

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021, MOUNT EPHRAIM COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
IN-PERSON MEETING HELD 7:00PM AT BOROUGH HALL**

MEETING CALL TO ORDER/OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT

Mayor Tovinsky called the meeting to order at 7:02pm with the "Pledge of Allegiance" and the "Open Public Meetings Act" statement. He welcomed all to the meeting.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk called the roll with Commissioner Gies, Commissioner Wolk and Mayor Tovinsky present. Also present for the Borough were Solicitor Justin Strausser and Engineer Scott Smith from KEI Engineers.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 24, 2021, Caucus meeting, and September 2, 2021, Commission meeting minutes were submitted for review and approval. On a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, the minutes were approved with all in favor.

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

Mayor Tovinsky announced that vouchers in the amount of \$771,469.69 were submitted for approval. On a motion by Commissioner Gies second by Commissioner Wolk, the vouchers as submitted were approved with the following poll vote: Gies-yes; Wolk-yes; Tovinsky-yes.

ORDINANCES FOR PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION

The Clerk read the following ordinance by title:

Ord. 2021-16 Amending Chapter 525, Zoning, Regarding Fence Heights on Corner Lots

Mayor Tovinsky opened the public hearing on ordinance 2021-16. He asked participants to please state your name for the record. Comments are limited to five minutes per person.

Seeing no public question or comment, on a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, the public hearing on this ordinance was closed.

On a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, Ordinance 2021-16 was adopted with the following poll vote: Gies-yes; Wolk-yes; Tovinsky-yes.

RESOLUTION CONSENT AGENDA

Clerk Shannon read the following resolutions for approval by consent agenda:

- 21-70 Cancelling Outstanding/Stale Checks Drawn of Various Accounts
- 21-71 Governing Body Certification of the 2020 Annual Audit Report
- 21-72 Setting the Hours for Halloween Curfew and Trick or Treating
- 21-73 Change Order No. 1—James Street Project
- 21-74 Affirming Mount Ephraim's Civil Rights Policy with Respect to all Officials, Appointees, Employees, Prospective Employees, Volunteers, Independent Contractors and Members of the Public that Come into Contact with Municipal Employees, Officials and Volunteers
- 21-75 Authorizing Refund of Overpayment of Taxes

On a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, the resolution consent agenda was approved with the following poll vote: Gies-yes; Wolk-yes; Tovinsky-yes. Resolution consent agenda was approved.

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REPORTS AND COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Gies read highlights from the August Municipal Court report stating that funds turned over to the Borough were \$10,758.56. He then read highlights from the Fire Department report for September. They one dwelling fire, five public assists, four natural gas releases, 10 good intent calls, 21 mutual aid, 10 alarm systems and they had three drills. The Heroes to Heroes run is October 9 and their hoagie sale will be October 16. Commissioner Gies then read highlights from the Police Department report for September from Chief Conte. They answered 797 calls for service and he read highlights of the calls. They also had 149 vehicle stops and issued 119 motor vehicle summonses. They served 17 warrants and had 34 arrests and he read a summary of the charges. They also had two juvenile arrests this month for harassment and criminal trespassing.

Commissioner Wolk read the details from the Tax Collector's report for September 2021, reporting total receipts of \$237,270.88. We had lien redemptions totaling \$19,685.67. We are preparing for the budget meetings and will notify everyone of the upcoming budget meetings.

Engineer Scott Smith reported on the following projects:

2022 Municipal Aid applications should be announced at the NJLM Convention.

We are performing fieldwork for Lake Street, the 2021 Municipal Aid project.

Idora and Linden are complete—we are developing the list of punchlist items.

James Street change order was approved on this agenda.

Sacred Heart redevelopment meeting went very well so we are ready to move forward with this project.

Mayor Tovinsky asked Chief Conte to update everyone on important dates for this month. Chief Conte reported Heroes to Heroes is this Saturday at 9am; Boos and Brews is October 23 on Station Avenue from 1pm-7pm; Halloween Parade is October 30 on Center Avenue; Halloween is on Sunday, October 31 from 1pm-7pm. The Firehouse hoagie sale is October 16.

Mayor Tovinsky read highlights from the Construction Office report for September. They issued 13 permits for a total of \$2,077.00, zero vacant property registrations and 4 resale CO's for \$1,440.00. Public Works collected single stream recycling of 77,220 pounds and 201 tons of trash for a cost of \$16,732.10. They collected 11,700 of metal for revenue of \$1,073.20. They had to take care of a tree that fell on a car during the Ida storm and other trees, took down the summer banners and hung the fall banners, picked-up the vaccine for the rabies clinic, EJIF inspections passed and they removed metal from the church property. Remember Boos and Brews is a big fundraiser for the Celebrations Committee and Station Avenue will be closed down.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Tovinsky opened the meeting to the public and asked that residents state their name for the record. Present were the following individuals who spoke:

Sue Lewis from Valley Road wants to know what is going on with the property between the motel and the homes. Mayor Tovinsky responded that we are clearing the area out and will be putting fences at both ends. We are trying to keep people from the motel out of private properties. Sue was concerned that the people who already have three-foot fences won't be a deterrent and Mayor Tovinsky responded we plan to put up six foot fences where we can.

Mike Rossano from Green Avenue reported there is a divot in the street. He said it has been painted for the One Call and is wondering when it is being repaired. Mayor Tovinsky said he will take a look at it tomorrow.

Jerry Kappatos from Valley Road thanked the Governing Body for cleaning up the area between their homes and the motel but now they can see clearly through and there have

been some thefts. He does not want to keep bothering the police but Mayor Tovinsky said that is their job so keep calling them.

Angelique Kappatos from Valley Road said she attended the meeting at Wawa and the residents are very concerned. The last traffic study showed there are 1500 cars a day on Valley Road and the plans Wawa has will create even more volume. Wawa told them they can get speed humps and get the timing adjusted on the light. Mayor Tovinsky responded that they cannot as it is DOT and we have not even able to get it done. Mr. Kappatos Road added he does not know how the driveway they want to put in will benefit the town—there is already a timing problem and now there will be even more cars. Mayor Tovinsky responded that they have to come before the Land Use Board first and that has not yet happened. Ms. Kappatos thanked Chief Conte for putting up a new box on the street and Conte responded it will be up for a month so we can get the traffic data. Mr. Kappatos added that they should be able to turn right on red at that light.

Robert Bonner from Valley Road said there is a homeless person living at the former barber shop. There are abandoned buildings where people can move into. Mayor Tovinsky said he got six texts today from people about this. Chief Conte said it is not legal to be homeless. We have been shuffling him around town and has nowhere to go. We have tried to get him help but he has resisted. We are doing what we can. He poses no danger to kids. Commissioner Gies added he had a tragedy in his family that really hurt him. Mr. Bonner then asked if it is true that kids from out-of-town can attend our schools. Mayor Tovinsky said he has to go to a school board meeting to ask about that. There is school choice, but they were paying less than what we pay to send a kid to Audubon. The school board does not set the rate—the state does. We don't know how many kids they have through school choice. Commissioner Gies added the next school board meeting is on the 18th.

Olivia from 17 Valley Road asked about the bus stop at the corner of Valley Road. Is that a Department of Transportation issue? Mayor Tovinsky said yes. We have been trying to get our four lanes back on the Pike but have not gotten anywhere. Mr. Kappatos reported there is riff-raff there and they caught a guy masturbating on the corner. MayorTovinsky again stated you have to call the police when you see anything like that. Mr. Kappatos added that is why it would be good to be able to turn right on red so you can get away from the corner quickly. Olivia added there has been a steady decline of the area because of the motel and the vacant properties on the corners. She helped a homeless person on PATCO and the person said "oh good—now I can go to the Bobet". It is known as a place for homeless people to go. Mayor Tovinsky responded there is not much we can do. They pay their taxes and unless they break the law, we can't take any action against them. Mr. Kappatos added that Amin is letting those properties sit empty—does he have a plan for them? Mayor Tovinsky added that he pays the taxes so we can't make him sell if he does not have an interested buyer.

Mayor Tovinsky thanked everyone for their comments. There is not much we can do about state and county roads but we are trying. Chief Conte is working very hard to get the lights adjusted so please be patient.

Seeing no further public comment, on a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, the public portion was closed.

On a motion by Commissioner Gies, second by Commissioner Wolk, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.

Approved: Terry Shannon
Terry Shannon, Municipal Clerk