TABERNACLE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE – ANNEX BUILDING
EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 10 2020


PROFESSIONALS IN ATTENDANCE: Solicitor Peter C. Lange, Township Administrator Douglas Cramer and Municipal Clerk La Shawn R. Barber.

Litigation Matter: Fran Brooks V. Township of Tabernacle (Bur-L-002065-19)

Mr. Lange updated the governing body with the ongoing litigation made by Fran Brooks. Allegations surround the Church of the Holy Eucharist’s event and their request for the Township to make suggestions for persons of the year for their Annual Pine Barrens Festival. Allegations were made with Township’s representation to the Emilo Carranza Memorial as to who would attend.

Mr. Lange spoke of amending answers and make certain admissions of facts that were known to be true and accept what the Judge feels appropriate; and being vigilant in future, with the Open Public Records Act.

Mr. Lange advised that Fran Brooks wants discovery; the process was explained at length along with summary proceedings. As representatives of the taxpayers, the Township Committee made it clear not spend money on further litigation and they will not agree to discovery.

Mr. Lange explained Township Committee’s position during a conference held with Judge Culvert and Fran Brook’s Attorney, Walter Lauer. Mr. Lauer’s response to the Township Committee’s position was reasonable; however, need to talk to his client. Fran Brooks does not agree and wants a motion for discovery. Mr. Lange advised the Township would not consent and would file a motion to oppose and dismiss since there are no fees associated with the OPMA.

Mr. Lauer filed motion; Mr. Lange was in the process of responding to the motion; however, the Township Committee resolved to appoint a special counsel last month during their reorganization meeting to handle these matters, advising Mr. Lange to focus on the day-to-day Township matters. This was communicated to the Judge in an effort to have this matter postponed. Mr. Lauer consented and the Judge postponed the matter until the third week of March 2020.

Mr. Lange encouraged the Township Committee to have Special Counsel, Mr. Burns review his detailed Attorney Client Letter that he prepared for this case and make comment. Mr. Lange will speak to Mr. Burns informally and report back to Township Committee by the next meeting.

Mr. Cramer spoke to BURLCO JIF Labor Counsel to discuss Mr. Lee’s participation in the lawsuit specifically regarding the Whistleblower Act. Township Clerk will send the lawsuit to former Committeemen Stephen V. Lee, IV and Joseph Yates, IV.

Contract Negotiation Update: Tabernacle Fire Company #1

The Township Committee met to discuss an update of the contract negotiation for Tabernacle Fire Company #1. Mr. Lange spoke of being contacted by an investigator and Burlington County Prosecutor’s Office; there are ongoing investigation regarding financial matters being raised regarding donations and revenue. There were complaints and concerns by members and former members of the fire company. The proposed
contract has slowed down because of this issue and the Township has not received the fire company’s 2018 Annual Audit.

Township Committee invited guest Mr. Woods, a private citizen, to share his expertise regarding volunteer fire companies that do not have accountability with their Townships and reorganization.

The Township will continue to have further discussions regarding a contract negotiation at a later time.

**Personnel Matter Regarding Terms and Condition: Conflict Attorney and Special Counsel**

Special Counsel, William Burns has informed the Township that he will be with a new law firm effective March 3, 2020 and requested his continued appointment with the new firm. Members of the Township Committee expressed no objections; a resolution will be needed at the next meeting.

Members of the Township Committee came out of closed session at 10:23 p.m. and returned to the workshop meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

La Shawn R. Barber, RMC/CMR
Municipal Clerk

- Approved: 04/27/2020

RELEASED 12/17/2020