



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 6TH, 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

ABSENT: Mayor Kim Horton

ALSO PRESENT: 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 RESOLUTIONS OUT OF CONSENT

56 Allowing the Budget to be read by title only.

Motioned to move Resolution #56-2023 – Allowing the Budget to be read by title: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

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

PUBLIC HEARING – 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

57 Adopting the 2023 Municipal Budget.

Jessica Thompson: The City's tax rate remains flat, there will not be any tax increase from the City. The school tax rate also remains flat, and there is actually a decrease in the County tax rate. As a result, anticipates that residents will see a small decrease in their overall 2023 taxes.

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

(No Discussion)

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

Motioned to move Resolution #57-2023 – Adopting the 2023 Budget: Councilman DeRose;
Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

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

Motioned for a first reading: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

Councilwoman Howell: Questioned possible legal ramifications.

Bill Blaney: Clarified that the ordinance would limit the amount of time allowed to stay. Does not anticipate any legal ramifications, however reminded them it's always a possibility.

Council President LaRotonda: Indicated that other towns have similar ordinances and that the owners are in full support.

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on April 20th, 2023.

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

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

Council President LaRotonda: Clarified that the ordinance lowers the fee that the City charges.

Councilman Marrone: Thanked charity organizations for all they do to give back to the community.

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on April 20th, 2023.

2023 RESOLUTIONS - CONSENT AGENDA

- 58** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2023 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$3,500.00 from the State of New Jersey Highway Traffic Safety.
- 59** Appointing a Registrar of Vital Statistics.

- 60 Authorizing the appointment of an Electrical Sub-Code Official for the City of Absecon.
- 61 Authorizing the Sale of City Owned Land, Block 232, Lot 24.

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: 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 #58-61 by title.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$1,669,811.42

Motioned to accept: Councilman Burroughs; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 2/16/23

Regular Meeting Minutes – 3/2/2023

Regular Meeting Minutes – 3/16/2023

Budget Meeting Minutes – 2/9/23

Budget Meeting Minutes – 2/23/23

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Abstain (2/23), Yes (2/9, 2/16, 3/2, 3/16); Howell – Abstain (2/9), Yes (2/16, 3/2, 3/16, 2/23); Light – Yes; Marrone – Abstain (2/23), Yes (2/9, 2/16, 3/2, 3/16); LaRotonda – Abstain (2/23), Yes (2/9, 2/16, 3/2, 3/16);

REPORTS

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds Committee: Explained the selection process for the bands participating in the local Concerts in the Park. Even if a band is not chosen one year, they are still welcome to pursue performing at future Concerts. The City receives a significant number of inquiries from bands looking to perform for the event, so there is a lot of effort dedicated in ensuring a fair selection process.

J. Thompson: 2023 Concerts in the Park will be held in Heritage Park and occur every consecutive Sunday starting on June 25th. Listed the band lineup and that it will soon be posted onto the City's website.

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Met the day earlier. Discussed, at length, the idealized rejuvenation of New Jersey Ave. Committee is exploring various means through which they may acquire funding to improve the overall business environment (e.g. downtown aesthetics). Also discussed possibly creating a Chamber of Commerce in Absecon. An Absecon Business & Commercial Development (ABCD) organization existed in the past, however, has since fizzled out. Next Economic Development meeting will be on May 3rd.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance Committee: Have not met since last Council Meeting, although the 2023 Budget has been passed. Expressed appreciation for J. Thompson's hard work, especially during throughout the Budget process. Next Finance meeting will be April 20th at 5:30PM.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs Committee: Echoed Councilwoman Cain in her appreciation for J. Thompson's hard work during the Budget process. The City will be sponsoring a city-wide cleanup and shredding event on Earth Day, Saturday April 22nd. Recycling Coordinator, Bob Battista, and Councilman Burroughs will be leading the shredding event, and the public is encouraged to join in the city-wide cleanup from 9AM-12PM. Many Councilmembers volunteer with city-wide cleanups at least four times a year, and have thereby earned revenue from the ACUA. Discussed the Committee's Senior Brunch, which is being organized by Councilman Marrone and will be held on May 20th from 10:30AM-1:30PM. Encourages senior citizens to come out and join them. Also discussed progress with Memorial Day Parade plans. Medals and awards will also be given out during the Bike Brigade encouraged those interested to decorate their bike and show their patriotism. Shared that she, Deb Reilly, and Caleb Cavileer, have already begun work to prepare for this year's Creekfest in matters relating to food trucks, bands, etc. According to Police Officer Epstein, the City will be hosting a holiday movie in July at Heritage Park this summer.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety Committee: Echoed Councilwomen Cain and Howell in reference to their work on the budget. Public Safety Committee met a few weeks prior. Shared that the City would be updating their Emergency Management Plans (conducted every two years). Discussed the continuation of productive communication between himself, other members of Council, Police Chief Laughlin, and the Absecon Volunteer Fire Dept. Next meeting will be April 18th at 6PM. Thanked the Chief and his officers for their hard work, especially considering public safety issues relating to local hotels. The City's officers are tough, but remain contemporaneously compassionate and strategic, despite the difficult and sensitive issues they are facing.

Police Chief Laughlin: Expanding on that topic, shared that the Police Dept. has been working hard with several other entities (County Services, Jewish Family Services, AtlantiCare) in their efforts to solve this issue. All services have collectively planned to provide more outreach programs in order to assure people are given the help they need. The problem is not strictly limited to just within the hotels/motels. There has been an increase in the number of wanders going through Absecon, but practically all cities surrounding Atlantic City are experiencing this. Unfortunately, the City is unable to independently and individually fund solutions for all those issues, however, with their partnerships (including that with Volunteers of America), there has been discussion about creating a new PILOT program that would have Case Workers accompany Police Officers in their cars. Issues of this nature have become a common occurrence. Urged the public to slow down as nice weather approaches. Still receiving complaints about local speeders and people running stop signs. An emerging issue pertains to kids' refusal to wear bicycle helmets. Efforts to encourage helmet-use are usually primarily located within the schools, however, the most important influence in

the matter is parental enforcement. The increasing popularity of electric scooters amongst children pose an additional threat to those who refuse to wear proper helmets. Reminds the public that if bikes and electric scooters are being used on the roadway, the riders must abide by the laws of the road. Urges residents to keep their garages and cars locked and secure, and also adjust their lights. Concluded by reminding the public, "see something, say something." The Police is open 24/7 and there is a response to every call. They are there to serve the public.

Council President LaRotonda: Commended the Chief all his hard work, especially with the recent outreach efforts.

Chief Laughlin: Mentioned that the Dept. is working on additional pursuits as well, including possible grant funding so that there is a chance the City may limit its costs.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: At their meeting, discussed a residential complaint about an issue with a local pedestrian crosswalk which Lloyd Jones of Public Works rectified. Proposed a rearrangement of traffic flow and the signage on the ground at California Ave and Route 9 which E. Dennis is looking into. The Committee also continued their previous discussion regarding items related to Heritage Park.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: Spring Leaf Pickup will be from April 17th to May 12th, residents may place their leaves at the curb for pickup. Mentioned that she, Mayor Horton, the City Engineer, and the Public Works Committee met with CDM Smith and NJ American Water Co. to discuss an upcoming project to replace lead pipes where they still remain in Absecon. The pipes include those from the street to the residence and are free of charge to the property owners. Any home built after 1985 are not included in this project. Postcards and outreach materials will be sent to local residents in the future. There will also be canvassing or a self-reporting option. Information will be posted onto the City's website. Shared that Atlantic City Electric is also moving forward on their project for Smart Meter Upgrades. Expects that residents will receive information from Atlantic City Electric about the project soon. Thanked everyone for their hard work in the budget.

Councilman Light: Was included in the NJ American Water meeting, so he went home and took a picture of his piping to send to NJ American Water to clarify whether his home was eligible for their project. Emphasized to residents that they will be provided the same help and clarification, if needed, through that process.

Council President: Asked whether the companies were reaching out the residents directly.

J. Thompson: Confirmed, but emphasized that updated information will be available online.

Councilman Light: Reminded the public that the NJ American Water project is free. Warned residents to beware of potential scammers.

Councilman Marrone: Shared that the project is a massive public relations campaign, so the public will be made very aware of its progression and the company will be more than happy to assist in addressing any questions or concerns. Suggested residents self-report, if possible, in order to expedite the process.

E. Dennis – City Engineer: Provided context about the NJ American Water project. About two years ago, the State passed a law requiring all utilities to replace any lead or galvanized service line within the next 10-year period. NJ American Water supplies Absecon's water so they are required by law to replace all lead/galvanized pipes in the streets, as well as those from the curb to residence, within their entire service area. It is NJ American Water's responsibility and will not cost the residents any money. Absecon is the first municipality in Atlantic County that the company wants to begin with. This will benefit the public, as it removes lead out of the system. In regard to the budget, its adoption will allow the City to move forward with its engineering projects, such as the Road Program and Streetscapes Project. Survey crews will be around the city in the upcoming weeks. Once bonding is complete, they will begin work on other projects. Expressed that he looks forward to all the exciting projects planned for the 2023 year.

Councilman Light: Asked for a status update regarding the Shore Road Project, as well as the state of Illinois Ave.

E. Dennis: Illinois Ave. is included within the Shore Road Project, so it will be completely redone. Indicated that there are two parallel matters being addressed in regard to Illinois Ave. First is that there is a Right of Way that is needed to be acquired from private owners. This is a lengthy process of which the County has taken lead on. Second is that during the last meeting with the County Engineer Office, decisions were made to expand the Shore Road Project, which will ensure a complete and more efficient outcome. They will be working with the State to ensure new pavement will continue onto Illinois Ave, the jug handle, and onto Shore Rd., under the bridge up to where the newer pavement begins approaching Route 30. Provided some explanation as to their current limitations, including the needed coordination with the NJ DOT (their jurisdiction) and the project's expansionary components (e.g. improving the bend on S. Shore Rd.). Difficult to estimate a definitive timeline for the project due to the complexities of the project.

Council President LaRotonda: Informed by the Congressmen's Office that Shore Rd. from Galloway through Somers Point is included in the infrastructure bill and will be completely repaved. Asked if E. Dennis had heard any more information about it. **E. Dennis:** Has not.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Alex Perri – 620 Yarmouth Ave: Excited for the Absecon Green Team to get to work. Group members are considering meeting on the first Tuesday of each month and are hoping Councilmembers will attend. Encouraged everyone interested to join their Sustainable Absecon Facebook page.

Councilwoman Howell: Asked what time they plan to have their meetings.

A. Perri: Meetings will likely be at 6PM and location is to be determined. Updates will be provided on their website. Possibly use the Municipal Complex for several meetings throughout the year, but also plan to have off-site meetings. He was recently appointed to the Atlantic County Parks and Environment Advisory Commission. In their meetings they have discussed the importance of municipal Environmental Commissions. Advantages to having Environmental Commissions include grant money, credit towards a Sustainable NJ certification, etc. The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) offers an online, do-at-your-own-pace training that qualifies people to be active participants in an Environmental Committee. Encourages Council to consider establishing an Absecon Environmental Commission, or at least encouraging current Planning & Zoning Board members to take the available training webinar courses. Concerned about reports pertaining the gas station at Turner's Cover that the City is considering acquiring. Considering the gas station's proximity to the waterway, concerned about possible remediation required and environmental hazards. Questioned if the City has been in contact with the NJDEP to ensure they are doing their due diligence. Also questioned what the City is doing to ensure that other gas stations near waterways and flood-prone areas are not polluting.

E. Dennis: The City is not currently engaged in proceedings with the specific site in question. The NJDEP created the Licensed Site Remediation Program (LSRP), acknowledging that they do not have the capacity to supervise every contaminated site in NJ. This program enables licensed professionals to become LSRPs, who may act as an agent of the Dept., and are therefore required to enforce all DEP environmental regulations. Every contaminated site in NJ must have an LSRP assigned to it. The site in question already has an LSRP assigned by the property owner, so it should already comply with all proper DEP regulation.

Councilman DeRose: Would he be able to contact the site's LSRP to get a better understanding of the site's status and to share their contact information with the newly formed Green Team.

E. Dennis: Confirmed that he could put Councilman DeRose in touch with the LSRP.

Councilman DeRose: Assured A. Perri that he will share the information once he receives it.

Council President LaRotonda: If the City were to purchase the site it would actually be funded by the County. In order to receive the funds, the County is requiring the site's clean bill of health.

Jackie Howell – 605 Bayview Drive: Asked if the Council Meetings are still televised on ABTV.

Council President LaRotonda: Confirmed. Specified, according to the Notice, they are played at 9AM and 7PM.

J. Howell: Denied that they are showing.

Councilwoman Howell: Agreed that people have reached out with complaints because they are no Council Meetings have been on ABTV all year.

Council President LaRotonda: Thanked J. Howell for bringing the issue to Council's attention. Asked J. Thompson who would be the person to contact in order to have this problem resolved.

J. Thompson: Stated that the City's outside company is responsible, so she will contact them.

Council President LaRotonda: Instructed J. Thompson to make that a priority.

Councilman Marrone: Declared the issue absolutely unacceptable.

J. Thompson: Claimed this is the first time the issue has been brought to her attention.

Councilman Marrone: Stated that he was not blaming her specifically, but would appreciate her rectifying the situation promptly.

J. Thompson: Indicated the Meetings have been available on the website.

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

CLOSED SESSION - #62-2023 - 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. 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: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Marrone
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: 4-20-23