

MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP
SPECIAL MEETING
MUNICIPAL COURT – SHARED SERVICE

Tuesday, December 28, 2021 at 9:00 am

This meeting has been advertised in accordance with the statutes of the State of New Jersey.

This meeting was held in-person and via teleconference to accommodate all entities involved in the proposed Shared Service.

Present: Ken Whildin, Mayor
Bill Ashton, Deputy Mayor
Joe Sterling, Committeeman
Denise L. Peterson, Municipal Clerk

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Whildin

Roll Call Mr. Whildin – Present
Mr. Ashton – Present
Mr. Sterling, - Present

Guest Attendees: Richard Tonetta, Solicitor for City of Vineland (teleconference)
Susan Baldosaro, City of Vineland (teleconference)
Robert Dickenson, Administrator City of Vineland (teleconference)
Rachele Dippolito, Municipal Court Administrator Vineland (teleconference)

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss proposed Shared Services for Municipal Court services.

Discussion

Shared Service for the Municipal Court with the City of Vineland

Mr. Tonetta stated that the county is conducting a study regarding the consolidation of the municipal courts and that Maurice River may want to look into participating. Mr. Tonetta offered that regionalization of the municipal courts is being pushed on the state level. At this time Vineland is not interested in the consolidation of the municipal courts as this will cause the municipal courts to lose their individual identity.

Mr. Tonetta explained that the Vineland Court presently has two judges. The municipalities looking into a Shared Service agreement with Vineland are Maurice River, Newfield and Millville. With a Shared Service any of these municipalities and change if things do not work out. With a Shared Service all municipalities will maintain their identities.

Mr. Tonetta stated that the answers to Maurice River's question were forwarded by email. Vineland is trying to set this Shared Service up so that neither Vineland or Maurice River tax payers have to pay more. Vineland is in the process adding another courtroom. The cost to each municipality will be based upon usage by each municipality. Millville appears to still be interested but not final decision has been made yet. All major improvements will be paid by Vineland. Janitorial and general maintenance will be split between the participating municipalities. It is proposed that this agreement would be for 5 years with an annual evaluation and review by all municipalities.

It was discussed that should the Maurice River Township Municipal Court Administrator leave prior to the finalization of the Shared Service agreement that a Shared Service could be arranged between Maurice River and Vineland to cover the present Maurice River court.

Mr. Whildin explained that he had spoken with Matt Pisarski, CC Planning regarding the County's study and it appeared that since Maurice River and Vineland were already discussing a Shared Service agreement that Maurice River's participation in the study would not be necessary. Mr. Tonetta clarified that he and Judge Telsey were conversing about the Maurice River and Millville regarding this proposed Shared Service and Judge Telsey simply made a point that it couldn't hurt but was not necessary to participate in the County's study.

Mr. Whildin expressed concern about future costs and the prospect that they might be inflated. Mr. Tonetta stated that all major costs are Vineland's responsibility.

Mr. Whildin explained that all along a concern has been that Maurice River's current Municipal Court Administrator will be losing her job and asked about the recent advertisement by Vineland for a position in their court. Ms. Dippolito, Vineland MCA, explained that they were hiring for a bilingual 'clerk' and also hiring to replace a retired 'clerk'. Mr. Tonetta indicated that possibly in a year or so they may need another clerk but now they are covered. Mr. Tonetta stated that they do not want to hire and increase the costs to everyone unnecessarily. Mr. Dickenson indicated that should she want to apply they may be able to place her in another position in the City of Vineland.

Mr. Ashton stated he had concerns about what the situation would look like in the second year but with explanation provided by email he is more comfortable. Mr. Tonetta explained that he previously did joint courts for Buena and Woodbine. With what is presently proposed in this Shared Service arrangement things could change in the future. Mr. Tonetta added that the Vineland Municipal Court building has space for expansion and presently is underutilized.

Mr. Tonetta confirmed that there will be an annual meeting of all participating municipalities regarding the budget and proposed costs for the following year. Mr. Ashton stated he does not believe that Maurice River needs to get involved with the County study and is confident that the Township Committee can make a decision that is best for the residents and the Township. Mr. Tonetta explained that the County study is state funded and funneled down to the county.

Mr. Sterling stated that his primary concern is finding the present Municipal Court Administrator a position due to the loss of her job and is okay with moving forward.

It was discussed when the Shared Service would start and whether May would be a good target date. Mr. Tonetta stated he believed it could be started seen is everyone was in agreement and that Judge Telsey was on board with this agreement.

Public Comment

Mr. Ashton motioned to open for public comment at 9:32 am; seconded by Mr. Sterling.

Roll Call: Ayes – Ashton, Sterling, Whildin Nays – None

There being no public comment, Mr. Ashton motioned to close the public comment at 9:33 am; seconded by Mr. Sterling.

Roll Call: Ayes – Ashton, Sterling, Whildin Nays – None

Adjournment

Mr. Ashton made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Sterling.

Denise L. Peterson, Municipal Clerk