



CITY OF ABSECON
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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 1st, 2025 6:30 PM
MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Alex Clark, Linda Evans, Nick LaRotonda, Christine Parker, Mike Sykes, and Council President Richard DeRose

ABSENT: Councilman Steve Light

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Tommy Marrone, City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Solicitor John Amenhauser Esq., Police Chief J.R. Laughlin, Captain Jeff Mazer, CFO Kristen Manning, Auditor Jerry Conte, and City Clerk Pro Tem Mary Fetske.

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2025 RESOLUTIONS OUT OF CONSENT

- 95** Appointing a Deputy Clerk Pro Tempore for the May 1st, 2025 Council Meeting.

Motioned to move Resolution #95-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes; DeRose - Yes

- 96** Allowing the Budget to be read by title only.

Motioned to move Resolution #96-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman Sykes
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes; DeRose - Yes

Council President DeRose: Thanked all those who have been involved in the 2025 Budget process. Celebrated the outside engagement of public residents in the process. Acknowledged that no one wants to pay more, as well as wide-spread mistrust in government. Stated that those in Absecon who

have reached out to Council have gotten the opportunity to be heard. Thanked residents who stepped up and offered ideas, and those who have offered words of encouragement and support for the City's new approach. Denied rumors that the City is planning to cut funding for Senior Citizen Programs. Read a letter from the Senior Center addressed to the Governing Body thanking them for their 2025 funding.

PRESENTATION – 2025 BUDGET POWERPOINT

Council President DeRose:

- *Mayor & Council*
- *Municipal Budget Team:* Mayor Tommy Marrone; Finance Committee Chair Alex Clark; Finance Committee Members Nick LaRotonda and Christine Parker; Council President Rich DeRose; Municipal Auditor HFA; CFO Kristen Manning; Others (residents, professionals, volunteers, etc.)
- *Where do taxes go?:* Municipality (32%), school (51%), & County (17%)
- *2024 Tax Rate Breakdown:* 2024 Tax Collection Percentage = 99.2%

Councilman Clark: Shared that this presentation will be posted on the website.

- *Atlantic County Abstract of Ratables 2015-2024:* Highlighted that from 2015 Absecon's change in local taxes increased 1%. Indicated that Absecon as a municipality is comparable to Northfield or Mullica. Pointed out that from 2015-2024 Northfield's taxes increased 12% and Mullica's increased 33%.
- *City of Absecon 2015-2025 Tax Rate Trends*
- *Tax Rate Analysis:* From 2015 to 2023 Absecon's Local Tax Rate decreased, while School and County Tax Rates increased to reflect rising costs. City Budget used Fund Balance as revenue to fund operating budget in amount not sustainable for future financial stability. Also, one-time revenues were used to fund the budget.
- *2025 Budget Expenditures:* Provided categorical breakdown with percentages (see PowerPoint).

Council President DeRose: Significant input from a variety of sources was considered when creating these slides so that they would provide information to ensure the most understanding.

Councilman Clark:

- *2025 Budget Revenues:* Provided categorical breakdown with percentages (see PowerPoint).
- *2025 Property Tax Snapshot:* Identifies how the tax increase will affect residents. Presents examples for the cost of the increase for the new municipal tax rate based on a property's assessed value. The average property tax bill increase is \$189.19 per year or \$15.77 per month.
- *Factors that influence Absecon's Municipal Budget:* Includes general and specific factors. Specific factors include less in surplus (5.5 cents), loss of state aid (1 cent), one-time revenue sources (2 cents), health insurance increase, debt service increase (1.75 cents).
- *Year End Surplus Analysis:* Graph depicting municipal and sewer surplus decline within recent years. The increasing use of fund balance to off-set needed tax increases. There has been a lack of budget projections looking at past budget documents (page for Future Budget Projects is blank). The Utility Balance and Capital Fund Balance were used to fund budgets – both with no to low contribute.
- *Things done in 2025 to help lower expenses:* Secured grant money to help support hiring of 6 new Police Officers, combined positions for Administrator and Deputy Clerk, utilized Shared Services for CFO/QPA positions, secured several grants, adjusted ROAD Program expenses for 2025. The 2025 Budget still includes fully funded Recreation Programs, Senior Center, and Trash Removal. No services to residents were cut.

Council President DeRose:

- *Planning for the Future: 2025 and Beyond:* Have shifted to focus on securing grants to offset costs. Currently working with County, State and Federal partners to secure as many grants as possible. The City is also working with their professionals to realign municipal licenses, fines, fees, and permit costs to be comparable with other towns. Most fees have not been raised in over 20 years. In order to provide the level of service expected, the fees must be adjusted. So, the fees are now currently under review. The City will continue to support businesses/growth and development, and strive to maintain fiscal responsibility to offset any future tax liabilities. In regard to local businesses, the City has implemented a timeline for checking in with prospective businesses and developers, promoting transparency and accountability. The City is also reviewing contracts in effort to bring about results with local businesses.

Councilman Clark:

- *Conclusion:* How? There was a decrease in tax levy while all costs, contracts, pensions, etc, increased, no financial future planning, no decrease in expenditures to adjust post spending, and use of one-time budget fixes and “potential growth” to keep going.

Council President DeRose:

- *Moving Forward?:* The budget process will continue throughout the entire year. Historically the process began mid-January through March into early April. However, Absecon will begin the actual budget process from now on in October. Currently working on Ordinances and Resolutions to implement an actual structure for the budget process timeline. Will have more presentations in the future. The City will focus operations utilizing multi-year outlook, rather than a single year outlook. Each budget will have a 2-year look-out, making it a 3-year process. The City has also separated the duties of CFO and Administrator. In the budget process, the Administrator will work with each department on their budget and then work with the CFO on the general budget. This will allow for more efficient checks and balances. Starting the budget process earlier will allow for more input from residents.

Councilman LaRotonda: Separating the CFO and Administrator position has saved the City money.

- *Feel Free to Contact Us:* Encouraged the public to contact him (call, text, email) or Councilman Clark (email) about any budget-related questions.
- *Tax Information Meeting – May 19th at 10:00am:* Recognized that tax increases are not ideal. Shared to the public that there are programs available to help residents. At City Hall on May 19th at 10AM, Council President DeRose and Mayor Marrone are hosting a seminar featuring NJ Division of Taxation Property Tax Relief Program Managers, the Property Tax Deductions Tax Collector, and Eligibility & Applications Manager.

Mayor Marrone:

- *Property Tax Deduction Eligibility (Local Level):* Announced Property Tax Deductions available, including the Veteran’s Deduction and the Senior/Disabled Deduction.
- *Contact Tax Office –* Encouraged the public to reach out to the very friendly and very informed Tax Collector/Administrative Team-member, Jessica Snyder, and Deputy Tax Collector, Joy Lewkowski.
- *State of NJ Property Tax Relief –* Shared that he and J. Snyder have been working directly with the State to make sure everyone gets the Tax Relief that they are entitled to. The Governing Body and professionals are committed to making the process and easy as it can be. The three programs of NJ Property Tax Relief include Senior Freeze, ANCHOR, and Stay NJ.

Councilman Clark: Explained his connection to Absecon. Has lived here since 2009, while his wife grew up here. His kids grew up going to school in Absecon and are themselves involved in the community. Pointed out that Mayor Marrone is 3rd generation, Councilwoman Evans raised her kids here, Council President DeRose’s wife is 2nd generation, Councilman LaRotonda is raising his family

in Absecon, as did Councilwoman Parker, and that Councilman Sykes is an Absecon legend. Acknowledged the difficulty of the situation. The initial increase calculated to 21-cents, which Council found unacceptable. So, they made hard decisions without cutting funding to certain direct services. The Governing Body made their decisions in the best interest of the City, their families, and your families. If the City continued down this path, they would inevitably run out of surplus. The City is now working hard with new businesses and focusing on growing revenues in order to minimize tax increases.

PUBLIC HEARING - 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Council President DeRose: Asked for everyone to keep comments civil. Reminded public that they are all neighbors working to ensure Absecon's financial future is secure. Hopes that the collective goal is a better future for the City.

Motioned to open the Hearing to the Public: Councilman Sykes; Seconded: Councilman Clark
All in favor, none opposed.

Kim Horton – 1003 Plaza Place: Asked why Council President DeRose needed to do a “deep dive” into how the City found itself in this situation. The former CFO, Jessica Thompson, made it clear that contract negotiations and Chief negotiations. Expressed support for public safety, but admitted that it comes at a price. At that time, they discussed possibly adding three more officers to the force, but J. Thompson cautioned that hiring a police officer would equate to about \$100K. In January Police Officers were hired. The City secured a grant that partially paid for the officers, but the remaining cost was paid for with City funds. Declared the members of the Governing Body to be stewards of the people, and recognized the responsibility they hold. Reprimanded Council for looking to the past to place blame. Addressed the claim about COVID funds by stating that they were used for Capital Projects, not to “plug-in holes”.

Councilman LaRotonda: Reminded K. Horton that many members of the Governing Body campaigned on public safety. Acknowledged that public safety comes at a cost. Agrees that they are stewards of the people. Proud of their success in hiring more police officers.

Council President DeRose: Reminded the public that they may comment and that Council may respond, but asked that everyone does so in an appropriate manner. Confirmed that they made the conscious decision to hire more Police Officers this year, knowing it would raise taxes. Every single day members of the public ask for more police officers in the City. It has been the City's intention to spend the extra money on public safety concerns, however, it was not the City's intention to spend money on the items requiring the 11-cent increase. Public safety issues are constantly topic of conversation in-person and on social media. More police officers are required to address more of the City needs.

K. Horton: Stated that the figures in the presentation were incorrect, as the numbers do not reflect those presented at the recent School Bd. Meeting.

J. Amenhauser: Informed the public that once they come to the microphone, they must speak the entirety of their comments then, as they cannot return once they yield.

Councilman DeRose: Reminded K. Horton that there is an Ordinance that prevents Council from speaking on matters they cannot control, so will not address.

Councilman Clark: Council raised taxes 4 cents for public safety in 2024 when K. Horton was in office as Mayor. Chief Laughlin then secured a grant which allowed the City to hire more officers. Disputed the accuracy of the claim that hiring a police officer cost \$100K (other factors).

Josiah Andrews- 27 School Street: Asked for clarification about the loss of surplus.

Councilman Clark: In 2024 the City used \$135K more than 2023 and maxed out all their revenues.

Council President DeRose: Shared that when most Cities are doing revenue projections, they do not assume it will be 100%. Absecon has been using the max-out approach, although that is changing moving forward.

Peter Regenye – 7 Delray Lane: Earlier this year at Bel Aire Lakes, all residents were assessed \$6K due to poor financial management. Many people are struggling financially and on a fixed income. Asked for clarification about what he will be paying with the tax increase.

Councilman Clark: Explained the mathematics that would provide him the answer to what his increase will be.

Council President DeRose: Welcomed P. Regenye to contact him to discuss the matter further.

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth Avenue: Pleased to see so many people in attendance.

Councilman President DeRose: Thanked G. Seher for requesting charts explaining the budget.

G. Seher: Stated that regarding inflation, the CPI has increased 21%. Asked what percent Absecon taxes increased over the past 10 years.

Councilman Clark: About 3.1%

G. Seher: Clarified that there have been increased services costs during this time, but with minimal tax increases. Also clarified that the surplus has decreased.

Councilman Clark: Without a surplus to borrow from, cannot balance the budget.

Chris G - 1034 Seaside Ave: Asked how Councilman DeRose how he decided who to talk to about the budget and how more people could get involved.

Council President DeRose: Reminded the public that all meetings are open to the public. The website only has so much reach, so they also use social media. Has spoken with people who happen to run into him at the local grocery store. Moving forward they would like to use new technology to gain greater reach.

Councilwoman Evans: Council does not select the people, as they come to the Governing Body to get involved.

Council President DeRose: Indicated that most people reach out to him via social media and the first thing he suggests is for them to attend either a Council Meeting or Finance Committee Meeting (1 per month).

Warren Kataska – 908 Elm Avenue: Believes that the City's explanation for why there will be an 11-cent tax increase makes sense, but wants to know how the City will prevent this from happening again in the future. Encouraged the City to look for potential ratables and revenues, to know what expenses will be, and to know when they will take place. Asked what assurances Council could give its residents that this won't happen again. Asked how much money they expect to secure through grants and ratables. Supports the direction the City is going in, however is asking for more substance.

Council President DeRose: Explained that he plans to resurrect an Absecon Financial Advisory Committee. The Committee was made up of residents who attended Finance Meetings. Plans to reauthorize a 7-member Committee who will be responsible for reviewing the budget throughout the year. Welcomed W. Kataska to join the Committee.

J. Conte: Mentioned that in their "Moving Forward Plan" the City will be formulating multi-year projections to ensure sustainability and avoid these increases.

W. Kataska: Suggested using project maps to ensure the City is accountable to a timeline.

Mayor Marrone: Shared that one of the first things the City's new CFO suggested was for Absecon's budget process to begin much earlier (October.)

Council President DeRose: The City is implementing spending freezes for all departments. This will allow the City to get a snapshot and analysis of what's been spent and then adjust moving forward.

W. Kataska: Dissatisfied with how the 11-cent tax increase was communicated (Facebook).

Councilman Clark: There have been many Finance Meetings, which is where the budget conversation began.

Council President DeRose: The 2025 Budget Process has had the most communication by the City ever. Has personally posted about Budget meeting and posted his contact information to discuss the matter.

W. Kataska: Suggested a less technological alternative.

Council President DeRose: Discussed possibly sending out a late fall mailing.

Bob Middlesworth – 413 S. Shore Road: Regarding the budget increase due to the increase in the police force, asked whether there was a statistical basis on which they decided to hire more police officers. Also, if the Police are focused on (1) traffic maintenance and (2) crime, asked whether the City looked into alternatives for traffic maintenance, like speed control methods.

Councilman Sykes: Stated that the Police post a blotter which presents the number of incidents the police have faced.

Chief Laughlin: Explained that in the 1990s, Absecon had 28 FT Police Officers and averaged about 14K-15K calls for service. In recent years, Absecon has had less than officers and have been receiving an average of 35K-40K calls for service. The Police Officers in the Academy now will bring the force back up to 32 officers. Alternatives suggested, such as speed signs and cameras do not hold up in court in NJ. Overall, the Police Force in Absecon deal with a vast number of matters in the City (i.e. traffic, hotels, homeless, mental health crisis, increased training requirements, more thorough caseloads, etc.) The matters of police work sometimes take weeks to years to be completed.

Councilman Sykes: Mentioned the influence of the population increase.

Chief Laughlin: Noted that the population increase in surrounding areas affect Absecon as well. Shared that the number of fatal car crashes since 2019 have increased. Moving forward, hopes to have a Traffic Unit. Currently, patrol officers are fitting traffic safety around making sure kids are getting to school safe. Overall there has been an increase in population and crime.

B. Middlesworth: Are there any other elements of the budget that could be decreased.

Chief Laughlin: Reminded the public that Public Safety is the largest percentage of the tax base in every municipality. Clarified that Public Safety includes EMS and fire services.

B. Middlesworth: Did EMS or fire services increase their budgets.

Council President DeRose: EMS increased, fire stayed flat.

Betty Howell – 1007 Spring Lane: Acknowledged the difficulty of Council's job. Disputed Council's claim that COVID money was used to "plug holes." Claimed that the City used it for infrastructure, which was permitted. Clarified that the City hired people to fill J. Thompsons positions (CFO/Administrator).

Councilman Clark: Confirmed that they actually hired two people.

B. Howell: Asked if they are there every day.

Councilman Clark: Estimated every 4 days, they are PT.

Mayor Marrone: Based on the City's budget, they determined that there was no need for a FT CFO.

B. Howell: Asked how much they are being paid.

Kristen Manning: Explained that she (CFO), a Deputy CFO, and a QPA come as a package deal under a Shared Service Agreement for \$75,000.

Councilman Clark: Noted that there are no benefits part of their salary.

Mark Mazzone – 616 Pitney Road: Read on a radio show posting that the County Executive took money away from Absecon. Asked for confirmation.

Councilman Clark: Believes he is referring to school funding. Stated that the City lost about \$78K is state aid funding.

Mark Mazzone: Mentioned the increase in energy rates. Asked whether Council accounted for that in the 2025 Budget.

Council President DeRose: Confirmed that they did. This year they built in expected increases.

M. Mazzone: Asked whether costs increased during all the years that taxes never increased.

Council President DeRose: Confirmed that costs increased significantly.

Councilman Clark: After this tax increase, it will be an overall 14.2-cent increase over 11 years, which is a little over 1 cent a year. If they had increased taxes before, it would not have been so drastic this year.

M. Mazzone: Asked whether maintenance for Police Body Cams were accounted for in the budget.

Council President DeRose: The budget was based on direct communication with each department. They, along with the CFO, sat with each department head to go over those kinds of questions.

M. Mazzone: Asked how the body cams were paid for.

Chief Laughlin: Had body cams since 2016 (one of the first PD in Atlantic County). They are on their second round of body cams. In 2022 they got a grant to cover a majority of the cost. They budgeted for the rest. This morning at the State Chief's Meeting and they discussed it. The body cam lifespan is nearing their end, so the Association will be asking the Senate Committee about getting another state grant. The PD looked at getting more cameras for the new officers and the administrators will share some cameras. Absecon's body cams are currently under warranty until 2026. Moving past warranty, they will have to budget for body cams for replacements. Hoping that the state ups the grant process to help with the body cams since they mandated them.

M. Mazzone: Asked if Absecon increased the sewer rate because the system was deteriorating.

Council President DeRose: Explained how that situation and the current situation are similar. The City was using surplus without a plan for the future. The sewer rate increased to plan for the future and also address some billing issues. The City worked with the City Engineer to recognize that there is aging infrastructure and that emergency callouts cost a lot of money.

M. Mazzone: Asked if any money has been saved by the City in case of an emergency.

Council President DeRose: Confirmed that there is an Emergency Fund, but admitted that it is nowhere near where they want it to be.

J. Conte: Urged the necessity to be on a continually upgrading plan so that the City isn't waiting for something to fall apart and paying triple rate as an emergency.

E. Dennis: Suggested that the City has been proactive in regard to infrastructure.

M. Mazzone: Thanked the Police Chief and his Dept.'s work at 5 Corners.

Councilman Clark: Asked K. Manning to explain how the COVID money was recorded on the 2022 and 2023 Budgets.

K. Manning: Confirmed that the money was used for construction projects, however the money was brought in as "Revenue Replacement" in both the 2022 and 2023 Budgets. Just filed a report, initiated by the former CFO, about the matter. So, on the Budget it is depicted as a one-time revenue.

Harry Hartman – 632 Woodland Avenue: Referred to past meetings during which he told Council they need to have a plan. Asked whether the City will have a PT CFO to tightly manage the budget all-year.

Council President DeRose: Suggested that the current PT CFO manages the budget and general spending with more scrutiny than when there was a FT CFO.

H. Hartman: Asked, again, whether the City will have a PT CFO to tightly manage the budget all-year.

Council President DeRose: Confirmed.

Councilman Clark: The City also has an Auditor working on a 5-year plan.

H. Hartman: Asked if the 2024 Audit has been completed.

J. Conte: Suggested that they were working on it. Due to the transition of the new CFO, they prioritized the Budget.

H. Hartman: Claimed that some items in the Budget were forecasted in last year's Audit. Doubts a PT CFO's ability to manage the financials.

K. Manning: Informed H. Hartman that there is a FT Finance Clerk at City Hall every day. Explained that she processes finances every day which frees up the CFO and Deputy CFO to work with Council.

Council President DeRose: Altogether, Finance Team, the Financial Advisory Committee, the monthly Finance Committee meetings, and an earlier budget process start date, all assure him of success.

H. Hartman: Has heard that City Hall is understaffed.

Councilman Clark: Admitted that while they probably are understaffed, they don't have the financial ability to hire more staff. More people are overlapping work.

H. Hartman: Asked the future plan for the Administrator.

Council President DeRose: Reminded H. Hartman that they can only discuss 2025 budget-related matters.

Dan Miller - 703 Chelsea Road: With the understanding that the Shared Service Finance Team is three people getting paid \$75K, asked how much J. Thompson was paid.

Councilman Clark: Explained that she had two positions – CFO and Administrator.

Council President DeRose: Is unsure of the exact number.

J. Amenhauser: Advised not saying a number unless he knows it's absolutely correct.

D. Miller: Under the impression J. Thompson was paid \$76K.

Councilman Clark: Definitely incorrect, her pay for one salary was significantly more than that.

Council President DeRose: Offered to get D. Miller the exact information at a later time.

D. Miller: Ask Chief Laughlin if the City is paying for them to go to the Academy.

Chief Laughlin: No, but the City is paying their salaries.

D. Miller: Asked who is paying for the Officers to go through the Academy.

Chief Laughlin: Indicated that the Atlantic County Academy is free of charge, but the City is paying their salaries.

D. Miller: Asked if more cars will be needed for more Officers.

Chief Laughlin: No, the fleet is in good shape.

D. Miller: Asked how many Police Officers are on shift.

J. Amenhauser: Cautioned that the conversation must stay on the topic of budget.

Chief Laughlin: Stated that there are 4 Patrolman per shift and there are 4 shifts (7a-7p).

D. Miller: Asked if they are looking to hire more Police in the future.

J. Amenhauser: That is not regarding the 2025 Budget. That is a projection and therefore off topic.

D. Miller: Asked for clarification about a previous comment Councilman Clark said about the assumption that a police officer hire cost \$100K.

Council President DeRose: Explained that projections will be included in future budgets.

D. Miller: Shared that former Councilmember Fred Green started a program to care for 1-2 pumping stations a year to prevent them from failing all at once.

E. Dennis: Explained that the City has been doing similar proactive tasks (i.e. slip lining.) This saves the City significant amount of money in the long run.

Pat Malia – 911 Seaside Avenue: From 2016 to 2025 local tax rates have gone up less than 5% while insurance, energy rates, and cost of living have increased significantly. Noted that his property assessment hasn't changed since 2016. Understands that the County ordered a re-valuation for all municipalities. Pointed out that the City hasn't hired a new CFO, but instead, has entered into a Shared Service Agreement with Galloway to use their CFO services. The State encourages and offers grant money for it.

Council President DeRose: Indicated that the City was pursuing.

P. Malia: Asserted that any office that charges fees should be self-sufficient. Fees should be reviewed and analyzed on an annual basis to become self-sufficient. Thanked the Governing Body for their transparency.

Motioned to close the Hearing to the Public: Councilman Sykes; Seconded: Councilwoman Clark
All in favor, none opposed.

2025 RESOLUTIONS OUT OF CONSENT

97 Authorizing Self-Examination of the 2025 Budget.

Motioned to move Resolution #97-2025: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilman LaRotonda
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - Yes

98 Adopting the 2024 Municipal Budget

Motioned to move Resolution #98-2025: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilman Sykes

Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - Yes

2025 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #03-2025: Councilman Sykes; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker

03 Amending Ordinance 13-2018 - an Ordinance repealing and replacing Section 224-194 "Affordable Housing" of the City of Absecon's Land Use and Development Ordinance to address the requirements of the Fair share Housing Act and the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls (UHAC) regarding compliance with the City's Affordable Housing Obligations.

Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - 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 15st, 2025.

2025 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.

99 A Resolution for professional cleaning services for the Municipal Complex Building and the Public Works Building.

- 100** A Resolution for HVAC Services for various departments.
- 101** Authorizing to participate in the Bergen County Cooperative Pricing System.
- 102** Authorizing Change Order No. 1 for the reconstruction of Calderon Avenue.
- 103** Appointing a Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics.
- 104** Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon VFW Post 9462 Auxiliary.
- 105** A Participant's Resolution in the LEAP Implementation Grant.

PUBLIC PORTION - (Agenda items only)

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

NO DISCUSSION

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

CONSENT AGENDA VOTE

Motioned to move Consent Agenda: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Yes; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - Yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST- \$509,512.22

Motioned to accept: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - Yes

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 2/20/2024

Motioned-to accept: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilman Sykes
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Absent; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose – Yes

REPORTS

Councilman Clark - Finance: Praised Community Affairs and Councilwoman Evans for their awesome Easter Egg Hunt. Baseball recently had their opening night. Commended Public Work for their phenomenal job.

Councilman Evans – Community Affairs: Met earlier this evening. Those eligible for the Senior Brunch are more than welcome to attend this Saturday, even though the RSVP is technically closed.

Councilman LaRotonda - Economic Development: There is significant progress being made at the local Aldi and Jersey Cow. Has been working with the owners of Jersey Cow and although they have hit some obstacles with the utility companies, they still aim to open for the summer season. Working together to expedite some electrical infrastructure needs.

Councilman Sykes - Parks & Playgrounds: Met on 4/15 and discussed some things they plan to accomplish at Veteran's Park and some simple things accomplished at Senior Park. Praised Public Works. Will meet again on the 3rd Tuesday in May.

Councilwoman Parker: The Concert in the Park schedule has been posted on the City's website and will be in the newsletter.

Councilman Sykes: The 10 bands have been selected and scheduled. Encouraged the public to come out and attend as many as possible.

Councilwoman Parker – Public Safety: Met on 4/7 at 6PM. We heard some residents' concerns about speeding and discussed suggestions about how to rectify that. Fire Chief Roy Tally cautioned the public that when doing yard cleanup *do not burn your leaves*. He also encouraged everyone to check your smoke detectors. The Committee also discussed the upcoming Hooked on Fishing event.

Chief Laughlin: Reiterated that the Fire Chief cautioned everyone about the dangers of burning leaves. Shared that the City avoided a potentially huge tragedy a few days ago when someone dumped a solo stove on Faunce Landing near Route 9 and started a fire. Luckily, Police Officer Christian Cavalier (Fire Chief of Lower Bank), was able to quell the fire while the Fire Dept. was responding. Urged people to be cautious when using grills or BBQs. Asked the public not to speed. Suggested leaving for your destination just a few minutes early. Announced that the spring letters are going to be mailed soon. Praised Jessica Snyder for her hard work on its new look. Asked the public to please show their appreciation when they stop by to pay their taxes. Appreciates public attendance and open discussion at Council Meetings, but disappointed to constantly have to reiterate topics like local speeding. Public safety is for our families, kids, business, and, his officers. Urged the City to work together as a whole because that's what a home is really about. Announced that Hooked on Fishing is on June 14th. Encouraged the public to come out and see the kids' fish. The joy of the event is contagious. One of the biggest things that brings the City together is our children. All are invited.

City Clerk: Monthly Report – March 2025

Municipal Court: \$11,165.44

Tax Office: \$606,395.00

Municipal Clerk's Office: \$7,169.00

Mayor Marrone: Recognized a reoccurring theme throughout this Council Meeting. Council has made tough fiscal decisions for the Budget. Emphasized the mantra "Absecon is Home." Recounted growing up playing baseball with Councilman Sykes at the old fields (location of new White Horse Liquors). Councilman Sykes coaches his son's baseball team and Tommy's son is on another team, but the other night was baseball's opening night both Mayor Marrone and Councilman Sykes had the honor of throwing first pitches. Each son played the position of catcher for their dad's first pitch. The experience was the epitome of a full circle moment and highlighted the exceptionality of the Absecon community. Read a letter, on behalf of himself and Council, addressed to the residents of Absecon. Emphasized honesty, transparency, and a shared commitment to the future to the community. Despite inheriting significant financial issues, they are taking full accountability in addressing them. Explained the factors that contributed to their fiscal state. Described the measures taken to reduce the tax increase as much as they could. A tax increase is the first step in getting Absecon back on financial ground. Next, the City will adjust license, permits, and fees, to reflect current values, continue to streamline operations, and limit non-essential spending, expanding Shared Services with neighboring municipalities, maintaining pro-business approach to attract new ratables and prioritizing public safety. They are committed to keeping Absecon safe, strong, and financial responsible.

E. Dennis - City Engineer: The change order approved tonight was a reduction of \$6,200 (work on Calderon Avenue). The 2024 Road Program is in progress. They are almost complete the work on 4th Avenue, so the drainage work is done and the work on the concrete will be done next week. After, they will move on to their next street. They recently completed a slip lining on Meadowview Avenue, which is a proactive and low-cost way to maintain sanitary sewer structure (prevents big ticket repairs in the future). The Shore Road Project is actively being worked on. His Office and the County Engineer have a meeting regarding the project to go over final comments before going out to bid.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

David Tartar – 311 East Wyoming Avenue: Shared that although he's been in Absecon a year and a half. He emigrated from another state. Lately has wanted to be more involved in the community. Recently attended the School Bd. Meeting. Was impressed by the diversity he witnessed. Pointed out that there are members of the community who have emigrated from other countries, and are scared. Asked if/when ICE comes to Absecon, what is the level of cooperation or resistance do they plan offering.

J. Amenhauser: Advised that there are directives in place that government agencies must follow. This is a hypothetical scenario. Advised staying clear of giving specifics.

D. Tartar: Asked whether Absecon was a sanctuary city.

Council President DeRose: No, doesn't believe Absecon passed that.

Mayor Marrone: Admitted that when he grew up in Absecon it was not diverse. However, is thrilled that his kids are exposed to so much more diversity. Indicated that diversity is both a strength and a treasure.

Council President DeRose: Offered to get in contact with D. Tartar. Expressed that it is extremely exciting to hear someone say they want to get more involved in the community. Wants more members of the community to be involved day-to-day. Explained that there are different Committees chaired by each Councilmember. Thinks that D. Tartar would be interested in Councilwoman Evan's Community Affairs Committee. Suggests connecting with him and/or Councilwoman Evans. Explained that the meetings are only once a month so not too burdensome.

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth: Disappointed that so many people left the Council Meeting once discussion about the Budget ended. Suggested that this part of the meeting is where things get accomplished. Frustrated that people demand more police but then refuse to accept more taxes. Recognized that additional services equal additional costs. Appreciates Council's transparency about the cost of Public Safety.

Council President DeRose: Pointed out the unique-ness of this meeting, in that Council was not obligated to answer every question or engage in discussion. Council is sticking by their commitment to transparency, and open and honest discussion.

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

CLOSED SESSION - #106 – Contract Negotiations

J. Amenhauser: In accordance with the Open Records Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, the City Council will go into Closed Session. Closed Session is to discuss contract negotiations. Action may be taken afterwards.

Motion to enter Closed Session: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(Closed Session)

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

2025 OLUTIONS

- 107** Authorizing the Mayor to sign an Inter-local Agreement with Atlantic County for installation and maintenance of pedestrian safety equipment on the intersection of New Jersey Avenue and Highland Boulevard.

Motioned to move Resolution #107-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman Sykes
Roll Call: Clark - Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light - Yes; Parker - Yes; Sykes – Yes;
DeRose - Yes

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 6-5-25