

BLAIRSTOWN TOWNSHIP  
2010 REORGANIZATION MEETING  
JANUARY 4, 2010

Thank you all for taking the time to be with us this evening at this first meeting of the Blairstown Twp. Committee for 2010.

First of all, congratulations to Committeemen Bill Seal and Frank Anderson on their overwhelmingly successful reelection to the Township Committee.

I want to express my most sincere appreciation to my fellow committeemen for their support making it possible for me to have the honor and distinction to once again serve as Mayor.

I offer a very special thank you to my wife Susan for her patience and support over the past 5 years that I have been on this committee, especially this past year, when her schedule and my schedule often conflicted and adjustments had to be made.

I want to thank our staff at the municipal building for their cooperation and extra effort as we transitioned through some difficult adjustments in staffing in 2009.

I also wish to recognize our Public Works Employees and our Police Officers for their dedication and fine work.

Our Fire Dept & Ambulance Corps deserve special recognition. These individuals unselfishly volunteer their time 24 hours a day providing extraordinary service to this community.

Looking back over 2009 I would like to mention a few notable events and moments -----

The Township's Operating Budget was reduced by \$50,000. This reduction was the fourth consecutive reduction in the Operating Budget. It came with some painful reductions in staff at the municipal building.

Early in the year the Township entered into an agreement with the Blairstown Ambulance Corps which provides the Corps with a few acres of leased land, here at the municipal site, where they can situate a new building for their operations.

The green acres program continued to provide residents with the opportunity to preserve their land. 113 acres of land were put into permanent preservation last year.

On Arbor Day your Shade Tree Committee planted 2 trees at the municipal site. One tree donated in memory of former Mayor Frank Kelly and one planted at the request of Lois Konkle as her retirement gift commemorating her 41 years of service to the Township.

Dr. Clavel – Blairstown’s first doctor – retired after 34 years of extraordinary professional service.

Main Street business owners came together as a group. They shared their thoughts and ideas to find ways to improve Main Street, a valuable historic asset.

Our public works department was able to repave and mark parking stalls in the small municipal parking lot in the center of the village to ease parking concerns.

Regrettably, three small businesses in the Village closed their doors. On the brighter side, however, Tractor Supply occupied the old A & P building that had been vacant for many, many years, and First Hope Bank opened their new operations center.

The Township received substantive certification of the COAH plan that was developed by our Planning Board. The Planning Board also completed a build out analysis for the Township.

Our Environmental Commission began the Sustainable Blairstown initiative. This registers Blairstown in the New Jersey Clean Energy “Community Partners” initiative. This is a forum that allows our town to have access to technical assistance and financial incentives to help in setting clean energy goals, develop outreach plans and educate residents about the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy. A Green Team comprised of 13 volunteers was created as a first step in establishing a community sustainability program.

In keeping with the sustainability theme, the Food Shed Alliance, following on its success, began a 2<sup>nd</sup> year for the Blairstown Farmers Market which is held at the Givens Belet Memorial Hall parking lot.

The Blairstown water company was offered up for sale, several bids were received, but after careful consideration all bids were rejected. That story has not yet ended.

Our Recreation Committee applied for and received approval for a loan from the State to begin Phase 1 of the community park that they have been working on for several years. Discussions continue on this project.

A contract was awarded for a Fire Department Tanker Truck to replace a very old and operationally deficient tanker in their fleet.

Our Office of Emergency Management trained and certified 25 individuals, including 8 from Blairstown, to serve as CERT (Civilian Emergency Response Team) members.

In 2009 several major issues which will have a direct effect on the Township's budget in 2010 and many years, came to rest on the shoulders of this Committee. Some of them had been lurking in the shadows for a very long time.

The State's financial situation lead to a decrease in State aid – aka the energy tax receipts from Yards Creek. The State cut Blairstown's aid by \$134,000. This was a direct hit to Township revenues.

The New Jersey State Bureau of Dam Safety put the Township on notice that they had concerns about Paulina Dam and that repairs needed to be made soon. We are currently working to resolve this issue.

Underground heating oil storage tanks at two municipal locations had to be removed. There is a soil remediation issue with one of these locations making it necessary to close the Community Hall for an indefinite period of time.

Other issues placing a burden on the Township's budget include:

A significant increase in insurance premiums

State mandated increases in contributions to the State pension system

Subsidizing the water company. Revenues from billings did not match expenses.

There are bright spots in the future:

While dealing with the Paulina Dam issues, it came to our attention that there exists the possibility of refitting the dam with a turbine to generate electricity once again at the dam. Conservative estimates suggest that the Township could realize \$50,000 per year in revenue from this project.

Also, there is an increased interest in solar energy generation funded in part by the federal economic stimulus money that has become available. At the January 13<sup>th</sup> regular Township Committee meeting we will be hearing a presentation on this subject. We will hear how energy generated from solar panels can be used to reduce the Township's electric bill at all the facilities we own. It is also possible that the schools in town can be included in this program.

We anxiously await this presentation.

In closing, this committee remains committed to providing a cost effective government, a government that uses its resources efficiently.

We will strive to maintain a zero municipal tax for as long as possible by doing whatever is necessary to bring our spending in line with our revenues.

A New Year brings new hope. Hope that next year will be better than the year that just ended.

Your Township Committee wishes all of you a happy, healthy and more prosperous New Year. We ask you to the men and women serving in the armed forces, and to remember those less fortunate than us.

Thank you.

Richard Mach  
Mayor