

**MINUTES
WOOLWICH TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 22, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Frederick at 6:32 p.m.

Mayor Frederick made the following statement:

The February 22, 2022 meeting of the Woolwich Township Committee is being called to order. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Roll Call: Marino: PRESENT Minhas: PRESENT Nocentino: ABSENT
Callahan: PRESENT Frederick: PRESENT

Also on the dais were Solicitor Gaglione and Administrator/Clerk DiBella

Those present saluted the American Flag.

Mayor Frederick stated that a 2020 Referendum to legalize cannabis was approved by the voters of New Jersey. He advised that all New Jersey municipalities were tasked with determining whether they would allow any or none of the six classes of licensing in their respective municipalities by an August 2021 deadline. He further advised that Woolwich Township voted to allow all but retail sales.

Mayor Frederick advised that the State is now accepting applications for Class I and Class II licenses. He further briefed those present of the application process, noting that the state requires a letter of support from the municipality to accompany applications.

The Mayor advised that the Committee tabled a resolution on 2-7-22 which would authorize such letter of support for the application of Nova Farms for a proposed outdoor cannabis cultivation farm on lands at 169 Russell Mill Road. The resolution was tabled to allow for resident questions and concerns to be addressed by representatives of Nova Farms. He added that if the Nova Farms application is approved for a license, they would then move onto the land development process.

Mayor Frederick advised that he spoke with the Sherriff's in Massachusetts and Maine where Nova Farms currently operates, and they advised that they have no complaints and that Nova Farms is a good community member.

The meeting was turned over to Blair Fish, Dennis Ebert and Zac Allen of Nova Farms, who made a presentation of their businesses in Vermont and Massachusetts and provided a PowerPoint presentation of their proposed Woolwich facility.

Upon the conclusion of said presentation, Mayor Frederick requested comments/questions from the Committee.

Committeeman Marino noted that Nova Farms propose a 3.5 acre cultivation canopy and said he thought it would be limited to 2 acres. Mr. Fish replied that the maximum canopy of 150,000 sf.

Deputy Mayor Callahan asked how many workers would be on site throughout the year. Response was 1-2 dozen in the peak of harvest.

Estimated distance from nearest home was provided as being 1,000 ft.

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeeman Marino to open the meeting to public comments/questions. All were in favor.

Ralph Sharp, 26 Russell Mill Road asked what the intention is for the remainder of the farm and was told that it would remain as farmland. Mr. Sharp then said he is concerned about the effects on his property value and suggested that it be put elsewhere. He further shared his concerns that the Committee is moving too fast on the issue.

Mark Pannullo of 206 Deerpath Court questioned the Mayors communications with the Chiefs in Massachusetts and Maine and suggested that Woolwich obtain the thoughts of the residents in those towns.

Mike McGovern, 25 Colony Court noted the wording of the State referendum. He asked if it is possible for the township to consider a resident vote.

Mr. McGovern then said he thought that Nova Farms would be cultivating only, but said he was unaware the company intends to manufacture on site for edibles etc. He then asked what discussions the Committee has had as to rules and regulations, number of sites etc. and said that if they have not done so, they consider that.

Mayor Frederick responded that the Committee had those discussions during the August 2021 deadline discussions. He advised the Township did not put a limit on number of operations, but did discuss micro facilities and large indoor grow facility location on Rt. 322.

Solicitor Gaglione advised that the law required municipalities to either opt in or opt out by the deadline, adding that the state Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) guidelines are still being developed.

Bill Reichert, 216 Deerpath Court said that he has spoken with a resident of Sheffield Twp. who said there is an odor. He asked if the state has an odor dispersible plan, noted his concern on property values and suggested the Committee slow down on the issue.

Mayor Frederick advised that the Committee is only considering a letter of support only.

Resident of 34 Winding Way questioned the cannabis freeze process and asked if chemicals would be stored on site for this purpose. Also noted that Russell Mill Road cannot support tractor trailers.

Nova Farms informed that there are no hazardous chemicals used in the process, adding that the company utilizes freeze boxes and liquid nitrogen is not used in the process. They added that there would be very infrequent access by tractor trailers.

The resident also stated that Nova Farms intends to bring \$2 million into the township to be spread among all residents, but the impact to local residents and services should be considered.

Karen Zehner, 652 Russell Mill Road noted that there are no sidewalks on Russell Mill Road and increased traffic particularly by tractor trailers would not be safe. She asked what the Township is being turned into. Nova Farms replied "agriculture".

Kris Wilson, 307 Wellington Way advised that he is submitted an application for a micro grow facility on Russell Mill Road. He advised that agriculture changes through the years, and farmers know that reputation is everything. He noted that many posts on social media were positive as to the proposed plan, and advised that the process will be heavily regulated.

Natasha Camy, 220 Deerpath Court asked if increased police presence would be required and was told it would not.

Keith Wilkins, 37 Russell Mill Road asked if there would be lights 24/7. Nova Farms advised that night time lighting has a negative impact on the plants. They also advised that infrared cameras will not be on at night. He then questioned project timelines. Nova Farms advised that there are multiple stages of the process, but estimated within 6-8 months of state license approval. Mayor Frederick added that the application would also have to make its way through the Township Land Use Board.

Jordan Schlump, 10 Wilshire Blvd. questioned usage of the remainder of the farm and was told it will contain some animals and livestock. Mr. Schlump asked what will happen to water drainage. Nova Farms replied that there will be no harmful chemicals, so it will drain like on any other farm. Mr. Schlump asked how that land will be taxed, and was told it will be taxed as a business, not farmland assessed. He asked if there are plans for a retention pond on site and was told there are no plans for water retention. Mr. Schlump asked the Committee if they were considering a PILOT for the business and was told they would not.

Resident of 104 Westwood Lane asked if the company had any connection to a cultivator Mark Rioux, Mr. Fish replied that Nova Farms was brought onto charges against Mr. Rioux, but the charges were unfounded and consequently dropped against Nova Farms. He added that employees go through national background checks.

John Curran, 271 Westbrook Drive asked if this is a permitted use for parcel zoning and was told it will be considered agriculture.

Ann DiGiocomo, 102 Westwood Lane questioned a quote in the NewTown Press saying that a Nova Farms representative said that the "bog" would keep odor down. Mr. Fish was not aware of the statement, but once again described the process and plant cycle. Ms. DiGiocomo asked the Committee if Sorbello Farms has obtained a micro-grow license and was told that they are currently going through the process.

Ron Ippolite, 306 Briarwood Lane suggested that the township seems to be moving too fast and he urged the committee to conduct due diligence. He asked if the \$2 million in revenue would make a significant difference in taxes. The Mayor responded that they are looking for tax stabilization.

Mr. Ippolite said that the location is poor, and the negativity of the business pulls down the entire township. He asked if the Committee is aware of the proximity of three group homes near Sorbello Farms and asked if that would cause a security issue, and if so, who would respond. The Mayor responded that local police would.

Marie Reichert, 216 Deerpath questioned construction of the onsite processing facility. Nova Farms responded that they intend to use a typical building on concrete pads approx.. 1,000 sf. They further advised that the fresh/freeze process takes about four days, with perhaps 1 dozen employees working inside.

Debbie Sharp, 26 Russell Mill Road asked if the freeze boxes produce noise. Response was that there would be little to no noise. She asked if who will reside on the property and was told that a Nova Farms representative would reside. She asked about hiring practices and was told the company intends to hire local. Ms. Sharp asked if the oils would be shipped to their retail stores and was told that the product cannot cross state lines.

Ms. Sharp asked the Committee if they have put a limit on the number of facilities allowed in Woolwich and was told they have not yet, but intend to discuss options with their solicitor. Ms. Sharp also noted that taxes may stabilize, but property values go down, and how nearby properties would be assessed. Mayor Frederick replied that the issue would be worked through with the county assessor.

Abigail Cunning, 204 Norwood Lane asked if anyone has seen the 2021 Gloucester County Mitigation Plan that shows the Dryden Bridge on Russell Mill Road to be failing. She asked that Nova Farms and the Township be made aware of that when considering traffic.

Francisco Reyes, 109 New Sweden Rd. questioned "off gassing" on winds and the effect of turpines on other plants. Mr. Fish replied that there are always turpines in the air that come from many different plant species. He added that male plants are not grown. Mr. Reyes questioned waste management and was told that the waste is composted to reduce carbon footprint. Mr. Reyes who will regulate the site and was told the CRC would. He then asked who would conduct inspections and was told the CRC; that it would not be monitored by the township.

Blair Hannigan, 25 Natalie Drive questioned the design of the fence. Mr. Fish said it would be a chain link fence with privacy screen that would start approx.. 600 ft. from the road to about 1,000 feet back.

Ann DiGiocomo said that the township failed notification wise. The Solicitor replied that if the company goes before the Joint Land Use Board, property owners within 200 ft. will receive notice of the hearing.

Marie Reichert, 216 Deerpath asked if the fence will be seen from her home. Nova Farms said they do not think it will be visible with the trees and buffer.

Debbie Sharp, 26 Russell Mill Road asked how many plants can be grown on 1 acre. Nova Farms estimated roughly 1,000 plants.

Jordan Schlump, 10 Wilshire noted the use of bees on the property and asked if there would be flowers for pollination purposes. Nova Farms replied that they do not grow male plants, but that the honey will be used in processing.

Mike McGovern, 25 Colony Court again stated that the issue could have been better communicated to residents.

With no further comment, Dep. Mayor Callahan moved to close the public portion. Committeeman Marino seconded. All were in favor.

Mayor Frederick called a recess at 8:28 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:39 p.m. at which time Mayor Frederick read the following Ordinance by title only upon first reading:

2022-02 Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a CAP Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14) Motion: Callahan Second: Minhas
Roll Call: Marino: YES, Minhas: YES, Callahan: YES, Frederick: YES Motion carried

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeewoman Minhas to adopt resolution **R-2022-55 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing Letter of Support for Nova Farms NJ LLC** as tabled on February 7, 2021.

Committeeman Marino said that when the Committee first discussed the cannabis issue, he had a hard tie with grow facilities, but that realizing that over 70% of residents passed the legalization of cannabis, he felt it would be a good revenue stream. He said the township only considered indoor grow on a larger scale along Rt. 322. However, knowing that landowners have been hindered by the Townships TDR program, trying to do what's right for all is difficult. However, the non-support expressed by the residents that evening, he has a hard time approving outdoor grow.

Dep. Mayor Callahan said that this resolution is only to approve a letter of support. He said that he feels there is time to work through some details with Nova Farms if their application is approved, therefore he sees no harm in approving the letter of support. He added that it seems like a great use of the land, and if the township does not get ratables, taxes will continue to rise.

With no further committee comments, Mayor Frederick requested a roll call on R-2022-55.
Roll Call: Marino: NO, Minhas: YES, Callahan: YES, Frederick: YES Motion carried

Motion was made by Committeeman Marino and seconded by Dep. Mayor Callahan to approve a consent agenda for resolutions R-2022-71 through and including R-2022-86.

Mayor Frederick detailed the purpose of each resolution.

R-2022-71 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing a Shared Service Agreement Between the Township of Woolwich and the Gloucester County Improvement Authority for the Use of Certain State Units for Special Events

R-2022-72 Resolution Authorizing the Proposal of Celebration Fireworks to Provide Fireworks display During Fun Day in the Amount of \$5,565.00 and Authorizing the Execution of Said Contract

R-2022-73 Resolution Making an Appointment to the Woolwich Township Joint Land Use Board to Fill a Vacancy in the Position of Alt. #2

R-2022-74 Resolution Making an Appointment to the Swedesboro-Woolwich Parks and Recreation Committee

R-2022-75 Resolution Appointing Larvie A. Hoglen as UCC Construction Code Official/Building SubCode Official for Woolwich Township

R-2022-76 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Elevating Brandon Hamer to the Position of 5th Class Patrolman within the Woolwich Township Police Department

R-2022-77 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing the 2021 Township redevelopment Counsel to Conduct Certain Professional Services Towards Holdover Positions

R-2022-78 Resolution Authorizing the Tax Collector to Transfer or Refund Overpayment of Taxes

R-2022-79 Resolution Authorizing Totally Disabled Veteran Deduction

R-2022-80 Resolution Authorizing Totally Disabled Veteran Deduction

R-2022-81 Resolution Authorizing Release and Closure of Escrow Account

R-2022-82 Township of Woolwich, County of Gloucester, 2022 Emergency Temporary Budget-N.J.S.A. 40A:4-20

R-2022-83 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing Reduction No. 1 of Performance Bond # 21-02 Posted on Behalf of Villages II, Section 2.2

R-2022-84 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing Reduction No. 1 of Performance Bond # 21-01 Posted on Behalf of Villages II, Section 2.3

R-2022-85 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Authorizing Contact Person for the Employment Practices Liability Attorney Consultation Service Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland Counties Municipal Joint Insurance Fund

R-2022-86 Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of Street Opening Permit- 205 Jockey Hollow Run

Motion was made by Dep. Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeeman Marino to adopt resolutions R-2022-71 through R-2022-86.

Roll Call: Marino: YES, Minhas: YES, Callahan: YES, Frederick: YES Motion carried

The following reports were presented for the month of January:

Tax Collector: \$3,819,038.38 remitted

Woolwich Fire Company: Chief Valechka presented his report noting 52 calls in the month of January. He invited the Committee to visit the fire academy.

Police: Dep. Chief Morgan advised that the department is looking for ways to communicate with residents. They have instituted and advertised use of "Neighbors App." which will provide real time notifications of police activities. Mayor Frederick advised that the department is looking to revise its monthly status report format.

Township Engineer: The engineer continues transition and has been active with projects. He briefly reviewed all current projects.

Precision Land: Andrew Shaw advised that testing and restoration are being conducted on Rt. 322 and a paving schedule is being developed. Aqua approvals for Dermody warehouse are under review. Materials needed for Kings Hwy. should be delivered on March 7th. Committeeman Marino questioned status everything has been submitted to Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. Shaw replied they understand the project is under a time crunch, and will expedite the letter. Committeeman Callahan questioned the repaving at Rt. 322 crossings. Mr. Shaw replied that the paving will be 20 ft. Work is dependent upon temperature.

Administrator's Report: Report submitted as self-explanatory.

Municipal Services: Monthly Report Submitted

The following Committee liaison reports were provided:

Committeeman Marino:
Solid Waste/Recycling; Provided T&R numbers for the month. JLUB: Met for review of upfit at Liberty Warehouse.

Committeewoman Minhas:
Municipal Alliance; No report. Recreation: preparing for Daddy Daughter Dance on April 23rd and Fun Day on May 21st.

Committeeman Nocentino:
Municipal Services; Env. Commission; In the absence of Committeeman Nocentino, Mayor Frederick that the Disc Golf Course will hold its opening on April 23rd from 10:30-12:00. A tournament will be held on June 11 and 12.

Deputy Mayor Callahan:
BDAC; Meeting scheduled for 2-23. Educational Partners (SWSD/KRSD); Schools are lifting certain COVID restrictions. Meeting was held with school administrators at which time various topics were discussed such as safety, partnerships, student opportunities, tech support collaboration and communications.

Mayor Frederick:
Administration; 2022 budget preparation is underway. Public Safety: No report.

There was no old business.

Committeeman Marino moved to open the meeting to public comment. Dep. Mayor Callahan seconded. All were in favor.

Jim Kane, 109 Oliphants Mill Road asked for a status update on reconstruction of the road. Mayor Frederick replied that the township is looking at costs, permitting and entering into a tri-party agreement with the county and dam owner.

Jordan Schlump, 10 Wilshire Blvd. questioned the impact of TDR on the farm being considered for cannabis cultivation. Mayor Frederick replied that the township intends to repeal the TDR Program this year.

With no further comments, the public portion closed upon a motion by Dep. Mayor Callahan, seconded by Committeeman Marino and unanimously passed.

Motion was made by Dep. Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeeman Marino to approve resolution **R-2022-87 Resolution for Closed Session.**

The Committee entered closed session at 9:18 p.m. for the purpose of discussing contractual matters having to do with development PILOTs and RABs.

The meeting resumed at 10:11 p.m.

Motion was made by Dep. Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeewoman Minhas to approve the minutes of January 18, 2022 and Executive Session and February 7, 2022 and Executive Session. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Dep. Mayor Callahan and seconded by Committeewoman Minhas to approve the bills and purchase orders.

Roll Call: Marino: YES, Minhas: YES, Callahan: YES, Frederick: YES (abstain from Verizon)

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m. upon a motion by Dep. Mayor Callahan, seconded by Committeeman Marino and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane DiBella
Administrator/Clerk

Minutes not verbatim
Audio recording on file