



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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Municipal Clerk

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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 18TH, 2023 6:30 PM
MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE – Nancy Gillespie

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Councilman Richard DeRose

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson, 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

PRESENTATION – DONNA PAYNE: Mayor Horton made a speech honoring Donna Payne's 20 years of dedicated service as the Director of the Absecon Senior Center.

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2023 ORDINANCE FOR INTRODUCTION

- 11** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 69, Article IV, §69-35, Payment for Off-Duty Assignments.

Jessica Thompson: This ordinance is to increase the Police Officer's rates for off-duty detail, as well as administrative fees.

Council President LaRotonda: Pointed out that this increase has no effect on the taxpayers, as the rates are paid by the entities hiring the Police's service.

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

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; 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 June 1st, 2023.

2023 RESOLUTIONS

Council President LaRotonda: Received notice from third party that Resolution #77 (Authorizing a Person-To-Person Transfer of Plenary Retail Consumption Licenses issued to LPJS 1, LLC. t/a Reddog's Hi Point) will need to be tabled for another meeting.

Motioned to table Resolution #77: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

- 74** Supporting Senate Bill S3063 establishing "ATV Law Enforcement Task Force."

Chief Laughlin: This would enable the State to begin looking into the ATV problem. Last year the City changed their Ordinance, but this Resolution would allow the State to look into the issue as well, as it is wide-spread throughout New Jersey's municipalities.

Council President LaRotonda: Encouraged members of the public to write to their legislators and senators, urging their approval.

- 75** Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon Blue Devils.
- 76** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2023 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$7,000.00 from Atlantic-Cape May Regional Highway Traffic Safety – Click It or Ticket.
- 78** Authorizing cancellation of Municipal Certificate due to acquisition.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

Motioned to open to the public: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
All in Favor, None Opposed.

No Discussion.

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

CONSENT AGENDA: All matters listed under item, Consent Agenda, are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be discussed separately.

Council President LaRotonda read Resolutions #74, 75, 76, and 78 by title.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – 1,417,713.29

Motioned to accept: Councilwoman Howell; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 5/4/23

Closed Session as to form and content only – 4/20/23

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes (4/20), Abstain (5/4); Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

REPORTS

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds Committee: Met on May 16th. Old business included discussion about a robotic line machine for the fields. Holy Spirit bought one, so the Committee will monitor their experience. Going to discuss with Public Works the possibility of purchasing just an updated walk-behind line machine. Thanked Public Works for replacing American flag at Wagon Wheel. New business included being pro-active in aerating and re-seeding the fields so that they may regrow. Concerts in the Park begin on June 25th. Also, storage is short on the baseball fields, so discussed possibly adding another shed. Encouraged support at the upcoming Father's Day Baseball Tournament. Got on the waiting list for the Knights of Columbus' Flags for Forgotten Soldiers. The Athletic Director has reminded all coaches when their coaching badges expire, but reminded public that it's the responsibility of the people in charge of each sport, to make sure all coaches have current and proper badges. Invited Alex Perri from the Absecon Green Team up to speak.

Alex Perri – Absecon Green Team: Had their meeting on the first Tuesday of the month, roughly 20 people were in attendance. Many topics were mentioned; However, they have narrowed their ideas down to three central initiatives, including (1) a Heritage Park Restoration Project, (2) water bottle filling stations along the bike paths, and (3) a community garden. Next meeting will be within the next few weeks. Wants to coordinate a volunteer event for the eager individuals rearing to get their hands dirty. Had the idea to host a volunteer event at Heritage Park. The event he had in mind is an educational walking tour so that the participants can learn about the invasive plants in the parks (e.g. English ivy, oriental bittersweet) and sever them to save the trees they are suffocating. Seeking City permission and approval. Mentioned paperwork to be provided to volunteers. Shared that Mary Crawford, Go Green Galloway Co-Chair, reached out to him about strategically placing signs around Absecon to advertise for the Galloway Green Market at Smithville. Reached out to Councilman DeRose about the matter and shared with him Mary's contact information. Due to his previous contributions to Go Green Galloway's past projects, they have put aside \$500 for Absecon's new Green Team to buy supplies. Absecon's Green Team is considering an art competition to re-design their logo for which afterwards, they would purchase items like T-shirts and banners. Looking into facilitating a means by which people may donate to the organization.

Councilman Light: Mentioned that A. Perri and others in his organization indicated their willingness to help in City events, such as Creekfest. Emphasized their interest in community engagement and establishing local exposure.

A. Perri: Confirmed that the Absecon Green Team would appreciate at least a table at Creekfest, but offered their assistance to help in other ways.

Councilman Light: Will meet again on June 20th. Recommended for any meeting changes to be given to the City Clerk so that they may relay the message out.

Councilwoman Howell: The last Planning Bd. Meeting was cancelled, but there will be another one next week.

J. Thompson: Reminded Councilman Light that all meeting updates are on the City's website.

Councilman Marrone – Economic Development: Has not met since last Meeting. Next meeting will be on June 7th at 4:30PM in the Conference Room. All are welcome.

Councilwoman Cain – Finance Committee: Met earlier that day. She, Councilwoman Howell, and J. Thompson were present. Mark Barbetto, of the Blue Devils, attended the meeting, so they spent time brainstorming different ways they could raise money to fund their expenses. They have an upcoming coin drop, however that will not be enough to cover all their expenses. Suggested he go to Community Affairs to discuss possible events they could assist him with. Referred to Resolution #78. The Bond Ordinance has a waiting period of 20 days, so by the second Council Meeting in June, the City will have the money available for projects (e.g. Crestview).

Councilwoman Howell: Asked about the Crestview Project.

J. Thompson: Reminded Councilwoman Howell that they cannot pass any legislation for the project until the waiting period is over. Is unsure when exactly the Engineer plans to go out to bid.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs Committee: Announced earlier that week the VFW honored Police Officer Keith Epstein and Karen Benedetto for their help in the community. The event happened to correspond with the most recent installation of the VFW (9462) and the Ladies Auxiliary. This Saturday will be the Senior Brunch at the Lion's Center, which will include bingo and a visit by Elvis. Seats are still available, but it is requested that attendees call to register in advance. Thanked Preferred Care for an event the prior night, celebrating their recent renovations. The Memorial Day Parade is coming up, more details to be shared later.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: Met on Tuesday. Old business included the proposed rearrangement of traffic at Route 9 and California Ave is pending, as is the symbolic street sign.

Councilwoman Howell: According to Lloyd Jones, the unveiling will be on the first Sunday in June

Councilman Burroughs: Explaining that upgrades to Heritage Park are in progress, Ed Dennis has made progress with the County in regard to the pot holes on Illinois Ave, and the retention pond issues have been rectified. New business includes an official name for the new Green Team and a special crosswalk sign. According to Council President LaRotonda, Home Depot donated American flags to the City and he is seeking permission to install them on poles.

Council President LaRotonda: Updated that Atlantic City Electric is allowing the City to place the flags, graciously donated by Home Depot, along their Veterans Memorial Parkway. The flags will be allowed up from around Memorial Day through the 4th of July.

Councilwoman Howell – Public Safety Committee: The Police and Fire Dept. requested several announcements be made to the public. Please do not leave any fires/burns unattended. Also, do not leave any pots and/or pans in the oven, as they be a fire hazard. Jim Eberwine shared that the Archdiocese wants churches to prepare emergency packets.

Chief Laughlin – Police Dept.: Pleased to announce that Officer Daniel Ramirez is finishing up his field training program and will be assigned to Patrol around the beginning of June. Reminded the public, especially in light of all the upcoming events, to prepare in advance to possibly avoid a speeding-related catastrophe. Suggested for people to remain mindful and encouraged leaving their house a few minutes earlier. Commended all the men and women in the Police Dept. Explained that

the VFW reached out to him because they wanted to recognize Police Officer Keith Epstein's work throughout the community. Commented that Hooked on Fishing will be on June 17th at Heritage Park. Noted that the VFW recently inducted their new officers. Encouraged everyone take time on May 29th, Memorial Day, to recognize all the people who have dedicated themselves in any way to our country. Our American Legion and VFW are both very involved in our community and are not lacking any local support or membership. Please remember that they continue to serve us in local events, donations, and other ways. The Police Dept. has begun work to prepare for the upcoming Movie in the Park, so will provide further updates in the future.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: No report.

Carie Crone – Clerk Report: Monthly Report – April 2023

- Municipal Court: \$9,665.05
- Tax Office: \$3,666,024.78
- Construction Office: \$10,036
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$13,908

Mayor Horton: Congratulated Donna Payne and wished her luck and happiness in the future. Thanked everyone who attended Preferred Care's Ribbon Cutting Celebration the night before. They provided her a tour of the newly renovated facility and did an amazing job. The Administrator, Josh Rosenberger, and his staff were very appreciative of the City's support. Thanked Councilmembers Cain, Howell, Burroughs, Council President LaRotonda, J. Thompson, Police Officers, Emergency Management team, and Fire Dept./EMT members, for going and showing their support. Encouraged all Seniors to attend the Senior Brunch on Saturday.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Donald Robison – 547 E. Absecon Blvd.: Was recently presented with a letter informing him that he had 14 days to vacate the hotel he has lived in since last June. Does not have anywhere else to go. Does not believe it is fair that they must relocate among the different hotels and motels every two weeks.

Council President LaRotonda: Explained there is to be a private meeting after the Council Meeting with the hotel and motel owners to discuss the matter further. Clarified that Council previous adopted an ordinance restricting lengths of stays in motels because of a concern for public safety and because they are not meant for long-term housing. Hotels/motel are for transient stays, and are not purposed for long-term occupancy.

D. Robinson: Explained that he's been looking for alternative housing since November, however has not been able to find another option.

Council President LaRotonda: Acknowledged D. Robinson's efforts. Assured D. Robinson that he will assist him with Social Services or any other state agencies to get him what he requires.

Steven Diamond – 930 White Horse Pike: He, his wife, and his 6-year old child have been living at the Easy Inn since last August. In accordance with Megan's Law, he is registered as a resident of Absecon at the Easy Inn. Has been informed that he and his family must leave Easy Inn by Saturday, but he has not been served any paperwork. Understands residents' concerns, but his child is homeschooled so his education is not costing them any money. Expressed that alternative options are limited/non-existent. Suggesting grandfathering in the people already living in the hotels/motels. Appreciates the offer to help with Social Services, however it is a slow and complicated process. Explained that he and his family will end up at the Atlantic City homeless shelter if they are kicked out of Easy Inn.

Council President LaRotonda: Council will be meeting with the hotel/motel owners tonight to have further discussion. Do not intend on having them kick anyone out immediately. Their goal is to formulate a plan with proper assistance to create a smooth transition for all parties affected.

Tom Byrnes – 110 E. Faunce Landing: Cautioned the public about an alleged "onslaught" of illegal immigrants soon to be dropped off in Philadelphia. Claimed that County Engineer, Dennis Levinson, warned them of this information. Asked whether preparations have been made, and if not, urged a plan be made. Suspects the government will be dropping off illegal immigrants all over the place, in white unmarked buses. Indicated it was a public safety issue. Urged Council to formulate a plan.

Chief Laughlin: Addressed the two gentlemen who spoke previously, urging them to speak with him before they left so that he could offer them assistance in their efforts to improve their situation. Corrected T. Byrnes by stating that the County has, in fact, *not* address this matter. The claims are part of a larger issue the City has already been facing, which is mental health issues, substance abuse, homelessness, etc. This is not just a problem in Absecon or Atlantic County, but rather all over the state and the country as a whole. Is proud to be working together with AtlantiCare. The AtlantiCare bus has been around the city (e.g. Shoprite) to provide the proper care to those who are suffering. Shared that he is not aware of any plans the County might be preparing. Acknowledged that they saw the article T. Byrnes cited, but is not aware of any County solutions being prepared. Pointed out limitations with availability, funding, and professionals qualified to deal with their current issues. Acknowledged that the homeless population is large in Atlantic County, but that Absecon works with Social Services to provide them help. Reminded the public that these services take time, as they only have so many resources themselves. Emphasized the importance of working together. Reiterated that he is proud to be working with AtlantiCare and other agencies to provide help to those in need.

Reed Moscatello – 4 Stoneybrook Drive: Notified the public to watch out for the invasive Spotted Lantern Fly. Warned that the species causes significant damage to native species in Absecon, and result in various hazards. Remediation for these kinds of issues is pretty simple with community involvement. Emphasized that this is a public call to attention that the Green Team plans to address in the future.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 6-1-23