

KINGWOOD TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

Special Meeting Agenda

March 8, 2021 – 6:30 PM

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by publication of the notice in the Hunterdon Democrat and Courier News on March 4, 2021 and by telefaxing a copy of the notice to the Express Times on March 1, 2021. Copies of this notice were also posted in the Kingwood Township Municipal Building and Baptistown Post Office on March 1, 2021.

Special Township Committee Meeting scheduled to be held at 6:30 P.M., Monday, March 8, 2021 regarding the auction of the Old Fairview School. This will be a virtual meeting held online only due to continuing COVID19 precautions.

The public can send comments on or before March 8th, 2021. E-mail comments should be sent to: fairview@kingwoodtownship.com Comments received before the meeting will be read into the record.

To attend the virtual meeting, please visit the Kingwood Township Website prior to the meeting for the live URL link. If you do not have a computer and/or want to call in to hear the meeting, a call-in phone number will also be posted. For meeting information visit: www.kingwoodtownship.com/Current Agendas

Roll Call

Auction of the Old Fairview School

Public Comments

Adjournment

PLEASE NOTE THIS AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO LAST MINUTE CHANGE

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KINGWOOD TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

Special Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2021 – 6:30 PM

A Special Meeting of the Kingwood Township Committee was called to order at 6:30P.M. with Mayor Dodds presiding.

Also present at the meeting were Deputy Mayor Ciacciarelli, Committeewoman Syrnick, Attorney K. Campbell, Historian Betty DeSapio, Deputy Clerk M. Tipton-Walters and Clerk C. Keller. Mayor Dodds called the meeting to order and following the salute to the flag, read aloud the following:

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Auction of the Old Fairview School

Mayor Dodds welcomed everyone who was online attending the virtual zoom meeting to discuss the future of the Old Fairview School. He read aloud the following information regarding the Old Fairview School, which is currently on the Township's website:

The Kingwood Township Committee is considering the sale of the property known as the Old Fairview School. Built in 1916 the building served as a one room schoolhouse for many years. The original 1776 schoolhouse was about 3/4 mile northwest of this site.

According to Kingwood Historian Sal DeSapio, who attended the school, "...it was Baby Boom years and there was no room for them in the regular school. It used stoves for heat. There was indoor plumbing, but there was also an outhouse out back. The kids would lock each other in there."

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In the 1960's, the school was converted into the Kingwood Township municipal building and used as such until 1993. Following 1993, the building has hosted public meetings, Yoga classes, and the Merry Mixers. In the last few years, the use of the building decreased substantially. The primary use has been the for meetings of the Kingwood Township Historical Society.

The Township has recently been investigating all of its Township owned properties to create a long-term plan. These properties do not generate tax revenue but cost the municipality to maintain. Older buildings such as the School require funding to be maintained to a useable state and significant funding would be required to renovate it to allow a more regular use. The building is currently only used a few times a year.

Members of the public have expressed concerns that the building is of historical significance and should be registered as such. However, the building has been substantially renovated over the years and it is not believed that it would qualify as a historical structure or funding available to preserve historic structures. Although many in the community few a sense of nostalgia for the old school, the Township must consider what is in the best interest of the municipality.

An online action for the sale of the building is being held on March 3, 2021 at 11:00am to offer the building for sale. The Township Committee will then decide if they choose to sell the property to the highest bidder. A public hearing will be held on 6:30 P.M., Monday, March 8, 2021, before the Township Committee decides if it wishes to accept the bid and enter a contract. Those wishing to be heard are invited to attend the public hearing or can submit written comments to the Township Committee which will be read into the record at the public meeting. Those wishing to submit written comments should send them via email or hand deliver to the Township Clerk no later than March 8, 2021 to fairview@kingwoodtownship.com

Mayor Dodds noted that the final decision on the future of the Old Fairview School will take place at a Special Township Meeting on Tuesday, March 16th, 2021 beginning at 6:00p.m.

Mayor Dodds first read aloud the e-mail responses received:

Deborah Kratzer, Hill Rd. wrote: I approve the proposal to sell the Old Fairview School. It is fiscally responsible to stop spending tax money to maintain a building that is so infrequently used to serve the needs of the community.

Paul Michael DiMeglio – Rt. 519 wrote: I'm fairly new here, but grew up in small agricultural 'rural' town that went down this road. In my childhood historic properties were demolished or sold, then the minimum lot sized reduced, and finally, some of the best farmland on the country became West Windsor. A horrible, charmless, cold suburbia. Let's NOT go down that road. I hope the Township reconsiders this seemingly rushed sale, with little public notice, until much further in the future. I can see better uses to the town and community from this property. I vote that for now, that we Save the School; and do not accept the 'winning' bid at this time.

Comments from the Public Present at the Meeting:

Township Historian, Betty DeSapio: Stated the Old Fairview School is not all that old and it would not qualify as an historical building, but more of a sentimental value. She noted that she has been in the building many times with her husband and prior Township Historian Sal DeSapio who never mentioned the building being of historical value.

Chuck Kolvites, Member of the Parks and Recreation Committee: Commented that as a member of the Parks and Recreation Committee the Committee has had the responsibility to keep up the building. They have not had to keep it up much since he has been on the Committee. He noted there is a broken window, but feels that it could still be used for many reasons. He feels that it has been around for 100 years and that it has value to the residents of the township. He stated he feels that the township should not sell the property and school house at this time.

William Pandy, Spring Hill Road: Commented that he has several reasons why the township should not sell the property. One is that his father went to school there. He feels the Old Fairview School should be preserved and kept as part of the history in Kingwood Township. As Chairman of the Farmland Preservation Committee, he feels there is a lot of meaning to that building. He feels that the building could be used as a community supported agriculture center for farmers and residents to sell their produce, vegetables, eggs, and chickens like other towns. He named a few towns that have centers to sell their items.

Phillip Lubitz, Federal Twist Road: Commended the Township Committee for giving the public a chance to comment on their thoughts regarding the Old Fairview School. He mentioned there has been some discussion on the Kingwood Facebook page. He would like to see the township think about a longtime formal plan, such as creating a list for historical preservation sites for Kingwood, which would be eligible for historical preservation. Perhaps a portion of the sale can go towards the development of a historical preservation plan.

Mary MacConnell, Spring Hill Road Commented she understands the interest to sell the building and the concerns for the expenses to maintain it, but she does not feel that it is one of the buildings that should be sold. She explained there were a lot of historical happenings and memories at the Old Fairview School, which were meetings that took place and made decisions regarding the town's history. The school was also the municipal building for a long time, where several marriages took place and residents voted. Several trees were planted outside the building in memory of a resident who did a lot of volunteering for the township over the years. She wanted to know what the township will do with the trees and plaques. She asked what the township plans on doing with the historical documents that were stored at the building and if they will be digitized to be kept electronically. Also recommended it is a good location if the township is still interested in building a new municipal building. She also would like to see the Township appoint another Historian. She hopes the township reconsiders their decision to sell.

Mayor Dodds noted that the Township appointed Betty DeSapio as the new Historian at the last Township Committee Meeting.

Historian Betty DeSapio - Answered Mary MacConnell's questions regarding the historical documents. Betty DeSapio explained the Kingwood School took the pictures that were hanging on the walls of all the old school houses in the township. She and her husband Sal DeSapio had talked in the past about the historical documents and that they should be stored at the County Historical Society in Flemington.

She explained the location the documents were stored in at the Old Fairview School, were not an environmentally safe place for them to be stored. The files have been taken by the Hunterdon County Historical Society to be stored in a safe, dry location. She explained that members of the Historical Society of Kingwood Township are able to obtain copies of the documents at any time.

Tiina Seres, Resident —Wanted to express her thoughts and is in favor of the township holding onto the Old Fairview School. She noted she does not know that much about the building or the history but, feels that the Old Fairview School is part of the charm of the township. She asked the township what the township is planning to do with the proceeds from the sale. She expressed that if the township does not need to sell this property for any real reason, she hopes they decide to hold on to it.

Mayor Dodds — Answered the question from Tina Seres. He noted the proceeds will be put into the General Fund and then into the Capital Budget for capital expenditure costs.

Beth Pandy, Spring Hill Road - Expressed she is against the township selling the building. Feels there is a lot of Kingwood history that happened there over the years. There is nothing wrong with feeling sentimental about a building. It means a lot to the residents of the township. Feels it was used a lot more when it was open all year long. She stated that when the township decided to close the building for the winter months, that organizations who used the building needed it all year and had to find another location. She explained it was used by many organizations including the Merry Mixers, Healthy Bones, Yoga, Tia Chi, Historical Society and many other groups. She feels it was a long time ago when the building was built in 1916 and that it is a big part of the history of Kingwood Township.

Lois Voronin – Noted she was there to listen and did not have any comments.

Maureen Syrnick, Committeewoman - Noted the money can be used to go towards a new municipal building. To answer to Mary MacConnell's question, the township did look into that property for the new municipal building to be built there, but it is not large enough and there is no where for parking.

Betty DeSapio –Stated as the township's Historian, she plans to find another location for the Historical Society to meet.

Deputy Mayor – Ciacciarelli Commented that it is not the same building it used to be.

Beth Pandy - Asked why isn't it, and why wasn't it used for anything any longer. Feels it is nice to have a place in the township to attend to a meeting or class, in place of driving further away.

Michele Tipton-Walters - Explained why the Merry Mixers do not use the building any longer. She noted that the plumbing was always breaking down and they could not use the bathrooms.

Jack MacConnell – Spring Hill Road –Stated that the building had proposals and estimates of what it would cost to extend the municipal building before they moved the municipal building to its current location.

Paul Michael DiMegilo - Noted he is the one who left the e-mail earlier. He grew up in a community that did away with all the historical buildings and feels that it turned into suburbia. He feels that the township should think about it and use it for community affairs.

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Mayor Dodds hopes that everyone that attended had a chance to speak. He noted that the decision for the future for the Old Fairview School will be discussed at a Special Township Meeting on Tuesday, March 16th, beginning at 6:00p.m.

The Township Committee thanked everyone who attended and for their comments and suggestions.

Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Ciacciarelli, seconded by Miss Syrnick and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:15P.M. **All** voted **Aye** on **Roll Call Vote**.

Respectfully submitted,

**Cynthia L. Keller, RMC
Township Clerk**