



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 16TH, 2023 6:30 PM

MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson, City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Solicitor Bill Blaney Esq., Deputy City Clerk Mary Fetske, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

OATHS OF OFFICE – POLICE

Chief Laughlin: Introduced a new FT officer and Class II officer. Pleased to bring the number of City Police Officers up to 28.

- FT Police Officer Daniel Ramirez
- Class II Officer Michael Barbagallo

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

06 To exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to establish a Cap Bank.

Jessica Thompson: This ordinance is done each year to establish a Cap bank. While the City has not ever exceeded cap, the ordinance is done to protect the City.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; 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 March 2nd, 2023.

2023 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #04-2023: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

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

- 04** Releasing, Extinguishing, and vacating the rights of the public in a paper street known as Madison Square located in the City of Absecon and conveying a portion of said land to an adjacent property owner.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #04-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(No Discussion)

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #04-2023: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Light

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

Ordinance #04-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #05-2023: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Light

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

- 05** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 224 – Land Use and Development, Article XX – Site Plan Review, Section 128 – Parking

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #05-2023: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(Discussion)

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #05-2023: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman DeRose

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

Ordinance #05-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

2023 RESOLUTIONS

- 39 Approving Settlement of Richard Rivera v. City of Absecon, et al.
- 40 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 41 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 42 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 43 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 44 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 45 Authorizing a Refund of an overpayment of taxes for 1st Qtr. 2023 on the listed property.
- 46 Applying for a LEAP Implementation Grant
- 47 Authorizing the Mayor to enter into an amended agreement with Atlantic County and the City of Absecon for the reconstruction and elevation of a section of Shore Rd. (CR 585) that is subject to repetitive flooding

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

(No Discussion)

Motioned to close to the public: Councilwoman Howell; 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.

Council President LaRotonda read Resolutions #39-47 by title.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$1,726,961.41

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman DeRose

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Closed Session as to form and content only – 12/15/22

Motioned to accept: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Marrone

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

REPORTS

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds Committee: Haven't met yet, but will meet on February 21st at 7PM in the Conference Room. Topics of discussion will include Concerts in Park details. Several bands have already contacted him and he has invited them to join the meeting. Grant information for park improvements will also be discussed.

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Shared exciting economic development news. On New Jersey Ave., Royal Bine Brewery is currently under construction. Had pleasant discussion with the owner who indicated their excitement and high esteem for Absecon, as well as Mayor Horton. They are eager to open their business and aid in the much-needed rejuvenation of New Jersey Ave. Their positivity and enthusiasm were both refreshing and encouraging.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked for an anticipated time of opening.

Councilman Marrone: Indicated, according to the owner, that they have run into several delays. During a conversation, the owner shared that while they originally planned to open in late spring/early summer, the different delays have pushed the anticipated time of opening back, instead, to late summer. The owners are very committed to the city. Next Economic Development Committee Meeting will be on March 1st.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance Committee: Met that afternoon at 4PM, and were later joined by other Councilmembers and a resident at 5:30PM. Within their meetings today and last Thursday, time was spent time going over the budget and beginning the budget process. They discussed matters such as salaries and a vacancy in City Hall. Next Budget Meeting will be next Thursday, where they hope to complete most of the budget. Next Finance Meeting will be March 16th at 5:30PM at City Hall. The public is welcome.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs Committee: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be on March 2nd at 5:30PM.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety Committee: First Public Safety Meeting is next Tuesday at 6PM. Thanked the outstanding job done by the City's Police Dept. and simply for what they do every day. Thanked Community Affairs for hosting Coffee with a Cop. Received lots of great feedback regarding the event. Expressed appreciation to his fellow Councilmembers for bearing with him during the budget process. Encouraged the public to join.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be on next Tuesday at 3:30PM.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: Echoed Councilwoman Cain in mentioning their work on the budget. Thanked Council for their time and effort throughout the budget process.

M. Fetske – Clerk Report: Monthly Report – January 2023

- Municipal Court: \$8,523.88
- Tax Office: \$3,634,191.23
- Construction Office: \$16,316
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$5,123

E. Dennis: A lot of the Engineer projects are part of the budget conversation, so once the budget is ultimately determined, there will be much more for him to discuss. Public Works Meeting will be next week, during which, they will be discussing the upcoming Road Program and potential roads for that project.

Council President LaRotonda: Thanked E. Dennis for his help and clarification in another matter. Had received communication from residents asking about work was being done on their newly paved road, but E. Dennis confirmed that a test was being conducted. Since the City received a grant for the streets, they are required to submit a core sample to the State to prove they used the proper material.

Light: Asked for any updates regarding: happenings at the firehouse on New Jersey Ave., the status of the things with the firehouse's General Contractor, and, lastly, the status of things at the location of the ball field.

Dennis: In regard to items needing completion at the Firehouse, there has been significant progress and, while there are several tasks left to do, most are complete. The work being done the other day on the street referenced by Council President LaRotonda, was to correct an issue with settlement. Recently had a meeting with the contractor, the City has Special counsel helping the City to close out the contract (bond company also involved in the conversation). Significant progress has been made within the past 30-60 days. Anticipates several sub-contractors who have been essentially holding out, to finish their items within the next week or so. After that is completed, the City will be almost ready to close out their contract. There are no new updates on the former ball field. Reached out to the redeveloper earlier that day, but has yet to hear a response. There has been activity out there, as, in accordance with public knowledge, White Horse Wines is planning to begin construction there within the next few weeks.

Light: Impressed with the work being accomplished at the former hardware store, which was quite an eyesore. Asked whether he knows of any updates regarding the status of that company's project.

E. Dennis: Does not have any information.

Mayor Horton: Honored Holy Spirit High School with a Proclamation commemorating their centennial. Informed by Principal Dr. Farren that the school's Hall of Fame event last Friday was extremely successful, with over 500 people in attendance. Wished the school luck in its next 100 years. Thanked Absecon Police Dept. for implementing their Coffee with a Cop event last Saturday at Dunkin Donuts. The City's officers spent time interacting with residents and even went in the back to take and deliver orders at the drive-thru window. Thanked Chief Laughlin and his Police Officers for going the extra mile. Mentioned how, at the event, she and the Chief spoke with Dunkins District Leader, who informed them that, similar to Burger King, that they have plans to update their facade. Expects the look of Route 30 to be significantly improved when all this work is completed. Visited Girl Scout Troop 1146 at Absecon Shoprite to pass out badges and buy cookies. Councilman Burroughs visited also, and discussed scouting with the Troop Members. Was told by Troop #1146 that, with the money collected from cookies sales, they were planning on taking a trip to Ellis Island. Also visited Girl Scout Troop #1394 at Galloway Shoprite to pass out the remaining badges. Resumption of Mayor Office hours (temporarily suspended during COVID), which will be scheduled for Wednesday 2pm-4PM. Residents are welcome to pop in with concerns or just to say "hi."

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Alex Perri - 620 Yarmouth: Acknowledged the Committee formed to address the New York Ave. Subdivision Project. Asked whether there are any updates from the Committee Meeting and whether the meetings were open to the public.

Council President LaRotonda: Not personally on the Committee, but shared that his understanding is they are taking a step forward in the project to buy some time. Does not mean they are rushing into the project, just to ensure their approvals remain current and prevent their expiration.

Dennis: Informed that while the City's approvals are in place, there is still work needing to be done to formalize those approvals so that they're permanent. That being the only decision being made during the Committee Meeting.

Councilman Marrone: Estimated the meeting lasted well over an hour, but that it was not open to the public, as there was not enough time to publish proper advertising.

Bill Blaney: Added that another reason the meeting was not public is because many meetings of the kind require legal advice, as that occupied much of the first Committee Meeting. Legal advice involves attorneys giving advice regarding possible actions to proceed, potential legal ramifications, etc. The result of discussion in that meeting was ultimately, the City must do certain tasks within a certain time frame in order not to lose an opportunity. There was no decision to move forward in any other kind of way, however the City must take certain action to protect itself without wasting money.

Councilman Marrone: Another factor of the meeting which occupied a good portion of time, was that he and Councilmen Light, being new to the Committee, were provided with a significant amount of information in order to answer any questions and provide clarity on the situation.

A. Perri: In regard to upcoming budgetary considerations, asked the City to seriously consider dedicating some funds to green initiatives.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,



Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 4-6-23