



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

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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 15TH, 2024 6:30 PM
MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Sandy Cain, Alex Clark, Richard DeRose, Steve Light, Tommy Marrone, Christine Parker, and Council President Nick LaRotonda

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Solicitor Bill Blaney Esq., Labor Attorney Nicole Curio Esq., City Clerk Carie Crone, and Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2024 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #04-2024: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Clark
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

- 04** To exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to establish a Cap Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A-45.14).

Council President LaRotonda: Reminded Council that Jessica Thompson previously explained how an Ordinance of this nature is routine for the Budget process.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #04-2024: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
All in Favor, None Opposed.

No discussion.

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #04-2024: Councilman Marrone;
Seconded: Councilman Light
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #04-2024 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #05-2024: Councilman DeRose; Seconded:
Councilman Light
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

- 05** Amending and supplementing Chapter 250 “Parks, Playgrounds and Recreations Areas” of the Absecon Code to provide for the establishment of a Community Garden and repealing all Ordinances heretofore adopted, the provisions of which are inconsistent therewith.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #05-2024:
Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker All in Favor, None Opposed.

Alex Perri – 620 Yarmouth Avenue: As Chairman of the Absecon Green Team, thanked Council for their effort to create and pass this Ordinance. Intends to achieve Sustainable Jersey Certification. Shared the benefits of a community garden (e.g. community connection, access to resources, educational opportunities). Ordinance #05-24 is written so that the City may earn points to eventually earn their Sustainable Jersey Certification.

Motioned to close the public portion: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #05-2024: Councilman DeRose;
Seconded: Councilman Marrone
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #05-2024 has been heard and is finally approved.

2024 RESOLUTIONS – CONSENT AGENDA

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.

- 51** Authorizing the use of Competitive Contracting to solicit bids for Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) in the City of Absecon.
- 52** Establishing rules, regulations, application processes and selection criteria for Community Garden Plot Licenses.
- 53** Authorizing Change Order No. 2 for the 2023 Road Program for the City of Absecon.

- 54 Appointing a Part Time Regular Crossing Guard and a Part Time Substitute Crossing Guard.
- 55 Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon Blue Devils.
- 56 Authorizing a refund of an overpayment of taxes for the 1st Quarter of 2024 on the listed property.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

No discussion.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Parker
All in Favor, None Opposed.

CONSENT AGENDA VOTE

Motioned to move Consent Agenda: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
Roll Call: Cain - Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose - Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone - Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$ 1,779,952.76

Motioned to accept: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Cain - Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose - Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone - Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Closed Session as to form and content only – 1/18/2024

Motioned to accept: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Light
Roll Call: Cain - Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose - Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone - Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

REPORTS

Councilwoman Parker – Community Affairs: Has not since last meeting. They continue to work on preparing for the Senior Brunch. Flyers for their Earth Day event, which will be on Saturday, April 20th, have been dispersed. Next meeting will be on March 7th at 5:30PM.

Councilwoman Cain – Economic Development: First meeting of the year occurred on February 7th, and was attended by Councilmembers Cain, Marrone, and Clark. Stated that the meeting was very productive. Established a plan to get updated information from the City's cannabis businesses. The City Administrator will contact the businesses to check in on their current statuses and anticipated timelines. Indicated that issues with State licensing have caused delays. New businesses anticipated soon to open in Absecon include Chipotle (Route 30), Jersey Cow (Mill Rd.), and a brewery. Will be in contact with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance to schedule a meeting for them to come to Absecon to discuss economic ideas. Hoping to resurrect the ABCD (similar to a which existed to provide resources to local businesses. Next meeting will be March 6th at 6PM.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety: Next meeting will be March 4th at 6PM. Last meeting focused on budgetary details in regard to all of Absecon's Public Safety organizations.

Chief Laughlin: In recent years, the Police Dept. has intentionally advertised for new hires ahead of schedule and before there is an urgent need for more police officers. Explained the lengthy hiring process and requirements. Will soon release a new recruiting video. Reiterated that, while the Department does not have current plans to hire any officers, will benefit from acquiring a list of potential candidates, in the case it is needed. Condemned local speeding, especially that of Absecon residents. Disapproved of the hard time many speeding residents give Police Officers, once they are pulled over and expect special treatment for being a tax payer. Encouraged the public to properly prepare so that no one is rushing and driving recklessly. Stated that it's most important for Absecon's residents to recognize the harm in speeding on your own streets, in your own city.

Councilman DeRose: Revealed that many residents have noticed the impact of the Police's commitment to address the city's speeding issue. On behalf of the community and himself, expressed his appreciation for the Chief and his Department's hard work.

Council President LaRotonda: Echoed Councilman DeRose's sentiment.

Councilman Marrone – Public Works: Shared brewery-related news that, this weekend, there will be an unveiling for Pineland Brewery in Tuckerton. Pineland Brewery has let Royal Bine Brewery (soon to open in Absecon) brew one of their beers, and there will be a tasting at their upcoming weekend event. Public Works has not met since the last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be March 4th at 5PM. Encourages public attendance, especially if there are any public works-related or code enforcement-related matters wished to be discussed.

Councilman Clark – Finance: Met briefly before the Council Meeting. Next meeting will be March 21st. Currently in the midst of budget season so have been working hard to make sure the City uses their money in the best most efficient way.

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds: Have not met since last Council meeting. Will meet again on the 20th at 7PM. Public is welcome. Topics of discussion will include Concerts in the Park (Selection Committee) and concern about the status of some playground equipment.

Council President LaRotonda: Provided an update from the ACUA about the landfill odor. Spoke with ACUA President Matt DeNafo earlier today. At a meeting that occurred about a month prior, the ACUA assure the City that steps would be taken to alleviate the odor plaguing local residents, however he has yet to observe any progress. He, along with other Councilmembers, have made plans to take a tour of the ACUA, led by M. DeNafo, to see for themselves the efforts taken to mitigate the issue. Assured the public that they will continue to put the pressure on them.

Councilwoman Cain: Shared that she and Mayor Horton took a tour of the ACUA facilities about 10 years prior. Described the interesting process she observed during the tour. Encouraged Councilmembers to attend if available.

Council President LaRotonda: Assured them that he will send the details out to all the members of the Governing Body.

City Clerk: Monthly Report – January 2024

- Municipal Court: \$2,839.51
- Tax Office: \$1,928,987.26
- Construction Office: \$5,684
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$5,068

Mayor Kim Horton: Observed Susan B. Anthony Day (2/15) and explained her importance in history, as a prominent suffragette. Shared that Girl Scout Cookie season had begun. Encouraged everyone to support the Girl Scouts with some cookie purchases. This weekend (Sat & Sun) the Scouts will be at the American Legion from 10AM-1PM, and next weekend (Sat & Sun) they will be

at the Absecon ShopRite 10AM-4PM. Announced that she had signed up for the Mayor's Wellness Campaign and scheduled Wellness Walks for 11AM on 2/3 and 3/2. They will walk two laps around Heritage Park, which is equivalent to about 1mi. Suggested that attendees bring a friend and prepare to make new ones, while getting healthy. Intends to host Wellness Walks on the first Saturday of each month. Encouraged the public to join.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Michael Troiano – 316 Ohio Avenue: Discussed the Planned Parenthood facility in Absecon, which is located next to his house. Reached out to Planned Parenthood to find out whether abortions would be performed in its Absecon location, and it was confirmed that they would be. Expressed his inability to now live at his house. Acknowledged that there was nothing that could be done to close the establishment, as the facility is permitted in the property's zoning.

Council President LaRotonda: Clarified to M. Troiano, that Council does not determine Planning or Zoning in Absecon. Elaborated on to explain that the Planning and Zoning Boards are autonomous. The City does not approve or disapprove any businesses in the city. Because Planned Parenthood is permitted in the zone, they do not have to come to the City to seek any approvals.

M. Troiano: Asked for clarification about the specifics of the property's zoning.

Bill Blaney: Explained that the Planning & Zoning Office can provide him the information he seeks.

M. Troiano: Complained that, because of the Planned Parenthood facility, he no longer wants to live at his house, but also complained that he doesn't want move out of Absecon. Criticized Planned Parenthood for installing new unsightly generators that are now required as a result of COVID-related regulation. Mentioned foul odor coming from the property.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked whether M. Troiano had reached out to Code Enforcement about the issues.

M. Troiano: Claimed that the City told him to call the agency to have it taken care of. Complained that he has to go to the Zoning Board to find out more information. Expressed his desire to find whoever is responsible for Planned Parenthood's establishment in Absecon.

Councilman DeRose: Does not know who incorrectly suggested to M. Troiano that he approach Council about this matter, but assured him that he would provide answers (although admitted the answers might not be the answers M. Troiano wants to hear). Gave M. Troiano his contact information and offered to get him any Zoning information he may need.

M. Troiano: Shared that Planned Parenthood offered to build a fence to provide M. Troiano's house more privacy, which he rejected. Claimed that the Planned Parenthood in Absecon is the only facility of its kind which is located next to a residence.

Councilman DeRose: Echoed his previous offer to provide information so that M. Troiano may reach the appropriate contacts.

Jackie Armstrong – Egg Harbor Township resident: Shared that her family used to own a lumber yard across the street from the current Planned Parenthood location. Claimed that her mother was selective in who she sold their lumberyard to. Suggested that having an abortion is now a "cool main-stream thing to do." Expressed her opinion that she is repulsed by the presence of the Planned Parenthood facility and accused the organization of "killing babies." Intends to go to the City's Zoning Board meeting to express her opposition to the establishment. Urged Council to support the people who oppose Planned Parenthood's presence in the City. Cited Holy Spirit High School, which is located less than a mile from the "abortion clinic." Suggested that Planned Parenthood's presence and "availability" would have a negative influence on the girls attending HSHS. Referred to Absecon's rich history of family values.

Council President LaRotonda: Reminded J. Armstrong, that the Absecon City Council has no authority in determining Land-Use. Council does not have a say in who buys property for operation.

B. Blaney: Explained that properties are specifically zoned, and if an operation fits in the zoning, they may use the property for that use. There is nothing that can be done at the local-level to prevent Planned Parenthood from operating in Absecon at that property.

Tricia Bradberry – Egg Harbor Township resident: Has children who attend HSHS. Considers the Absecon Planned Parenthood facility offensive to HSHS and the parents who pay the tuition for their children to attend. Agreed with M. Troiano that the presence of the “abortion clinic” will be a problem for Absecon residents, as is the “abortion clinic” currently located in Galloway. Wants to know what will happen to “the remains.” Noted that the facility is required to be contracted with a biohazard disposal company and admitted that she believes they will be, but suspects that the facility disposes of “the remains” in many other ways. Urged thorough investigation. Demanded regulation be imposed on their signage. Claimed that Planned Parenthood signage is targeting HSHS students (i.e. “No judgement, just healthcare.”) Suggested the referred “judgement” contradicts the lesson of Final Judgement. Emphasized parental rights.

Council President LaRotonda: Emphasized, again, that the City does not have the authority to prevent Planned Parenthood from operating at that location. Offered to point those who oppose the facility in the right direction, to people who could be influential in the matter, however nothing can be guaranteed by Absecon Council.

B. Blaney: The State Legislature is the body who would be passing laws of that kind. Laws of that nature are not passed at the local level.

Councilman DeRose: Asked T. Bradberry to send him an email with her information so that he may remain in contact with her about the matter.

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

CLOSED SESSION - #57 – Contract Negotiations

B. Blaney: In accordance with the Open Records Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, the City Council went into Closed Session. Closed Session is to discuss union contract negotiations, and no action will be taken after.

Motioned to enter Closed Session: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Light
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(Closed Session)

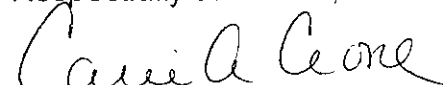
Motioned to adjourn Closed Session and re-enter the meeting: Councilman Marrone; Seconded:

Councilman Clark
All in Favor, None Opposed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned to adjourn: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 5/2/24