

BOROUGH OF OLD TAPPAN
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR & EXECUTIVE MEETING
October 4, 2021

In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law, notice of this meeting has been sent to our official newspapers and other publications circulated in the Borough of Old Tappan, and notice posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall.

Please note fire exits located at the main entrance to the Council Chambers and in the rear of the Council Chambers.

REGULAR MEETING

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| ROLL CALL: | Mayor John Kramer | Present |
| | Councilman Ronald Binaghi, Jr. | Present |
| | Councilman William Boyce | Present |
| | Councilman Guy Carnazza | Present |
| | Councilman Thomas Gallagher | Present |
| | Councilman Matthew Nalbandian | Present |
| | Councilman Jin Yhu | Present |

Also Present: Borough Administrator Anna Haverilla
Borough Attorney Michael Gannaio

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

BOARD APPOINTMENT

Board of Health - Sean Wengerter - Alternate #2 - Unexpired 2 Year Term Ending 12/31/21

Motion to accept the appointment – Councilman Carnazza

Second – Councilman Binaghi

Discussion – None

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----|
| Roll Call | Councilman Binaghi | Yes |
| | Councilman Boyce | Yes |
| | Councilman Carnazza | Yes |
| | Councilman Gallagher | Yes |
| | Councilman Nalbandian | Yes |
| | Councilman Yhu | Yes |

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ordinance 1194-21 – Capital Ordinance - Fire Department Radios – Resolution of Adoption

Councilman Gallagher described the ordinance and made a motion to open the meeting to the public.

Second – Councilman Carnazza

No Public Comment

Motion to close the meeting to the public – Councilman Binaghi

Second – Councilman Nalbandian

Discussion – None

On voice vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

Councilman Gallagher read the resolution

Second – Councilman Nalbandian

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----|
| Roll Call | Councilman Binaghi | Yes |
| | Councilman Boyce | Yes |
| | Councilman Carnazza | Yes |
| | Councilman Gallagher | Yes |
| | Councilman Nalbandian | Yes |
| | Councilman Yhu | Yes |

Ordinance 1195-21 – Amend Traffic Ordinance – Resolution of Adoption

Councilman Binaghi described the ordinance and made a motion to open the meeting to the public.

Second – Councilman Carnazza

No Public Comment

Motion to close the meeting to the public – Councilman Nalbandian

Second – Councilman Yhu

Discussion – Councilman Yhu would like to make sure that this traffic change is advertised as much as possible on our website so the residents know about the new rules.

Councilman Binaghi spoke with the Police Chief and the signs will be ordered. It will take a little while for the signs to arrive and be installed. An officer will be in the area a couple of times to make sure everyone is reading the signs and following the rules. There will be a learning curve. Tickets will not be issued right away.

On voice vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

Councilman Binaghi read the resolution

Second – Councilman Nalbandian

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----|
| Roll Call | Councilman Binaghi | Yes |
| | Councilman Boyce | Yes |
| | Councilman Carnazza | Yes |
| | Councilman Gallagher | Yes |
| | Councilman Nalbandian | Yes |
| | Councilman Yhu | Yes |

CONSENT RESOLUTION

Councilman Carnazza read the Consent Resolution

Second – Councilman Binaghi

Discussion – None

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----|
| Roll Call | Councilman Binaghi | Yes |
| | Councilman Boyce | Yes |
| | Councilman Carnazza | Yes |
| | Councilman Gallagher | Yes |
| | Councilman Nalbandian | Yes |
| | Councilman Yhu | Yes |

PUBLIC’S OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK

Motion to open the meeting to the public – Councilman Carnazza

Second – Councilman Binaghi

Discussion – James Duncan, Pearl River, NY, explained that he is a long-time member of the Old Tappan Golf Course. He spoke with about 30 members who are willing to pay a minimum of \$500 more in membership fees per year which should make the course more than profitable. There are many out of town members. He has seen other courses that were taken over by management companies and went downhill. Feels that we will lose membership if we change to a management company.

Councilman Nalbandian asked Mr. Duncan what the understanding is of the members that he has spoken to that is going to be different in terms of their ability to play golf.

Mr. Duncan said that they have witnessed other courses where management companies have taken over have issues with their membership because they can't get the tee times they want.

Councilman Nalbandian then asked if there is a mechanism in place right now in terms of prioritizing tee times in Old Tappan.

Mr. Duncan explained that for a long time now the Men's Club have been allowed to tee off early on the weekends; the tee is closed for them from 9:30am-11:30am.

Councilman Nalbandian stated that right now certain individuals are getting priority for early tee times on the weekends. That does not help any member who is not a member of the Men's Club. Why shouldn't they be afforded the same opportunity to play early on the weekend. It only seems to be a certain group of members that would be affected by a management company coming in and essentially eliminating that prioritization on weekends and now someone who is not a Men's Club member, but a member of the golf course, will be able to play early. He asked if Mr. Duncan has any idea how much money the golf course loses every year, other than last year?

Councilman Binaghi explained that when they tried to raise the membership rates they had a packed meeting with angry people complaining and that was only for a \$25 increase.

Councilman Carnazza explained that he was Golf Course liaison for 16 years. The membership at the time was maxed out and had a waiting list. Now membership is down and salaries and medical benefit expenses are up. There was always a problem when rate increases came up. This whole discussion about using a management company came up because both the Golf Pro and Golf Course Superintendent decided to put in for retirement next year. We are going to look at these RFPs and see if it is financially feasible to go this route. The Mayor & Council will have the authority to tell the management company how they want the course run. Old Tappan residents, Men's Club and Women's Club will still have some priorities when it comes to tee times.

Barbara Agnello, Woodcliff Lake, NJ explained that she is a first-year member and is so happy she found the Old Tappan Golf Course. Asked what the Mayor & Council is trying to solve with the management company.

Mayor Kramer explained that the Golf Course Superintendent and Golf Pro gave their notices of retirement and the concessionaire and golf cart agreements are up at the end of the year. They felt that if there was ever a time to consider doing this that this would be the time to do it. The reason we are considering this is financial. Every year we lose money to support the golf course with the exception of 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

Ms. Agnello says she enjoys the luxury of coming and being able to golf on demand.

Joe Donnelley, Cresskill, NJ explained that he has been a member for 5 years and loves it. The RFP clearly advocates for getting open public tee times and that is the greatest objection everyone has. If you keep the course private, raise rates and have a management company then he doesn't think too many people will be that upset. Having tee times open to the public on a 9-hole course will be very difficult to manage.

Steve Leonard, 200 Birchwood Road, Old Tappan, has belonged to the course for 15 years. It is a pleasure to have this course available to him. He is concerned with not being able to walk the course anymore. He is not a member of the Men's Club and he has never had a problem with them.

Cherie Fonorow, 256 Old Tappan Road, Old Tappan, is here to speak on a different subject, 244 Old Tappan Road. She explained that a couple of years ago she was approached about selling her home which is when she learned that the Korean Church and the property next to it were in default of their mortgage and that a developer wanted to purchase the property along with her home. Attended an Environmental Commission meeting to discuss her concerns. She is happy that the church was replaced with another church but is concerned and wants to bring awareness to the adjacent property, which is a 5.5-acre parcel with freshwater wetlands and a historic house on it. She has been contacting anyone she can to see if she can get the funding to have either the town or county buy the property and turn it into a nature preserve. The owner had a company come and do a line of delineation to see how big the wetlands are. They are about a third of the property and cannot be developed on. This property is zoned residential. They want to build a 3 story, 100 bed, assisted living home on this property which is located on a busy road. She is concerned with the town becoming over-developed.

Councilman Nalbandian explained that the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) is the reason why all of these developments are being built in town. The Mayor & Council are not looking to overdevelop Old Tappan.

Ms. Fonorow stated that this parcel is unique and should not be changed from being zoned residential. She has been in touch with Bergen SWAN for funding. They came out and inspected it and expressed interest. Feels that it is important to preserve this property for historical and environmental reasons. There's very little open space left and plenty of senior living facilities in the area already. Asking everyone to put this project on their radar.

Councilman Binaghi explained that the owner is asking for \$5 million dollars. The Borough cannot afford that. The Governing Body does not disagree with Ms. Fonorow about the property but the power lies with the Planning Board for this project. Advised her to come to the October 13th Planning Board meeting.

Howard Breshin, Valley Cottage NY, a 10-year member of the golf course, read the

below statement into the record:

I have been an Old Tappan Golf member for the last 10 years and was quite upset to hear, as the rest of our membership, about the changing of the club to a management company. Although on its face it appears to promote a savings opportunity, I wholeheartedly disagree with that premise given the circumstances that exist today.

I went through a very similar situation at Broadacres Golf Club more than 10 years ago and the savings as promised did not hit the promised mark at all. It's easy to tout how much money they will save us in this environment because Covid 19 became a boon to the golf world since it was a safer activity people can utilize during a pandemic with the obvious social distancing involved. Every golf club in America experienced a surge in business due to this fact.

Covid someday will take their place on the vaccine line along with a flu shot yearly, people will return to their offices from the virtual zoom world and the management's projected numbers will decline.

There are alternatives that will bring savings to the Town. One of which would be if you want a management company instead of Town employees working the course, with a couple of Supreme Court Judges who are members, a few lawyers and other very qualified people, why not we as members create our own board as volunteers and not be remunerated? Wouldn't that accomplish the same thing?

I understand golf is a sport that should be enjoyed by everyone. To think our 9-hole course would be a desirable attraction to everyone, don't lose site of the fact that within a mile or two there are two public courses off of Orangeburg Road, and with a five-mile radius a whole slew of other 18-hole golf courses, Northvale, Blue Hill, etc.

Although this thought wouldn't come under a legal reason to unseat our club, here are a few things that you should consider.

1. We are a family here at the club where most members know each other very well. There are older members 70 years old or more who utilize this club as their "center" for sunshine, friendships, exercise and a bite to eat at our very good restaurant run by Jill and her crew. It is their form of entertainment, socialization and exercise.
2. The rate of play, even with 300 members, moves along at a fairly good pace since each group of members tend to show up at the same time each day, some early morning, some mid-afternoon, then the late afternoon players like myself. These older folks will never be able to walk onto the course with huge waiting times inherent with public courses. I saw it happen at Broadacres and it will happen here. It is almost borderline discriminatory to our older players who will have the freedom to play whenever they mosey onto the course taken away from them.

We are also quite a diverse group of people from all ethnic diversities who have called this place our home, now to be ruined by a flood of people that will be unsustainable. Our parking is limited for public use. The spillover parking issue will bring people to park on DeWolf Road.

3. I urge this Honorable Board to reconsider your choice. Let us organize a group of qualified members who can come up with a better solution as opposed to believing a management company selling you a magic elixir who are giving you unrealistic numbers when it comes to savings for your Town. Dig a little deeper into their math. Covid eventually will wane and so will the management company's numbers when our younger members are forced back to their offices. If you were a member here, you would realize how heartbreaking this proposal is...

Bill Calice, Dumont, NJ, a longtime member of the golf course, understands the Mayor & Council's position but is not in favor of a management company, it can be run the way it always has. Loves being able to get on the course within a half hour, no tee time needed. The golf business changes all the time. Not everyone likes to play 9 holes so he is not sure how popular the course is going to be outside the current membership.

Councilman Yhu explained that when they had the walkthrough with the bidders we did stress that we wanted to have our core group of members and residents get some type of priority access to the course. Thanked everyone for their comments tonight. They will keep their options open.

Robert Zerr, Norwood, NJ, explained that he has worked for the last 2 Golf Pros and has enjoyed every minute of it. Wants to make sure that he is considered a core member and not counted out.

Mike Tama, 19 Willow Drive, Old Tappan, echoed what Ms. Fonorow had to say about 244 Old Tappan Road. Inquired about the anchor tenant at the Bi-State Plaza and when it will be filled.

Councilman Carnazza explained that it is privately owned so they cannot get involved. There were a couple of offers over the last year and a half but he is not sure what is going on.

Councilman Gallagher explained that they can only require that the property be kept nice looking and is up to code.

Ms. Fonorow said she had heard that Oakes Park was donated. She is hoping for a benefactor to purchase the 244 Old Tappan Road property.

Councilman Binaghi explained that the Borough bought Oakes Park with grant money but Bonnabel Park was partly purchased and partly donated by Mr. Bonnabel.

On voice vote, all in favor, none opposed, the motion carried.

Motion to close the meeting to the public – Councilman Binaghi

Second – Councilman Nalbandian

On voice vote, all in favor, none opposed, the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

Councilman Binaghi spoke about hiring a police officer and the 2 potential retirements coming up. The Police Chief said they have some really good candidates. He would like to hire 2 new officers if, in fact, we have the 2 retirements. We have money in the budget for 2 officers. The new hires will be done about a month apart. He asked for everyone's thoughts.

Councilman Carnazza is in favor of doing the 2 new hires as long as the 2 retirements are definitely happening.

Mayor Kramer asked what would happen if one of the officers put their retirement papers in and then changed his mind.

Ms. Overgaard explained that it is her understanding that when the retirement paperwork is filled out you must certify that this does not mean your job will still be available once everything is officially filed. The Mayor & Council could say that the retirement paperwork was submitted and we have other plans. Your job is not guaranteed.

Mr. Gannaio explained that this is consistent with his understanding. There is a representation when the retirement paperwork is submitted that the hiring authority could rely upon the fact that the retirement is going to happen. If for some reason the individual decides they no longer want to retire there is no guarantee that there will be an open spot for them.

Councilman Binaghi asked for permission to continue with the hiring process for the 2 new officers.

Councilman Binaghi made a motion to hire 2 new officers on November 15th and January 1st provided the 2 retirements happen.

Second - Councilman Gallagher

Councilman Nalbandian asked what the retirement dates were.

Mr. Gannaio suggested holding off this discuss until the next meeting's closed session.

Councilman Gallagher explained that at last meeting's closed session the police contract was discussed and we came to a consensus at that meeting to go in a certain direction. Do we then need to come into an open meeting and vote on it?

Mr. Gannaio answered no because negotiations were being discussed and that is not an open meeting item.

Councilman Binaghi brought up police promotions.

Mr. Gannaio explained that this topic should also be discussed in closed session at the next meeting.

Councilman Binaghi reported that his mother is ok with the bronze plaque for Oakes Park honoring his father. He has a rock that it can be mounted on. The DPW will pickup the boulder and place it in Oakes Park. All costs will be covered by the Binaghi Family.

Motion to adjourn Regular Meeting – Councilman Carnazza

Second – Councilman Nalbandian

On voice vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE MEETING

In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law, notice of this meeting has been sent to our official newspapers and other publications circulated in the Borough of Old Tappan, and notice posted on the bulletin board at Borough Hall.

Please note fire exits located at the main entrance to the Council Chambers and in the rear of the Council Chambers.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| ROLL CALL: | Mayor John Kramer | Present |
| | Councilman Ronald Binaghi, Jr. | Present |
| | Councilman William Boyce | Present |
| | Councilman Guy Carnazza | Present |
| | Councilman Thomas Gallagher | Present |
| | Councilman Matthew Nalbandian | Present |
| | Councilman Jin Yhu | Present |

Also Present: Borough Administrator Anna Haverilla

ENGINEER'S REPORT

No report

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS AND REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE

COUNCILMAN GALLAGHER – FINANCE/FIRE

The Fire Department and First Aid Corps are attending the Bergenfield Fire Training Center tonight and going through a live burn exercise. Tomorrow is the Fire Department open house at 6:30pm for Fire Prevention Week. They will also be visiting the school's tomorrow morning. The inspection dinner is on October 29th.

COUNCILMAN BINAGHI – POLICE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Thought that a lot of interesting points were brought up earlier about the golf course. When we look at the RFPs we should be stringent.

Councilman Nalbandian commented that there are many residents who do not use the golf course so we need a balance. Most of the people who spoke tonight were not residents.

COUNCILMAN NALBANDIAN – DPW/CONSTRUCTION

Thanked the Mayor & Council, Borough Hall staff, DPW and Police Department for expressing their condolences at his dad's passing.

The DPW parking lot is currently under construction. A resident of Demarest Lane had some concerns with the project. The DPW Superintendent has been communicating with that resident and some changes were made to the configuration along with the buffering and drainage. The resident seems to be pleased with the new plan.

The Technical Assistant in the Construction Office has resigned. We have individuals from other towns that have been filling in and keeping things afloat. We advertised for the position and have found someone who is interested and will be appointed at the next meeting.

Addressed the Pearson property with the Construction Official because work seems to have slowed down. They are waiting on Suez who has a very lengthy backup before they can proceed.

COUNCILMAN YHU – FIRST AID/SCHOOLS/SENIORS

The Seniors had their Lunch and Learn where an expert on financial matters spoke.

The Library Board did not have a quorum so they were not able to act on anything. A board member resigned, they are seeking a replacement. He asked that all boards keep in mind special religious holidays when scheduling meetings.

Both school boards have candidates on the ballot in November. He spoke to the high school's Athletic Director concerning the gate on Howard Drive. They really want to keep the gate open as a secondary egress. He explained to the director the parking issues on Howard Drive and how they might need to make it no parking on one side of the road. He spoke to several residents in the area and they seem very accepting to that idea. We should also consider Howard Drive, Doris Avenue and Charles Avenue.

The First Aid Corps sent him a letter of concern with all the development going on in town. They are able to keep up with their responsibilities to the town now but are worried how much their call volume is going to increase in the future. They have been talking to their mutual aid partners to see if they can come up with a solution.

Read a letter received from a resident praising Jo-Ann Forcellati and the Social Services Board.

Mayor Kramer asked that the letter received from the First Aid Corps be distributed to all Council Members.

COUNCILMAN BOYCE – GOLF/PLANNING BOARD/ENVIRONMENTAL

We have received 5 responses to the golf course management company RFP. They are being thoroughly vetted. They are weighing many considerations including years of experience and the scale of the courses they already manage. No decision has been made. They will take into consideration the Men's Club and all the positive things they feel about the course. We are learning from this process in how to possibly break even or better in the future, after the Covid bump ends.

The Planning Board is dealing with a controversial application for the senior care facility adjacent to the Syrian Orthodox Church. He met with Ms. Fonorow at her residence and observed the wetlands. The development would occur uphill from the wetlands. The board will take awhile to think about this application. No decision has been made.

They are still looking to have a design competition to add to the Veteran's Memorial in Oakes Park. Once a plan is finalized it will be publicized on the website.

The Environmental Commission discussed disbanding the Green Team because we do not have any challenges within the town to improve in order to fulfill the goals of the Green Team. Instead they will redirect their work towards a Tree Preservation Committee that would fall under the Environmental Commission. They are working on the tree ordinance and will present something at a future Mayor & Council meeting. They want to make an informational video so they can properly communicate everything to the residents.

Councilman Gallagher asked if this proposed assisted living home application will help the Borough with its COAH numbers.

Councilman Boyce suggested speaking to the Planning Board Attorney or Borough Planner.

Councilman Nalbandian asked what percentage of the golf course's membership live in Old Tappan.

Councilman Boyce stated that out of the 320 members about 110 are residents.

Councilman Nalbandian stated that 2/3 of the golf course do not live in Old Tappan but are looking for us to subsidize it for their pleasure.

Mayor Kramer stated that if we lose the out of town members we can't rely on the public that lives in this town to give their full support.

Councilman Nalbandian stated that this process is going to be trial and error. Whatever we decide now might not be what ends up working a few years down the road.

Councilman Boyce explained that in most businesses like this we would make decisions based on past performances and trajectories and try and chart where we would be but we have very little information because there were no tee times ever employed. All we have are the annual budgets and their reconciliations, revenues and expenses. They are considering doing tiered memberships so the Men's Club can pay a premium to have a higher tier.

Mrs. Haverilla explained that Paramus auctions their tee times off for the year.

COUNCILMAN CARNAZZA – RECREATION/HEALTH

No report

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

The Borough received notice from Bergen County Community Development that we have received a \$6000 grant for the Senior Expressive Art Program.

There are political signs posted on the fence near Old Tappan Road and Heritage Road that he has fielded a number of calls about. He explained to them that there is really nothing we can do besides asking the resident to remove them. The Zoning Officer did go to the house and spoke with a family member but they are still up.

Motion to adjourn – Councilman Carnazza

Second – Councilman Yhu

On voice vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

On voice vote, all in favor, none opposed, the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean M. Donch, RMC
Borough Clerk

Reviewed & Approved: October 18, 2021