

UPPER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019 @ 6:00 PM

Chairman Bermingham Jr. called this Special Meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Present were Chairman Bermingham Jr., Supervisor Due, Supervisor DeFranco, Supervisor Teel, and Supervisor Pinter. Chairman Bermingham Jr. stated this Special Meeting is being held to interview four (4) candidates for the Township Manager position. Chairman Bermingham Jr. stated that interviews are conducted in Executive Session so if anyone (the public) would like to come back at 9:30 pm to see if any action will be taken, they are welcome to come back.

**Chairman Bermingham Jr. introduced Richard Young.**

Mr. Young discussed his employment background and experiences.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: Why come to Upper Mount Bethel to be a Township Manager?

Mr. Young: My past experiences are transferable and I feel this is the next step I'd like to take.

Supervisor DeFranco: Do you have any experience dealing with Unions?

Mr. Young: Yes, although I did not have a lot of interaction, I can honestly say, I never had a grievance filed. I've always had a good working relationship with the Unions.

Supervisor Teel: What your thoughts on public water and sewer?

Mr. Young: It depends where you're at. Some properties may not be suitable for on-lot systems. I am currently not up to speed on the plan, but it is something you have to take a very close look at. What kind of system works best.

Supervisor Teel: Are you experienced in applying for grants?

Mr. Young: Yes.

Supervisor Pinter: Did you write the grants or did someone else?

Mr. Young: Combination of both.

Supervisor Due: Are you familiar with Upper Mount Bethel Township at all?

Mr. Young: I am vaguely familiar.

Supervisor Pinter: Explain how you prepare budgets?

Mr. Young: There are several steps in preparing a budget. First, look at what you spent last year, is there anything that can be cut from that or increased, items that no longer apply, items needed for the future.

Supervisor Pinter: What do you feel is an acceptable debt to income ratio for a municipality?

Mr. Young: That I am not sure of. There are several guidelines to follow.

Supervisor Pinter: What is your opinion?

Mr. Young: You try to keep your debt as low as possible.

Chairman Bermingham Jr.: How do you manage people? Supervisor Pinter: What is your management style?

Mr. Young: I am kind of a laid back person. I am not always in their face. The staff knows their job, but I do walk around and touch base with everyone. Having a good relationship with them, makes it a little easier to manage them. Having confidence in them and they having confidence in you.

Chairman Bermingham Jr.: What do you think makes an effective leader?

Mr. Young: Having followers. Try to instill in your staff that what they do matters.

Supervisor DeFranco: Do you have experience with Open Space Funding/Trail Funding?

Mr. Young: I did get involved a little bit with the County. In addition to the Open Space, there is also the ability to do some purchasing of development rights, but I would have to do some more research on that.

Supervisor DeFranco: Will you have any problems attending multiple meetings a month?

Mr. Young: It's a salary position, so it is part of the job.

Supervisor Due: Are you familiar with zoning?

Mr. Young: Yes

Supervisor Pinter: What is your experience with Economic Development? Describe the most important planning initiative you participated in?

Mr. Young: The Iron Pigs Stadium, my direct involvement was the land review, zoning and traffic. The second was the Arena downtown Allentown, site plan review and traffic. Both have been big Economic generators. For a smaller municipality, you may want to look at where your infrastructure is.

Mr. Young: What is the time schedule? I would like to provide a two week notice.

Chairman Bermingham Jr.: There could be action taken this evening, maybe not, but soon.

Chairman DeFranco: What kind of salary are you looking for?

Mr. Young: That is a very difficult question to answer without knowing the rest of the benefits. I look at the total package. Probably around \$85k. One thing I would like to add, is that I have a very good working relationship with County Executive Lamont McClure, which may be a plus.

**Chairman Bermingham Jr. introduced Ed Nelson.**

Mr. Nelson discussed his employment background and experiences.

Supervisor Pinter: If you were awarded the position of Township Manager, would you relinquish your Santa position?

Mr. Nelson: I have a contract, so at this point, it comes down to the salary.

Supervisor Pinter: If the offer was sufficient, would you be able to get out of the contract?

Mr. Nelson: It will cost me.

Supervisor Pinter: What are the keys to a successful budget and explain how you would prepare a budget?

Mr. Nelson: I think it's straight forward, being prepared. Not everything is not going to work out.

Supervisor Pinter: Would you recommend truing up the account at the end of the year to meet what it was or to show the discrepancies?

Mr. Nelson: No, I would try to stay on top of it on a month to month basis. It is my responsibility to make it work, but the Boards responsibility to say it is OK to do.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: If you are offered the position, how are you going to get the people you are going to manage to follow your lead?

Mr. Nelson: They have to know that I will be true to them. I don't believe that anyone is going to work with anyone unless they believe the person they are working for is going to support them in their efforts. That doesn't mean I'm a babysitter, it's my job to make sure everyone knows what to do, they have the equipment to do it and be recognized that it has been completed. And when it comes time for me to be involved in those jobs, you will see me involved. I am a hands on person.

Supervisor DeFranco: While you were a Supervisor, why didn't you pass the Act 537 Plan? What is your opinion on the Act 537 Plan?

Mr. Nelson: Because we never had a Board with the majority being in favor of it. During the time I was here, we never had a solid manager. I believe the Act 537 Plan needs to be done, but it has to stay at a pace and it has to have a clear objective.

Supervisor Teel: How skilled are you at writing grants?

Mr. Nelson: To be honest, I am not a grant writer. I would have to use the resources available to me. I would not try to do something that I am uncertain I can do, with knowing I may fail. I can be aggressive and if the Board directs me to go after something, I will.

Supervisor Teel: What kind of salary are you looking for?

Mr. Nelson: I like to think that I owe the Township for everything it has done for me. I did do some research before my interview. I am on Medicare and have a good supplement plan, so that would not be an issue. I think on a dollar number, what Rick received in total, would be sufficient for me. I believe Rick was at \$95k, so knowing what the state medium is, I would say for me, anywhere between \$85k-\$95k. And with benefits, we can structure them in a different form, i.e. 401 (k). My primary objective is to think of my family.

Supervisor Due: How would manage the Road Dept. equipment, as far as getting new equipment?

Mr. Nelson: I haven't followed what's been done since I've left, but at the time we were tracking costs of each vehicle. Each vehicle has a cost point, so when a vehicle gets to a point where it is costing more than the vehicle is worth, than its time to get rid of it.

Supervisor Pinter: What is your opinion on a successful debt to income ratio? What is an acceptable debt for a municipality to have?

Mr. Nelson: I think the max is set by the state, if I'm not mistaken.

Supervisor Pinter: I'm just trying to get your opinion.

Mr. Nelson: I cannot answer that, but off the top of my head, I would say 7-9%.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: How do you deal with an angry resident?

Mr. Nelson: The first thing to do is listen to them and try to understand what they are saying and don't make promises to them that you ultimately can't keep. Depending on the situation, don't delay, follow-up.

Mr. Nelson: In regards to the Supervisors being Liaisons, my suggestion is to re-look at the Liaison structure.

Supervisor DeFranco: Are you familiar with PennDOT regulations?

Mr. Nelson: It has been awhile, I would have to sit down and review, but there is no doubt in my mind, I would have no problem picking it up.

**Chairman Bermingham Jr. introduced Lawrence Meo.**

Mr. Meo discussed his employment background and experiences.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: Where do you currently live?

Mr. Meo: I currently live in Toms River, but am looking to relocate to the Lehigh Valley.

Supervisor Pinter: Why the career change, from the Police Force to finance?

Mr. Meo: My father and grandfather were both in finance and now that I have a family, I felt it was a good time to make a career change.

Supervisor Pinter: With the finance degree, for you, what makes a good budget and how do you work through it?

Mr. Meo: It has to be solvent and with a view of the future. The best investment is a smart investment.

Supervisor Pinter: What do feel is a good debt to income ratio for a municipality?

Mr. Meo: I'd like to know what the past showed. I have not had to make those judgement calls before, but I would say 30%.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: If you were offered the position, what is your management style and what makes an effective leader?

Mr. Meo: An effective leader needs to be able to do what he is telling his people to do. I like to have a person to person relationship.

Supervisor DeFranco: Are you familiar with the Act 537 Plan?

Mr. Meo: I am not familiar with it, but in anticipation of this interview, I did do some research.

Supervisor DeFranco: Are you familiar with writing grants?

Mr. Meo: I've never had to write a grant, I wanted to write them for the police department, but they wanted to keep that at the Lieutenant level.

Supervisor Teel: What kind of salary are you looking for?

Mr. Meo: I imagine you already have an amount in mind, it would need to be something above \$55k.

Supervisor Teel: If you are chosen, keep in mind that the position requires a great deal of time attending meetings, so again, what kind of salary are you looking for?

Mr. Meo: Am I safe to assume this position requires more than the standard hours, if that is the case, than I would be looking around the \$70k range.

Supervisor Teel: How skilled are you at writing letters?

Mr. Meo: I am pretty skilled, I write letters for a living.

Supervisor Due: How do you feel about being a manager dealing with a union?

Mr. Meo: Obviously the union has rights, it's something to work with.

Supervisor Pinter: Can you give me an example of when your ethics were challenged and how did you deal with it?

Mr. Meo: When I was on night shift (police force), I was dispatched to an accident and when I arrived, the driver was someone I went to college with and was friendly with. She said that she had dropped her phone and was fishing for it and then veered off the road striking a parked car. Since it was someone I knew, I elected to notify my Supervisor and he decided to have a different officer handle the investigation, ultimately she was charged with a DUI.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: How do you deal with an employee who is not performing up to standard and then how do you deal with an angry resident?

Mr. Meo: You need to initiate conversation, communication. And then it needs to be in an email/writing. Of course if it is union employee, I would need to check their rules on discipline. As far as an angry resident, I would first listen, let them blow off steam and then respond.

Supervisor DeFranco: Are you familiar with Upper Mount Bethel?

Mr. Meo: Not necessarily, but I have studied the map.

Supervisor Teel: How are your communication skills with the State Police?

Mr. Meo: I have no problem with communicating with the State Police.

Mr. Meo: Aside from the Act 537 Plan, are there any other large projects happening in the Township that I could research?

Supervisor DeFranco: We have our Community Park Project with ongoing projects. We've also just had a 780 acre parcel sold to a developer, so there will be a lot happening with that.

**Chairman Bermingham Jr. introduced John Brown.**

Mr. Brown discussed his employment background and experiences.

Chairman Bermingham Jr: Could you explain your current position, John Brown Leadership Solutions LLC and if you were offered the manager position, would you continue with your current position?

Mr. Brown: I work with local developers who need help working with municipalities and one on one executive coaching. The coaching contracts I would continue to do, but the other probably not.

Supervisor Pinter: In regards to Economic Development, what are your experiences with Economic Development and what part of Economic Development will you be able to help the Township out with?

Mr. Brown: That was one of my challenges when I became Mayor of Bangor with all the empty store fronts. I was active in the community development process. The key to Economic Development is to balance the infrastructure with the companies you are looking to attract.

Supervisor Pinter: What is your opinion on a good debt to income ratio for a municipality of our size?

Mr. Brown: Typically, I think a 10-1 would be a good starting point. This is one of those things where you have to try to be creative, find grants/alternatives. Ratings effect your borrowing rates.

Supervisor Pinter: When you left the County, do you remember what the rating was?

Mr. Brown: I think Northampton County is an AA, but no, I do not recall the rating.

Supervisor DeFranco: It sounds as though you would know how to start a Police Force.

Mr. Brown: The Regional concept, independent, or some other kind of hybrid, I would be very comfortable taking that challenge on.

Supervisor DeFranco: How are you with writing grants?

Mr. Brown: The key is you have to write the grant and I am more than able to do that. There is a whole process of doing it, how do you get it to the top of the list, at least to be seen. You have to sell it.

Supervisor Teel: How good are you at getting grants?

Mr. Brown: We'll find out, hopefully. The challenge is getting them approved and being creative.

Supervisor Teel: There are a number of people who oppose the Act 537 Plan, how are you at handling that?

Mr. Brown: I would have no problem, I'm the one that has the responsibility to address whatever issues arise.

Supervisor Teel: What kind of salary are you looking for?

Mr. Brown: I will let the Board decide what my value is by what I can bring to the table.

Supervisor Due: The Aquarium? We were looking for help, hoping that you would help us. Why wasn't the SlateBelt looked at?

Mr. Brown: I've always been a strong advocate for the SlateBelt area. The DeVinci Center in Easton, pitched the project and I didn't think the SlateBelt had \$30 million dollars to invest up front. It was not a viable business plan for the SlateBelt. I have supported the Liberty Trail project, boat landing in Portland, they have to be viable projects.

Supervisor Pinter: Would you consider this position to be a step down?

Mr. Brown: Not at all. I'm attracted to jobs that are going through a transition or has multiple projects that is what draws me to an opportunity.

Mr. Brown: Have the Supervisors asked all the questions they hoped to, is there anything else?

Chairman Bermingham Jr: Yes, we have. Thank you.

Mr. Brown: Where do we go from here, timeline?

Chairman Bermingham Jr: The Supervisors are going to discuss now, whether a decision will be made, I cannot answer that. We are looking to move quickly on it.

Interviews concluded at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Beck-Recording Secretary