



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 2ND, 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., City Clerk Carie Crone, Deputy Clerk Mary Fetske, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 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 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

Councilwoman Howell: Requested a more thoroughly explanation of the Ordinance.

Ed Dennis: Explained that there is paper street called Madison Square, in the industrial area off of Pleasant Ave., that runs through the woods between Summit Ave. and Pleasant Ave. Believes there was a request from the adjacent property owner on whether the City would be amendable to vacate the street. The City reviewed this case at the end of last year and it was determined they have no use for the Right of Way so vacating the street would out the street into productive use for the adjacent industrial property.

Bill Blaney: Asked whether it landlocked anything.

E. Dennis: Clarified that there was no landlock of any kind. Specified that the road would simply become part of the adjacent land.

Councilman LaRotonda: Asked the size of the area in question.

E. Dennis: The width is that of a regular street (about 30 ft) and the depth is not too significant. Informed Council that there is a legal description of the street that specifies those exact details. Elaborated that the paper street does connect to Summit Ave., and is almost parallel to Pleasant Ave. But emphasized that the street is not used by the City nor is it required.

Councilman DeRose: Asked, on behalf of the public, why does the City just give the space away, rather than sell it.

B. Blaney: These streets are generally created when someone has a parcel of land and they split them up into lots. They, then, assign a street so that people have access into these lots. The City does not pay for this property. State Statute requires that when the street is vacated, either or both adjacent property owners acquire ownership of the street. The areas are usually split between adjacent property owners.

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on February 16th, 2023.

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

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

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

Councilman LaRotonda: This was brought the City's attention by the Planning Board. In 2020 the City Planner recommended that the City reduce the parking requirements on New Jersey Ave. Currently, it's extremely difficult to meet the requirements to attain parking on New Jersey Ave. In order to get parking, the business would need to go in front of the Board and ask for an appeal. This is an attempt by the City to foster economic growth on New Jersey Ave. This Ordinance will make it much easier for businesses on New Jersey Ave. to thrive.

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on February 16th, 2023.

2023 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #01-2023: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilman Marrone

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

01 Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 77 – Police Department Fees.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #01-2023:

Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Howell

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 #01-2023: Councilman DeRose;
Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #01-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #02-2023: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded:
Councilman Light
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

02 Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 320 – Towing.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #02-2023:
Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Light
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(No Discussion)

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #02-2023: Councilman Light;
Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #02-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #03-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded:
Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

03 Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 69 – Police Department, Article I,
§69-2 – Requirements of Patrolman.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #03-2023:
Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilman Light
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(No Discussion)

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #03-2023: Councilman Cavileer;
Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #03-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

2023 RESOLUTIONS

33 Appointing a Full Time Patrol Officer, namely Daniel Ramirez.

Councilwoman Howell: This topic of never being previously discussed amongst Council. As a member of the Finance Committee, questioned why the matter was just being brought to her attention.

Councilman LaRotonda: Reminded Councilwoman Howell that this has been a topic of discussion since last Budget Meeting, and that this specific hire has been discussed by both the Police Chief and the City CFO. The City has been looking for more police officers, especially considering retirements.

Councilwoman Howell: Complained that this new officer is not replacing a retirement, and is, rather, adding to the City's expenses. Criticized the timing of this hire, stating that the budget process is later this month, and that this new hire will be an added expense for the local tax payers.

Councilman LaRotonda: Affirmed that the new hire of this police officer would not place an undue burden on the taxpayers of Absecon. Pointed out that the City has had a police officer retire recently and that the difference between the salaries of the new police officers' salaries and that of the retired officers is beyond compare. Emphasized that the majority of the Governing Body has been in favor of growing the Police Dept. so they intended on moving this Resolution forward.

Councilwoman Howell: Stated that she was not against hiring Police Officers. Affirmed that even if this was a matter discussed last year, it does not carry over into the new year and needs to be discussed again.

Council President LaRotonda: Councilwoman Howell's comments are very interesting considering he just used that same argument in discussions pertaining to the hiring of the new FT HR Officer/Finance Assist before the budget process, but was unheeded by those now using that very argument to challenge the hiring of an Absecon Police Officer. Declared it is with good intent they continue to grow the City's police force and that it should not be delayed.

Councilwoman Howell: Does not want to delay the hiring, but expressed that she thinks the matter should have been brought before Council prior to being placed on the Agenda. Criticized Council President LaRotonda's minimalization of the cost on the City, because in addition to salary, the price of health benefits has gone up in price by 21.6% (which is resulting in an additional \$100,000 cost to the City). As a member of the Finance Committee, emphasized how these are all important factors to consider, especially with the budget process coming up, so that the tax payer is not affected.

Council President LaRotonda: Reminded Councilwoman Howell that he already expressed those exact concerns with the Governing Body in regard to the new FT HR Officer/Finance Assist, who they will be discussing shortly. Acknowledged that Councilwoman Howell has stated her case, but the majority of Council, himself included, maintain that the City should prioritize hiring Police officers.

Councilwoman Cain: Echoed Councilwoman Howell's that she also believes that she should have been notified of the proposed action, as the first she became aware of it was from that Meeting's Agenda.

Council President LaRotonda: Suggested that if Councilwoman Cain had any questions, comments, or concerns, she could have reached out to him and he would have been more than happy to discuss any matter. Reminded Council that during the 2022 budget process, he and Chief Laughlin implored the City to hire more police officers, but the CFO responded that such hiring would need to wait until 2023, which is why he was compelled to put it on the Agenda now.

Councilwoman Howell: There is a new budget and explained, as a first-time Finance Committee member, she was not privy to that information. Restated her opinion that she should have been notified beforehand of the action. Clarified that she doesn't not want more police officers.

Councilwoman Cain: Believes that Council President LaRotonda, as President, should be making the initiative to call and communicate important information to his fellow Councilmembers.

Council President LaRotonda: Reminded Councilwoman Cain that she had the opportunity, as did all the other Councilmembers of reaching out to him if they had any questions, comments, or concern. Also advised that Councilmembers have the opportunity to attend the Agenda meeting if they so wish.

34 Appointing a Special Law Enforcement Officer, Class II, namely Michael Barbagallo.

35 Appointing a member to the Zoning Board, namely Arianne Sellers.

Councilwoman Howell: Questioned if this was for an Alternate position.

Council President LaRotonda: Confirmed.

36 Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon Blue Devils.

37 Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon VFW Post 9462 Auxiliary.

38 Appointing a Full-Time Human Resource Officer/Finance Assistant, namely Kayla Haberstroh.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth Avenue: Questioned the conversation about hiring the new police Officer. Asked if it was the City's original intent to hire police last year and whether it was just delayed.

Jessica Thompson: Informed G. Seher that the hiring of the new Police Officer was not included in the prior year's budget.

Council President LaRotonda: Explained that hiring the new police officer was not in the prior year's budget because the intent was to wait and hire police officers in 2023. Pointed out that J. Thompson was present in the Agenda meeting when the hiring of the new officer was discussed and no issue was expressed then.

J. Thompson: Clarified that the problem more so seemed to be a communication issue, as Council President LaRotonda did not share with other Councilmembers what topics were to be addressed at the Meeting.

Council President LaRotonda: Reaffirmed that everybody is more than welcome to reach out to him if they have any questions or concerns regarding the Agenda.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
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 #33-38 by title.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$1,185,754.36

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 12/15/2022

Re-Org Meeting Minutes – 1/5/2023

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman DeRose
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes(12/15/22), Abstain(1/5/23); DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Abstain(12/15/22), Yes(1/5/23); Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

REPORTS

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds Committee: Shared that Absecon Social and Athletic Club (ASAC) got the scoreboard up for Babe Ruth Field. Thanked Remington & Vernick Engineers for giving back to the community through their sponsorship, and thanked Public Works for installing the scoreboard signage. Indicated there has already been a significant amount of inquiries received about Concerts in the Park, and the those in the public are welcome to join in on the discussion at the next Committee meeting.

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Had their first meeting on February 1st, and was attended by Councilman Marrone (Chair), Councilman Light, Councilwoman Cain, and Council President LaRotonda (via telecommunication). Council President LaRotonda was the Economic Development Committee Chair last year, so he provided background on things the previous Committee had been working on, such as new business incentives, the New Jersey Ave. Parking Ordinance, and a Plan-Review Committee to streamline the permit process. Also discussed possibly creating an Ad Hoc Committee for private business owners and experts in the field of Economic Development, whom, by providing keen insight, would be able to assist in the creation and implementation of a successful Economic Development strategy for the city. Touched on ideas for possible events in the future that could properly showcase local businesses, such as an Absecon Farmers Market, similar to that of Galloway and Brigantine.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance Committee: Have not met since the last Council Meeting, but reminded the public that the Committee will begin the budget process soon, as the first Budget Meeting with the full Council will be on next Thursday, February 9th at 6:30PM.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs Committee: Meeting started with Mayor Horton awarding Certificates of Recognition to last year's Committee members and congratulating Butch Stewart, Ed Vincent, and Jim Smith for earning the Citizen of the Year Award. The main discussion of the meeting pertained to the Senior event. Every year Community Affairs typically hosts an event for Absecon seniors to attend. Ideas for this year's Senior event included possibly a High Tea, bingo, or a dinner. Currently working on letters requesting contributions for fundraising. The specifics of the event will be discussed and decided at a later date, but the event is anticipated for the end of May or beginning of June. Shared that Mike Monteith will be spearheading this year's Memorial Day Parade, and that she and Debbie Reilly will be in charge of this year's Creekfest, which is currently scheduled for Sunday, September 17th.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety Committee: First meeting is scheduled for February 21st at 6PM. Anticipates that the Committee will produce a great number of exciting ideas and initiatives for the City. Has already had several meetings with the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and EMS Chief, which he appreciates immensely. Expressed enormous gratitude for all the work these Chiefs do for Absecon, and professed that he is looking forward to all working together.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: Has not had a Meeting since the last Council Meeting. The next Committee Meeting will be on Tuesday, February 21st.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: Reminded the public that the budget process will begin next week. Has already started the proper preparations and received budget requests from all City Depts. Indicated that the budget process will occupy a significant amount of time and energy in the upcoming weeks, during which there will be further budget-related discussions.

Chief Laughlin: Invited the entire Governing Body and everyone from the public to join Absecon Police Officers for the upcoming Coffee With A Cop event on Saturday February 11th from 9AM-11AM at the local Dunkin Donuts. The local Dunkin Donuts has been very eager for the Absecon Police Dept. to have this event at their location. Recognized Police Officer Keith Epstein for his work in putting together many of the Police's community events.

Councilman Marrone: Asked for confirmation in his understanding that the Police Dept. has been short-handed and that the hiring of new police officers is required for the Police Dept. to achieve an integrity akin to that of former years.

Chief Laughlin: Confirmed, the new hires bring the Police roster up to 28 officers, which the City has not had since 1991. Reminded Council that the City will no longer be responsible for several high-skilled salaries of police officers, previously included in past budgets, due to retirements and attritions that occurred within the past year. Contended that the difference of cost between this year's Police compensation and last year's Police compensation, will actually enable the City to save money this year. Reiterated that three Police Officers retired in 2022.

Mayor Horton: Asked whether the retired officers had been replaced.

Chief Laughlin: Confirmed that the three retired police officers were previously replaced, with the latest hire being an additional officer.

Councilman Marrone: Asked whether the new hire had been previously discussed.

Councilman LaRotonda: Confirmed that the new hire had been discussed during the Agenda meeting. Pointed out that the Mayor is responsible for overseeing the Police Department and asked whether Mayor Horton was aware that a new officer was being hired.

Mayor Horton: Answered that she was hoping the City would hire a new police officer, but didn't think it should have preceded the budget process.

Council President LaRotonda: Advised that if that is how Mayor Horton feels, perhaps she should express that at the Agenda Meeting.

Councilman Marrone: Asked whether the new FT HR Officer/Finance Assistant position should also have been filled after the Budget Meetings.

Council President LaRotonda: Is of the opinion that it should have.

Councilwoman Cain: Asked Chief Laughlin how many regular Police Officers he currently has.

Chief Laughlin: Including the two officers in tonight's Resolutions, there are 28 FT Police Officers, two Class II Officers (including a part-time PT Class II Officer, who is also the City's Code Enforcement Officer).

E. Dennis: Earlier today met with the with the County Engineer, Planning Director, and staff engineer at the County Engineers Office to review the Shore Road Project by Ohio Ave. During their face-to-face meetings, they have been discussing technical comments in order to iron the engineering details out, especially those of major items, thereby making significant progress. Indicated that they have reached a point in their planning which will allow the County to comfortably move forward. Has previously mentioned the need for Right of Way acquisitions for this project as a result of the new drainage system. Parallel to this, the outstanding technical comments will be addressed based on the direction provided by the County Engineer in their meetings earlier that day. Suggested a scheduled timeline will be provided after their comments are submitted and approved by the County Engineer. Clarified that this project is being funded primarily by the County to raise Shore Road in the area of Illinois and Ohio Ave., where there is the issue of constant flooding. Emphasized how this upgrade will be a major improvement. Will also be working on the Capital Budget with the City by providing support and estimates.

Councilman Light: Indicated that residents of the community are concerned about the area of Illinois Ave. from Shore Road to the train bridge. Asked if the street belonged to the County or State. Advocated for the residents who have been waiting patiently for the tattered street to be fixed. Asked whether there had been coordination established between the different levels of government regarding the project.

E. Dennis: Shared that the specific matter of inquiry was addressed at the County meeting today. Confirmed that the street is a County road, but the section that is a jug handle belongs to the State. The plan is to completely repave that road up to where the State left off with their paving project. As part of this project, they will be paving all of the County portion up to the train bridge (which is the part most in need), and will also be paving the portion of the State area that was not included in their repaving project. When all is completed, there will be new pavement from Shore Road to Route 30.

Councilman Light: As a nearby resident of the area, expressed the need for a 'No Left Turn' to be installed where Shore Road and Ohio Avenue meet. Asked whether this matter has been addressed.

E. Dennis: Confirmed the topic had been discussed at the earlier meeting. Informed that they plan to make minor improvements, like signage, to the intersection of issue. Expressed that a significant change, such as installing a 'No Left Turn, despite appearing like a minor fix, would be a redirection of traffic and needs to be properly studied before being implemented, as the redirection could possibly create problems elsewhere. So the earlier meeting with the County included discussion of possible incremental improvements to the area to make as part of this project, but anything additional would have to be a separate matter. Clarified that there was no commitment to conduct the necessary studies, but acknowledged that the topic has merit enough to be a point of discussion. But in the matter of this specific project being conducted, minor changes will be pursued in order to ensure more safety at that intersection.

Council President LaRotonda: Questioned whether the water company has provided an update in regard to their project and repaving on Wyoming Ave.

E. Dennis: Confirmed that he has received an update, although not in front of him at the moment. Has already shared the information with several Councilmembers via email. Believes completion is estimated for April and that the work will be conducted during the day. A member of his office, as a representative of the City, met with the water company's contractor last week in order to make the residents are being properly considered during construction.

Mayor Horton: Received an email from the Girl Scouts of Central & South Jersey's Product Program Specialist and Coordinator, asking for her participation in the Girl Scout's cookie selling program. Her participation includes introducing herself and expressing support for the Girl Scout's efforts, buying several boxes of cookies from local Girl Scout troops, engaging in conversation about the Scouts' experiences, and handing out special badges for the event. It is expected for at least 100 troops to be visited by local Governing Officials. Has already forwarded the email to City Councilmembers and encourages their participation in the program as well. The principal of Holy Spirit High School, Dr. Tom Farren, reached out to Mayor Horton about the City possibly preparing a Proclamation celebrating Holy Spirit's 100-year anniversary in existence. The Proclamation will be shared at Holy Spirit's upcoming Hall of Fame Celebration at the Tropicana. Current residents, Dr. Stanley Marczyk, Mara Marczyk, and Andrew Applegate, and, former residents, Kathleen Marczak Wilkins and Patty Galupo will be honored at this year's celebration.

Council President LaRotonda: Called for good of the Order.

Councilman Marrone: Asked the City to support its neighboring City of Brigantine. Brigantine recently passed a Resolution imploring for a temporary halt seismic testing and windmill construction. Emphasized that Brigantine's legislation does not suggest that the City is "anti-clean energy," or even "anti-windmill energy." An unusual number of whale carcasses have been washing ashore recently, coinciding with recent progression of nearby windmill development. There are a number of Committees and social media pages who have presented solid research. Has been in communication with the Mayor of Brigantine who has expressed their sincere hope that the City of Absecon would pass a Resolution similar to theirs, in a show of solidarity. Although he is not a scientist, common sense would dictate that the strangely coincidental timing of windmill testing/construction and atypical mass stranding of whale carcasses, should be recognized and further investigated. While the NJ State Government has denied finding any credible research that establishes a relation between recent windmill installation and whale strandings, Brigantine is urging that there is no harm in temporarily pausing marine construction in order to conduct further exploration into the possibility of related causation.

Mayor Horton: Informed Councilman Marrone that she has been in contact with the Governor's Office and they have emphasized the need for Governing Bodies and Officials to step back and allow scientists, and scientists only, to explore the situation further. Cited an article published in Forbes which describes the unprecedented number of whale carcasses recently discovered in New York and New Jersey. While some have been perpetuating the speculative theory that these mass deaths are related to off-shore wind energy development, the Marine Mammal Stranding Center noted that no whale deaths had been linked to any windmill development. The article quotes an NOAA spokesperson also denying a relation between windmill development and whale deaths, claiming that the unusual whale deaths began a month before windmill development even began in the Atlantic Ocean. Advises that the best thing to do, is let the scientists do their job in analyzing the situation.

Council President LaRotonda: Agreed with the Mayor that everyone should pause and let the scientists do their due diligence in assessing the situation. It's imperative that scientists conduct proper research to find out the cause of this unprecedented number of whale deaths. Pointed out that the only identifiable differential that could possibly have resulted in this change, is the presence of windmill construction.

Councilman Marrone: Asked the Mayor why the Governor's Office is reaching out to her to discuss the whale issue, but refuse to reach out in order to discuss the children of the community and their schools. Recognized that the Mayor has addressed the school issue in the past and has expressed her frustration with insinuations from the public that she and the Council has not done enough for the cause, but assured her that he does not share that sentiment. Wants further explanation as to why the Governor's Office is picking and choosing topics of which they are willing to discuss. Expressed frustration with his observation that these local environmental issues that become so divisive and that anything said in relation, is interpreted as a political statement. Reiterated that the City is simply asking for support from neighboring towns to support their request to *temporarily pause* construction to conduct more thorough research in finding the cause of whale deaths.

Mayor Horton: Asserted that according to her own thorough research, experts have clearly expressed the need for non-scientists to resist inserting themselves in the matter.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked what harm could come from temporarily halting construction.

Mayor Horton: According to the scientific experts, there are numerous factors to the problem, including, the water of the Atlantic Ocean becoming cleaner, and the increased fish population resultant attracting a stronger whale presence, as well as the presence of vessels. Expressed reluctance to respond to the issue at this time, as Mayor Horton warned it could be too premature. In regard to the school matter, reiterated her attempts to get in touch with NJ's Dept. of Education, and clarified to Council and the public, that the issue therein lies with them. Affirmed that she remains in contact with the Governor's Office regarding the matter and they have also reached out to the Dept. of Education on the City's behalf.

Councilman Marrone: Lamented about the level of partisanship and political polarization in the City's own local government.

Councilwoman Howell: Asked Councilman Marrone to elaborate on how party politics related to their discussion.

Councilman Marrone: Explained that the Mayor is just mirroring the Governor's stance based on party politics, rather than actually considering the wishes of local constituents and neighboring towns. Suggested that she is acquiescing to the higher levels of the Democratic party, who have failed to serve in the interests of the local community. Reiterated that all Brigantine is asking for, is a pause in construction.

Councilwoman Howell: Claims to be non-partisan and denies the opposition to be fueled by partisanship. Shared that on February 11th at 11AM in the Brigantine Community School, there will be a meeting about the issue and the public is encouraged to attend. Reiterated statements by NOAA that deny any causal relationship between whale deaths and windmill development.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Councilman DeRose: Explained that he abstained from voting on the Bill List because he had promised to the Absecon residents that he was not going to vote on anything he did not thoroughly understand. He was unavailable to properly analyze this meetings Bills List, so he abstained.

Tom Burns – 110 E. Faunce Landing Road: Asked if the public was welcome to join Committee Meetings and asked where to find the schedule.

Council President LaRotonda: Confirmed that the public is welcome and that the schedule is listed on the City's website.

T. Burns: Asked the Mayor whether her research showed the Governor having any financial motive in the development of the windfarms. Indicated that his research has proven that claim.

Mayor Horton: Reiterated her opinion that the public should let the scientists do their work.

T. Burns: Claimed that it was at the cost of whales' lives.

Mayor Horton: Restated that she has acquired reliable information from the Governor's Office

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 3/6/23