mike Vizzard	Mayor
Joseph Klaudi	Committeeman
Heather Miller	Township Clerk
Bill White	Construction Official
Derek Leary	Building Inspector
Stefanie Muessig	Housing Secretary, T/A

Mayor Vizzard called the meeting to order and announced that this special meeting has been advertised in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was sent to the South Jersey Times and The Daily Journal.

Mayor Vizzard- Announced that the meeting was called to discuss the filling of the vacant position of Housing/Zoning and Code Enforcement.

Mayor Vizzard- We are looking for a part time person for all three duties.

Derek Leary- Explained each job description and requirements for the job.

Zoning- zoning applications for buildings, building of decks. Enforcing municipality ordinances, your setbacks for building a house, deck or pool, things of that nature. Zoning signs off before any construction other than plumbing or electric. Change of use. Basically, before any change to the property. The State of NJ has a certificate for Zoning through Rutgers. Each town has different zoning ordinances. Candidate needs a general knowledge of zoning. Having the certification is preferred but is not required.

Housing inspector- will do CO inspections, rental inspections. Certification is required. Housing and multiple dwelling certs. Code official is also another certification you can have which would give you oversight of housing but that is not required.

Property Maintenance or Code Enforcement- Has to go to court, write up properties in bad shape, handle complaints. No specific certification is required.

Discussion ensued regarding the property maintenance issues in particular, the Laurel Lake part of the township. Squatters and campers were discussed.

Stefanie Muessig- Who ever we hire, they will need to bring Steve's ticket books back and get assigned new books.

Mayor Vizzard- The situation with the campers is part of the reason we originally made that position full time. We didn't think there would be enough time to handle that part time. I think we can work it out and at least start off part time. We can see who we get and re-evaluate it.

Derek Leary- Inquired as to how many hours the committee wants for the position.

Mayor Vizzard- 30 hours.

Derek Leary- So maybe 3 days a week. You could probably fill that with just property maintenance.

Stefanie Muessig- Zoning may only be one day, not even. Stefanie explained that Derek has been covering for zoning, so no one is being held up.

Clint Miller- What about court, what's going on with that.

Stefanie Muessig- Right now, court is postponed until we get somebody. As soon as we have someone, they will get their postponement date. They are aware of what's going on here.

Stefanie Muessig- Housing, we have a lot of rentals. In a week, I tried to give Steve at least 8 inspections in a week. We send the bills out in March, and they are due in September. The landlords that have a lot of rentals get in and get it taken care of quickly. It's the ones with only a few that forget. We have some that haven't paid in 7 years and no violations were sent. We send the notices but no tickets or nothing.

Mayor Vizzard- That's got to stop.

Derek Leary- There is a date when it is due. After that, late fees should kick in. Then it goes to tickets. They go to court, and they need to bring their rental registration. We don't allow them to leave until that is paid.

Stefanie Muessig- Right now, I have waived late fees because we don't have anyone, and I am not able to schedule the inspection. Bill is covering situations that are urgent like with new property sales.

There was a brief discussion on the remaining rentals that need to pay or be inspected and discussed getting the list of rentals cleaned up as they may have sold. Stefanie felt she probably had around 40 that still had not paid.

Stefanie Muessig- We could probably get a list of other properties that aren't registered as rentals that we get complaints on that people are living there and the owners live like in New York.

Mayor Vizzard- Lets get back to figuring out how we can get someone hired.

Derek Leary- What exactly are you hiring for.

Mayor Vizzard- We are looking for someone who can do everything part time.

Clint Miller- So we need to put an ad in the paper listing all the jobs and do we want to give two weeks? Then we can get them in for interviews.

Mayor Vizzard- If you guys know anyone who may be interested, get them to apply so we can look at them.

Stefanie Muessig- Who ever you get doing code enforcement, they will need to work Tuesdays for court.

The Clerk reiterated that the committee wants one part-time person to do all 3 duties.

Mayor Vizzard- Correct. Court is overtime, correct?

Stefanie Muessig- No court is Tuesday during the day. Steve would usually be back by lunchtime.

Derek Leary- It will depend on how many violations you have.

There was a brief discussion on the potential schedule for the new hire to incorporate Tuesdays for court.

Derek Leary- If it helps, I can do zoning on Mondays. It has to go through me and Bill anyway and I'm already in town on Mondays. Housing is time consuming with working in other towns.

Clint Miller- How much more time do you think it will add to your schedule.

Derek Leary- Based on what Stef is telling me, it doesn't sound like much. Maybe an additional 4-6 hours maybe.

Mayor Vizzard- With that being said, we don't need to look for anyone with zoning.

Derek Leary- If that's the direction you want to go. If you came to me and said listen Derek, we're taking zoning away from ya, I'm not gonna be mad at you. At least until you get someone in and acclimated. Zoning is probably one of the toughest.

Mayor Vizzard- We need to work out dates. It was determined that the application deadline will be June 1st. Interviews the following week, possibly 7th or 8th. Then officially hire at the June 15th meeting.

Derek Leary offered to provide job description and requirements for the advertisement.

Clint Miller- Offered to help with Code Enforcement if she needs information.

Stefanie Muessig- I've been working with Joe, if we have something that is bad, I can write a code violation notice using pictures. When we get someone, if it's been longer than the time given for the violations, they can go ahead and write a ticket.

Derek Leary- Your biggest problem is going to be property maintenance. It's a thorn in every town side.

Clint Miller- Dave was able to keep it under control but we have grown so much in rentals. One of the things I tried to tell Steve in the beginning, I know this place better than anyone, it does not work

going after the residents. You have to go after the homeowner. You will never get anywhere. These people do not care about going to court, paying a fine, that's if they do show up.

Bill White- They pay the \$100 rental fee and walk away.

Derek Leary- Your ordinance should state homeowner. It's his property and his business.

Stefanie Muessig- If it's a rental and we know it, we send notice to the property owner and tenant regular and certified mail.

Derek Leary- Asked about vacant properties.

Stefanie Muessig- We have 17 registered right now.

Derek Leary- Do you fine the ones that aren't registering?

Stefanie Muessig- I don't know how that is working now. We have removed some because they have sold. We have 17 left and 6 or 7 have paid this year.

A brief discussion ensued regarding vacant property registrations.

Mayor Vizzard- I appreciate all the information and your efforts to keep us going.

With nothing further, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Miller
Township Clerk