

**MILLSTONE TOWNSHIP
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

Vice-Chairperson Butch called the Meeting to Order at 6:51 p.m.

Secretary DeFelice read the Adequate Notice at 6:52 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Asprocolas, Ms. Butch, Ms. Butewicz (6:56), Mr. Peck, Ms. Posten, Mr. Rueter
Absent: none
Guests: Mr. & Mrs. Pischel -153 Stillhouse Rd; Mr. Jonathan Pinhas – 107 Route 526

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Councilperson Asprocolas made a motion to open the meeting to public comment at 6:54 p.m. Councilperson Peck offered a second.

Mr. Pinhas inquired about the status of having trees trimmed that overhang the roads impeding and possibly damaging farm equipment that needs to travel from location to location. He has had several meetings with various Township officials but only a few roads have been trimmed. Vice-Chairperson Butch noted that the Township has currently contracted with JCP&L to have a company trim trees throughout the Township. Mr. Pinhas replied that cutting trees above the power lines does not help with the branches below the lines that cause problems for farmers. Councilperson Asprocolas commented that there is a process for funneling these concerns up to the Township Committee. The Township Administrator and then the Mayor. Vice Chairperson Butch requested a copy of the list of roads that Mr. Pinhas sent to the Township to be addressed. Mr. Pinhas agreed to supply the list.

Seeing no further comments, Councilperson Asprocolas moved to close public comment at 7:11PM. Councilperson Rueter offered a second.

MEETING MINUTES: January 18, 2022

Chairperson Butewicz tabled the minutes until next month.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Deer Spotlight Survey: Vice-Chairperson Butch was able to contact Jodi Powers at the NJDEP regarding assistance with conducting a follow-up deer population count. Councilperson Asprocolas will coordinate with DPW to use the same route.

Stillhouse and Stagecoach property: A discussion ensued regarding a status update on the property at the corner of Stillhouse and Stagecoach. The property owners were present and addressed questions from the Council. In regards to the access added from Route 524 (Stagecoach Rd), they received permission from Monmouth County to have access from 524 and add a driveway. This would allow farm equipment to get to the other side of their property easier without damaging crops.

In regards to the berm of woodchips around the perimeter of the property, Mr. Pischel stated that it is to create a privacy screen from the road. It will also help with preventing theft of farm equipment that seems to be increasing in town. They have spent a lot of time cleaning up the property since they purchased it. There were a lot of issues with items left around the fields that had to be cleaned up.

In regards to farming operations, Mr. Pischel stated that they have a commercial farming license through the County from 2002. Vice Chairperson Butch explained that the license does not travel with the owner nor does it stay with a property. A new license needs to be obtained whenever there is a change in ownership or use of the property. The owners must apply to the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board for a certification for their operation at the new property they own. Ms. Butch will provide the information needed to assist them in applying for the commercial certification. Councilperson Asprocolas noted that if they complete the paperwork and get certified as a commercial farm operation, they will get protection under the Right to Farm Act.

In regards to the issue with the wetlands encroachment, the DEP had visited the property and was satisfied with the remediation by the owners. The owners felt that the Township was using inaccurate maps to expand the wetland area on the property.

A suggestion was made to hold a Right to Farm certification seminar to help educate the Township and residents on the issue.

NEW BUSINESS:

NJ Agriculture Convention: Vice-Chairperson Butch attended and said it went well. The number 1 issue that was brought up was the viability of agriculture due to the shortages of labor and supplies and the increases in costs to both. A resolution was made to form a commission to review the issues and propose policies and legislation to help the industry address these pressures.

There was no pressing need to go to executive session due to the time constraint.

The council will be participating in the Livestock Manure Management Presentation that will begin at 7:30pm.

Seeing no further business, Chairperson Butewicz motioned to adjourn. Vice Chairperson Butch offered a second. Meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew DeFelice