



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
500 Mill Road
Absecon, New Jersey 08201

Carie A. Crone, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Phone (609) 641-0663x101
Fax (609) 645-5098

CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

OCTOBER 5TH, 2023 6:30 PM

MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Betty Howell, Tommy Marrone, and Council President Nick LaRotonda

ABSENT: Councilmen Rich DeRose and Steve Light

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Solicitor Bill Blaney Esq., City Engineer Ed Dennis, Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson, Clerk Carie Crone, Police Chief JR Laughlin

STATEMENT OF THE SUNSHINE LAW & NOTIFICATION THAT THIS MEETING IS ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

15 Establishing salary ranges for the City of Absecon.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

Jessica Thompson: This ordinance is to change the salary range for one position, that being the Police Chief. The range has been extended due to a new contract.

Council President LaRotonda: Commented that the Police Chief's contract expired in April, but that he and the City have recently come to an agreement.

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on November 2nd, 2023.

2023 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #13-2023: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilman Cain

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – No; LaRotonda – No

- 13** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 282 – Sewers, Article IX-Rates, Section 49-Sewer Charges and Section 51, Payment of Sewer Charges; Changes in Charges.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #13-2023: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilman Cain
All in Favor, None Opposed

Councilwoman Howell: Considering Councilman Marrone and Council President LaRotonda seemed to agree on the ordinance at the last Closed Session, questioned why they voted against.

Councilman Marrone: Clarified that she is referring to the Closed Session that she was not present for.

Council President LaRotonda: Constituents have reached out, expressing their concerns about the significance of the sewer rate increase. Has been consistently vocal, in all conversations touched on the topic, that he would prefer for the City to implement incremental sewer rate increases. Because the general consensus of Council at the time seemed to support the ordinance, he put it on the Council Meeting Agenda. However, he still believes the sewer rates should not be raised all-at-once, and, rather, would prefer the implementation of incremental increases. Does not support arbitrarily increasing sewer rates to \$500. Criticized the City for not addressing the need for rate increases at any time over the past 8 years. Believes the City should have implemented a less drastic, and more appropriate, rate raise. Concluded by pointing out how that was not an option anymore, since the Ordinance was just passed.

Councilman Marrone: Echoed Council President LaRotonda' sentiments. Shared that multiple people have reached out to him regarding legitimate concerns about the sewer rate increase, and after thorough reflection, decided that he opposed the terms of the ordinance. Asserted that it was his duty to listen to his constituents when making tough decisions. Reviewed the historical sewer data again, and is concerned that over the past 10 years, there has been absolutely no rate increases, and that over the past 5 years, the City has been steadily draining their surplus. Understands the need to increase the City's sewer rates, but opposes the financial burden an increase as drastic as this may inflict. Affirmed that the City's current situation is resultant of previous Administrations' failure to take necessary action, all the while running the Sewer fund well dry. Acknowledged the indisputable need for the City to raise its sewer rate, but does not believe a single record-high increase of \$100, is justifiable. Believes the City should systematically and affordably raise rates annually in smaller increments, instead of implementing this all-at-once sewer rate increase to \$500. Argued that it irresponsible of the City to place this financial burden on its residents, and therefore he will not support it. Lamented the unfortunate nature of the situation.

Motioned to close the public portion: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #13-2023: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – No; LaRotonda – No

Ordinance #13-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #14-2023: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

- 14** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 330, to designate a Multi-way Stop Intersection at Pennsylvania and Oakhurst Avenue.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #14-2023: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
All in Favor, None Opposed

No Discussion.

Motioned to close the public portion: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #14-2023: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #14-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

2023 RESOLUTIONS – CONSENT AGENDA

- 125** Authorizing a refund of a partial payment of taxes on the property located at 30 E. Faunce Landing Rd. (Block 93, Lot 4).
- 126** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2023 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$4,000.00 from the Federal Body Armor Fund.
- 127** Authorizing the award of a non-fair and open contract for Special Legal Counsel.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

Motioned to open to the public: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilwoman Cain; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

CONSENT AGENDA: All matters listed under item, Consent Agenda, are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be discussed separately.

Motioned to move the Consent Agenda: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$ 1,951,793.06

Motioned to accept: Councilwoman Cain; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 9/21/23

Motioned to accept: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Absent; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

REPORTS

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Met yesterday and will meet again on Wednesday, November 1st at 4:30PM. Topics of discussion at the last meeting included the feather flag ordinance (collaborating with Code Enforcement on specifics) and a tour of the impressive new White Horse Liquors facility given to several members of the Governing Body. Noted the significance of White Horse Liquor's investment in the City. Reminded the public that Oddball Vintage will be having their second Sunday flea market that upcoming weekend. There will be pumpkin painting, costume contest, and pet costume contest. Mentioned that he, himself, has the honor of being one of the judges of the pet costume contest.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance: Were unable to meet in September. Asked J. Thompson whether she had any financial update to report.

J. Thompson: The City had their bond sale in which they secured an amazing rate of about 2.9%. Also discussed renewing the City's insurance with the JIF. She and the Risk Management Consultant considered going with two other companies, but the City was declined by one alternative and the other was of a lesser quality than the current insurance. Mentioned factors effecting the City's ultimate decision to renew insurance with JIF, including the state of the property market.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked whether the City pursued other insurance companies via Request for Proposal (RFP).

J. Thompson: The City did not announce an RFP, but, instead, sought out other companies that could possibly be an improvement. Indicated that not many companies offer such comprehensive coverage, and so there are very few alternatives available.

Councilwoman Cain: Thanked J. Thompson for her due diligence. Next Finance Meeting will be Thursday October 19th at 5:30PM.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs: This past Monday, Absecon Historical Society had a well-attended and successful Fall Dinner, which featured a Speaker who came to discuss the Battalion at the Battle of Trenton. The Senior Center has posted their October Calendar. Notable events include: Free Senior Citizen Flu Shots (10/12); Royal Sweets Trivia (10/17); Info Session about the effect of medication on people as they age, hosted by a member of the AtlantiCare Trauma Team (10/24); and, October Meal and Halloween bags (10/26). St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will be providing free flu shots on 10/31 from 10AM-12PM. Committee met earlier that evening. Reminded the public of the upcoming Shredding Day and Community Clean-up scheduled for Saturday, October 7th from 9AM-12PM. Announced the Movie in the Park, on October 13th at 6PM, will feature the movie Hotel Transylvania. Mentioned that the Police Dept. will be setting the movie

up and that Officer Andrew Southrey will be spookifying the scene. The Mother's Club will also be there selling items. The Committee is now planning the City's Holiday Tree Lighting. More information will be provided at a later date.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works: Has not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be on October 17th at 3:30PM.

Councilman Burroughs – Parks & Playgrounds: Has not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be on October 17th at 7PM.

Council President LaRotonda: On behalf of Councilman Light, commended Public Works for their work on the Veteran's Parkway sign bases and on lining the fields.

Chief Laughlin – Public Safety: Addressed the City's flooding issue. Condemned the people who, despite apparent flooding, drive around traffic cones and through closed roadways, and end up flooding their vehicles and requiring towing. Emphasized the time and energy it takes for the officers of the Police Dept. to set up and move around the traffic cones, signs, etc. Commended the officers for all their efforts in, not only preparing proper precautions, but for also going into flood waters to rescue people who have ignored traffic signals. Encouraged the public to join the City's Move in the Park on Friday the 13th. On Friday, October 20th, Absecon schools will have Trunk or Treat and the Police will be hosting their Haunted Hallways. Shared that, for these special events, Absecon's Police Officers are attending on their own time, so strongly encouraged everyone to join them.

Council President LaRotonda: Shared that Council has been working with Chief Laughlin in regard to speeding issues in residential areas. Chief Laughlin and his officers have been going around setting up speedometers and monitoring different areas. Thanked the Police Dept. for their continued action. Appealed to the public to please respect speed limits and to drive with more caution and care. Shared that he sent an email to the County about the City's concern with speeding on Pitney Road, as well as concerns about the turning lane on Wyoming Avenue, and they responded by telling him that the County Engineering team will look into the matter. The County has already completed their tree maintenance along the sidewalks on New Jersey Ave.

Councilman Marrone: Thanked Chief Laughlin and the Police Dept. for all their hard work, specifically in regard to helping people in flooding situations.

Michael Reilly: Mentioned the idea of setting up permanent fences to close roads during flooding.

Chief Laughlin: Noted that it was a great idea.

Mayor Horton: Announced that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and emphasized the importance of education and early detection. Shared that this past January 17th, 2023, the Atlantic County Firefighter's Association commemorated 100 years of service. The anniversary will be celebrated this upcoming Saturday, October 7th from 12PM-5PM at the Egg Harbor City Lake, beginning with a parade down Philadelphia Ave. Wrote a Proclamation, which will be read by Mayor Lisa Jiampetti, honoring the Atlantic County Firefighter's Association. Received a letter earlier that day from County Executive, Dennis Levinson, stating that he will honor Council President LaRotonda's request for the County to conduct a traffic study on Pitney Road. Recognized the City's Public Works Dept. for their hard work beautifying City Hall and the Veteran's way sign base.

Ed Dennis – City Engineer: Had the Pre-Construction Meeting for the Road Program Project and work is anticipated to begin later this month. Drainage work will be completed on Highland Blvd. before milling and paving work begins there. They are in the process of soliciting (3-4) quotes for the water and sewer hookup at the Heritage Park Concession Stand. Once the City has received the pricings, they will make a recommendation on who to award the project to, so that they can get the

contract settled and work scheduled. Have already awarded a contract for the sewer (video) inspections. He worked with Lloyd Jones of Public Works to decide specific areas of priority. They have funding from the ACIA to extend the sidewalk on Mill Road in the area near the 9/11 Memorial. The plans are complete and have been sent to the ACIA for ultimate approval. Once the ACIA approves the plans, the project will go out to bid.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked whether they plan to use asphalt or cement for the project.

E. Dennis: Concrete sidewalk will extend down Mill Road and to the walking path and a cut through to the park will be made of asphalt. Streetscape plans for New Jersey Ave., alongside the new White Horse Liquors site, are almost finalized. The plans have been sent to Atlantic City Electric, who will be installing street lighting (similar to the completed section of New Jersey Ave.) They will review the plans and provide the City a price, so that the City can move forward. The plans have also been sent to the County, however, because that portion is actually a County Rd. This will precipitate an Interlocal Agreement (required by the County) that will eventually be brought to Council for approval. Once those two tasks are complete, the project will be ready to go out to bid. Recognized the prioritization of the project, especially considering that White Horse Liquors is preparing to open. Indicated awareness of recent flooding. Has been making some revisions to the Shore Rd. plans based on the County Engineer's feedback. Once that project is completed, there will be a significant reduction in the need for cones, signs, gates, etc. to block roadways off. Lastly, the Crestview Ave. Sidewalk Project plans are in a preliminary state. Next week letters will be sent to about a dozen property owners who will be specifically impacted by the sidewalk installation. Recognized that residents have very nice landscaping and driveways and assured that all will be done to minimize any negative impacts. They are striving to meet with home owners individually to show them the proposal, get their feedback, and make any necessary changes. Once that is settled, they will hold an open meeting for anyone else interested in the discussion.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked if there was any update about when the pedestrian crosswalk sign will be installed at 10th.

E. Dennis: Shared that he does not have any update. Last communication from the contractor indicated they were still waiting for the delivery of the actual sign.

PUBLIC PORTION

Motioned to open to the public: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Alex Perri – Green Team: Green Team has remained busy over the past several weeks cutting invasive plants down at Heritage Park. Wants to meet with Lloyd Jones to discuss invasive shrubs and small trees in the area. This past Sunday was their first Adopt-a-Road Cleanup (Downtown New Jersey Ave. to the American Legion) with about 15 volunteers in attendance. Looking forward to working with Community Affairs to plan more roadside cleanups. The last Green Team Monthly Meeting was this past Tuesday. Team members are excited to work with the City on the Community Garden. Thanked Council President LaRotonda for scheduling a meeting with Bill Blaney to discuss the project. Currently in the process of collecting information for the water station grant. They are considering possibly changing the day of their monthly meetings from the first Tuesday to maybe the second Monday. If a concrete decision is made, it will be announced. Has shared several ideas with the City (e.g. an invasive plant ordinance, the establishment of an Environmental Commission, a partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for restoration aid, etc.) Asked Council their thoughts regarding the proposals.

Council President LaRotonda: Reminded A. Perri that there will be an upcoming Code Enforcement meeting. The committee is newly formed and although there is no set schedule of specific dates, they plan to meet together on a quarterly basis. Informed A. Perri that his ideas and

proposals are currently on the next meeting's Agenda, and offered to have further discussion then. Indicated that all of Council seemed to support the creation of an Environmental Commission, but was intentionally waiting to make any official decisions until the Green Team was firmly established. Assured A. Perri that the creation of an Environmental Commission is an objective that they could certainly work towards.

Councilman Marrone: Praised the success of Absecon's Green Team. Commended their hard work and the visible impact they've accomplished. Affirmed Council's support for their ideas, but also asked for their patience.

A.Perri: Asked whether all members of the Governing Body have received the materials he has shared.

Council President LaRotonda: Confirmed.

Councilwoman Howell: Asked whether invasive species were likely growing on people's private property, and if so, how can it be addressed.

A.Perri: Stated that priority should be placed based on how dangerous the specific dangerous plant is. Recognized that during Council Meetings, members of the public have mentioned the presence of bamboo on their land. Bamboo has the ability to spread from one person's property to another. There are some invasive species currently located at Heritage Park that he is personally concerned with and wants to remove before there is further escalation. Emphasized the need for the City to specifically state that this is a problem, and also the need for the City to establish some kind of enforcement to prevent residents from allowing invasive proliferation.

Councilman Burroughs: Asked whether A.Perri considers English Ivy invasive.

A.Perri: Yes.

Councilman Burroughs: Shared that he personally likes the look of Ivy on his property, but he understands what A.Perri means in that the plant is very aggressive and maintenance is required.

Council President LaRotonda: Pointed out how discussion such as this is exactly the reason why the specifics of an invasive plant ordinance need to be thoroughly considered and determined by a Committee.

A.Perri: In regard to the sidewalk projects, asked whether they anticipated any tree removals involved in the construction.

E. Dennis: Does not recall exactly. But indicated that, very generally, the sidewalk will be right at the edge of the road and maybe even extend into the current road.

Council President LaRotonda: Is fairly certain that, for the sidewalk projects, there are no plans to remove trees.

A.Perri: Recently spoke with Councilman DeRose who stated that he reached out to the LSRP assigned to the former BP gas station. Emphasized the importance of understanding the extent of pollution at the property.

Mike Reilly – 444 4th Street: In regard to an invasive species ordinance, asked how specifics would be determined.

Council President LaRotonda: Informed M. Reilly how they have not yet reached a point of even drafting an ordinance. Indicated that the City would likely look at similar ordinances in other Municipalities as references.

M. Reilly: Asked whether the City was looking into reconfiguring the intersection on Ohio Ave.

E. Dennis: Although they considered possibly including the idea in the road elevation project, they determined that this project could not offer the improvements required to address that specific matter. In discussion with the County, they concluded that a possible reconfiguration would require more study first.

M. Kelly: Suggested making Station Ave. a one-way street.

E. Dennis: Shared that the idea has been considered before, but it becomes complicated because traffic in other areas are inevitably affected. In order for the idea to be considered further, a larger traffic study would be required.

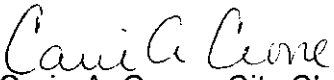
Council President LaRotonda: Spoke with the County about how the development on Westcoat will affect traffic in Absecon. The County indicated that they will be looking into the matter.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
All in Favor, None Opposed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned to adjourn: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 11-2-2023