



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 20TH 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, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 10** Bond Ordinance providing for various 2023 Capital Acquisitions and Improvements; appropriating \$1,245,000 therefore and authorizing the issuance of \$1,182,750 Bonds or Notes to finance part of the cost thereof.

Jessica Thompson: This bond ordinance is required in order for the City to receive funding for its Road Program, Crestview Project, and Shore Road Project, which are all in the City's 2023 Capital Budget. Once the ordinance is approved, the City may move ahead with those projects.

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 May 4th 2023.

2023 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #08-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone

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

08 Amending Chapter 216 of the City of Absecon Code, Governing Hotel and Motel Registration.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #08-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman DeRose
All in Favor, None Opposed

No 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 #08-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #08-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #09-2023: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

09 Amending Chapter 258 of the City of Absecon Code, Governing Legalized Raffle and Bingo Licenses.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #09-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
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 #09-2023: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

Ordinance #09-2023 has been heard and is finally approved.

2023 RESOLUTIONS - CONSENT AGENDA

- 62** Authorizing Change Order No. 1 for the 2022 Road Program.
- 63** Authorizing the release of Planning Board Escrow Fees posted by the American Legion.
- 64** Authorizing a refund of an overpayment of taxes for the 2nd Quarter of 2022 on the listed property.
- 65** Amending the Capital Budget.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

Councilman Light: Asked for clarification regarding Resolution #62.

Ed Dennis: Explained that for almost all road projects, there is usually a Final Change Order to note end quantities (as compared to the initial quantity assessment). For this specific project, believes the reduction in quantity is in the amount of about \$20,000. The quantities came in lower than anticipated, the biggest reduction pertaining to asphalt and fuel price adjustments (based on State index). Ultimately it saved about \$20,000 for the City.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman DeRose
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 #62-65 by title.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$734,503.77

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 4/6/23

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

REPORTS

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds Committee: Opening nights of Field of Dreams we be held April 21-22. Encouraged the public to show their support. Old business included installing a protective cover over the light switches to minimize electric costs and. Also, during this year's Marsh Madness Basketball Tournament, parents and spectators unfortunately got a bit carried away, which resulted in requiring Police presence to help keep the peace. Pete Higbee, staff, the School Board, and the Superintendent will be deciding how to move forward so that this issue may be avoiding in the future. He, along with Lloyd Jones, other Councilmembers, and members of the community, attended a live meeting/demonstration, which presented a robot designed to line sports' fields. Although this robot would come at a cost, it may be useful to the City and its residents. Linwood is currently using one for their fields, so the intention is to see how they fare. Discussed a current umpire shortage, as well as possible considerations in how to deal with the issue. A representative from the Green Team spoke about their upcoming fundraiser. Recognized Absecon's Public Works Dept. for all their hard work. Enhancements are being made at New Jersey Ave. and Highland Blvd.

Council President LaRotonda: Echoed Councilman Light's praise for the Public Works Dept. Commended the beautification of the fields and on Veteran's Blvd.

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Have not met since their last meeting. Next meeting will be May 3rd at 4:30PM in the Conference Room. All are welcome. Strongly encouraged business owners, as well as residents, to join their meetings so that everyone is on the same page, and, ultimately, make Absecon a more business-friendly City.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance Committee: Met that afternoon at City Hall and signed many purchase orders. Used the remainder of the meeting to discuss several issues that will be discussed in Closed Session, so cannot give further details.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs Committee: Several events are coming up. This upcoming Saturday is Earth Day, there will be a shredding event at City Hall from 9AM-12PM, in addition to a community cleanup. All are encouraged to join and suggested arriving around 9AM. Trash bags, recycling bags, gloves, etc. will be provided. Senior Brunch will be on May 20th at the Lion's Blind Center from 10:30AM-1:30PM. Seniors are encouraged to come enjoy the food, socialization, and bingo. The Annual Memorial Day Parade will be held on May 29th at 9AM. The Oakcrest Band will be performing and there will the usual Bike Decorating Contest. Commended Mike Monteith for all his hard work on the upcoming event. Shared that Creekfest will be on Sunday, September 17th from 2PM-8PM, and that preparations are moving forward. More information will be shared in the future as it is finalized.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety Committee: Met earlier this week where they discussed Ordinance #8-2023. Chief Laughlin will elaborate on the Ordinance later. Thanked the Absecon Fire Dept. for their help in battling the wildfires currently plaguing the state. Absecon's EMS Internship Program is beginning. Shared that he and his wife recently spotted an individual attempting to break into cars on their street in the middle of the night. They called the Absecon Police, who arrived within about three minutes. Thanked the Police for their hard work. Reminded the public to be vigilant and urged them to call the Police if they see anything suspicious.

Chief Laughlin: Explained that, as a participant in Mutual Aid Agreements, when other municipalities need services (Police, Fire, Ambulance), Absecon will go. The Fire Dept. has been called to various places regarding wildfires, we have been in a state of red flag warning this wildfire season. Informed the public that this prohibits people from having open fires. On behalf of Fire Chief

Roy Talley, large open fires are prohibited in the City. If a resident chooses to have a small fire, asked they be respectful to their neighbors when it comes to things like smoke. The Absecon PD has been working with Volunteers of America and Jewish Family Services for their assistance in addressing local social issues. Cautioned that some individuals have been setting tents in the local parks and directed the public to call the Police if they sight more. The Police have been able to help these people get the proper services they desperately need. Proudly announced a partnership with AtlantiCare, in which they will begin bringing their Mobile Unit out. This service will bring help to people struggling with homelessness, substance abuse issues, mental health matters, etc. The Absecon PD will work with AtlantiCare's Mobile Unit in order to provide assistance to the people in Absecon who need it. In regard to recent theft-attempts, urged everyone to keep their doors locked, and advised against leaving keys in the vehicles, and especially not in the ignition. Within the past year, there have been about 3-4 robberies/home invasions that were enabled because residents left their front doors unlocked.

Council President LaRotonda: Praised Chief Laughlin and his Police Dept. for pursuing this Outreach Program.

Chief Laughlin: Emphasized the importance of Social Service entities to work together. Referred to parental behavior at kid's sporting events. Recommended a Parental Code of Conduct for sports in Absecon.

Councilman Light: Expressed his appreciation for the Chief and his Police force for successfully handling such instances with respect.

Chief Laughlin: Warned that if the Police are called to a sport event in response to fighting or disorderly behavior, it will not be tolerated. Reminded parents and spectators to enjoy the fun event.

Councilman DeRose: Informed Alex Perri that, although he reached out to the local gas station's LSRP Representative, he has yet to hear back.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: Shared that Lloyd Jones of Absecon's Public Works fixed a broken Pedestrian Crossing sign recently reported to the City. One of the portable restrooms in Heritage Park was upgraded. Ed Dennis presented a work order for conduits (water, sewer, possible future connections) from the road to the Heritage Park Concession Stand. In response to a resident's request to Council President LaRotonda for an additional Stop Sign at Woodcrest Ave, E. Dennis conducted a thorough investigation into the matter and concluded that the installation of another Stop Sign at that location could not be justified, thereby denying the request. However, a project at 1000 Marlborough Ave. has been approved.

Councilman Marrone: Thanked his fellow Public Works Committee Members, Councilmen Burroughs and Light, as well as everyone else who attends their meetings. Expressed his appreciation for all the improvements being made around the city, such as the beautification of Veteran's Parkway Signs. Commended Lloyd Jones for his great work in completing that project.

Council President LaRotonda: Shared that the City will be creating an Honor Wall in City Hall for local veterans. People may email local veteran names, pictures, rankings, branch of service, etc, to AbseconHonorWall@gmail.com, so that it may be presented on the new Honor Wall. Hopes to unveil the wall in time for Memorial Day. A flyer with information will be posted to the City's website.

Councilman Light: Spoke in honor of Absecon resident, Lucille Ace, who recently passed away from cancer. Lucille, as well as her husband Bob Middlesworth, have been very active and involved in the community.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: Reminded the public that Spring Leaf Pickup will continue through May 12th. Expressed understanding in that residents are frustrated with ACUA's delay in yard waste pickup. ACUA has indicated that they continue to struggle with staff shortages, but are aggressively seeking new employees. She and Mayor Horton spoke with ACUA's Rick Dovey, and the ACUA put in a plan to make sure all yard waste is collected by the end of tomorrow. R. Dovey suggested that the ACUA will consider possibly issuing the City a credit in the future to make up for their lack of service.

Councilman Marrone: Expressed his belief that, due to the unacceptably terrible service provided, Absecon tax payers are owed a credit. Understands the challenges of employment shortages, however, suggested for Council to band together in their insistence that ACUA provide the City a credit (e.g. write a letter signed by all willing).

J. Thompson: Expressed her appreciation for his suggestion, however does not believe it is necessary. Mentioned how the City experienced similar issues with the ACUA in the prior year, but stated that the ACUA has good intentions and is currently dealing with difficulties.

Council President LaRotonda: Emphasized that this matter has been an ongoing issue.

Councilman Marrone: Echoed Council President LaRotonda in his emphasis that issues with ACUA have afflicted the residents of Absecon for two years now. While he understands that ACUA claims to have a staff shortage, pointed out that businesses are going back to normal, and when it comes down to it, the City and ACUA have a contract agreement that requires them to perform yard waste pickups, and, ultimately, they are not fulfilling the requirements of the contract. So, he is willing to take all the steps appropriate in order to properly rectify the situation.

J. Thompson: Indicated that, for those reasons, she has been reaching out to the ACUA. Claimed that all she could do is report that the ACUA is doing the best that they can and that they understand the City's frustration. Suggested that it was too early in the year to make any determinations.

Councilman DeRose: Questioned whether residents were receiving any citations resultant from ACUA's negligence with yard waste pickup.

J. Thompson: No, understands the issue is with the ACUA, not the residents.

Council President LaRotonda: Residents have informed him that when they have been forced with bringing their own yard waste to the ACUA themselves, as a result of the ACUA's failure to do it, the ACUA demands a fee. Questioned whether the City could discuss this with the ACUA so that residents may be allowed to dispose of their yard waste without such a charge. Understands that certain restrictions may be needed, but such a system could be helpful to the situation.

J. Thompson: Indicated that option was discussed with the ACUA last year, but they did not seem open to the idea.

Council President LaRotonda: Does not understand the reluctance, but urged the discussion again. Offered to reach out to the ACUA directly to discuss the option.

Councilman Light: Asked whether it was possible for a system to be implemented, that could inform citizens/the City if the ACUA was running late or having problems, to provide more awareness to the situation and so that people hold their yard waste, avoiding unnecessary eyesores.

J. Thompson: Spoke with Gary Conover earlier that day and he admitted that the ACUA's communication could be improved. G. Conover promised her to have better communication with her. Suggested she could then share the information provided, onto the City's website.

Councilman Light: Understands staffing issues, so explained that if this information was shared openly, it would allow everyone to anticipate and adjust appropriately

Carie Crone – Clerk Report: Monthly Report – March 2023

- Municipal Court: \$7,373.40
- Tax Office: \$893,906.33
- Construction Office: \$11,467.00
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$6835.50

Mayor Horton: She and Councilman Burroughs attended a Farewell Celebration for Donna Payne, who has been the Director of the Absecon Senior Center for the last 20 years. Gave a speech describing Donna's passion and dedication for the wellbeing of Absecon's senior residents. Intends to have Donna attend an upcoming Council meeting, so that she may be properly honored for all her hard work. Thanked Lloyd Jones and the employees in his department for their great work and effort beautifying the City. Gave a shout-out to Public Works employee, Bill Hoke, who was in current attendance. In honor of Volunteer Recognition Day, recognized the Absecon Volunteer Fire Fighters, coaches, Zoning and Planning Board Members, Community Affairs Members, and church and school volunteers, for giving their time and talent in making a difference within the city.

Councilman Marrone: Echoed Mayor Horton in thanking Bill Hoke for his hard work as well. Shared that he, himself, witnessed Bill working hard outside beautifying the City.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

No Discussion.

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

CLOSED SESSION - #66-2023 - Contract Negotiations/Possible Litigation

B. Blaney: In accordance with the Open Records Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, the City Council went into Closed Session. Explained the reason to go into Closed Session is to discuss contract negotiations, so there will not be any action taken after.

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

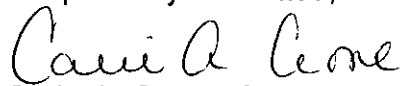
(Closed Session)

Motioned to adjourn Closed Session and re-enter the meeting: Councilwoman Cain; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 5/4/23