



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
500 Mill Road
Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

May 2nd, 2024 6:30 PM

MINUTES

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Councilman Marrone

FLAG SALUTE – Mayor. Recognized National Day of Prayer.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Sandy Cain, Alex Clark, Steve Light, Tommy Marrone, Christine Parker

ABSENT: Councilman Rich DeRose 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 and Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2024 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #09-2024: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilman Clark

Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes; LaRotonda – Absent

- 09** Amending and Supplementing Chapter 224, Zoning, of the Code of the City of Absecon and repealing all Ordinances heretofore adopted, the provisions of which are inconsistent therewith.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #09-2024: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker. All in Favor, None Opposed.

(No Discussion)

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #09-2024: Councilman Light;
Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Absent

Ordinance #09-2024 has been heard and is finally approved.

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #13-2024: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded:
Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Absent

- 13** Bond Ordinance providing for the 2024 Road Improvement Programs, by and in the City of Absecon, appropriating \$1,00,000 therefore and authorizing the issuance of \$950,000 Bonds or Notes of the City to finance part of the cost thereof.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #13-2024:
Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Clark, All in Favor, None Opposed.

Harry Hartman – 632 Woodland Ave. – Doesn't have a problem with the Bond Ordinance, knows it's done every year, but has a couple questions and thoughts. Where are we at on debt in the City - not school, municipal debt?

J. Thompson – I don't have the exact amount with me, but about 1.8%.

H. Hartman – Not percentage, numbers.

J. Thompson – I don't have that with me.

H. Hartman – Last meeting re-allocated \$670,000 to projects that were not forecasted for, they weren't put in the Capital Budget the previous year. You took \$670,000 that had been bonded before and taken that and moved it to pay for these various things. Not even going to argue if these things should have been done or not, but heard a lot of talk at the last meeting regarding public safety, would it have been possible to take that \$670,000 and apply it this year's road program, it's still Capital.

J. Thompson – It could have, except we also had the need for police vehicles and other items on that list.

H. Hartman – We're they forecasted for anywhere? That's the problem you never forecast.

J. Thompson – If we hadn't re-allocated the Bond Ordinance would have been higher.

H. Hartman – So you're going to do those things regardless?

J. Thompson – They were all deemed important to the City in this year.

H. Hartman – That's the reason the budget's got a problem, because we can't decipher between important and not important. \$290,000 for Pedestrian Safety, what is that? What makes it essential to raise taxes 4¢?

J. Thompson – Three different projects made up that amount. New Jersey Ave., Municipal Bldg. handicap accessibility ramp and additional funds for Crestview Ave. There was quite a lot a discussion on the importance of items and what everyone felt was priority.

H. Hartman – You guys have to accept that, you made the decision to spend money that way and now going to borrow for another million dollars, and you do it every year.

A. Clark – It's kind of like rolling over our debt.

J. Thompson – We need to continue to invest in the community and continue to upgrade our roads so we don't have larger cost later on.

H. Hartman – Why don't these things come up during budget time? They should be forecasted for:

J. Thompson – They do, we talk about them and then bring them up in the next budget process.

H. Hartman – Capital Budget allows you three years if you choose to.

J. Thompson – If you want to wait three years to get a project completed. If you do it like that, you need to put money in each budget and then couldn't complete a project until three years are up. It's doable, but not everyone wants to wait three years. An example being waiting three years to get police vehicles.

A. Clark – We had thirty some items on the list and narrowed them down. We have a list of things we plan to do the next three years. We picked the twelve most priority.

E. Dennis – We have a running list of Capital Projects and then at budget time the Governing Body decides what's priority for this year and then that's what get put in the Capital Budget. So, by forecasting, do you mean do we have a that list looking ahead, like a 5-year list of projects – yes, we do and it's constantly evolving.

H. Hartman – The budget is never used for that purpose. The Capital section of the budget has columns for years for planning.

J. Thompson – We usually do that if we're putting money aside in the budget for a future project. Not something we can really afford to do, we want to try to use what funds we have to do the projects that we need to do in the current year. If we do it like that, we'd essentially already be putting money aside to sit there for a project to be done in the future. That's not the way we've been budgeting for many years.

C. Parker – The minutes for the budget meeting are available on our website so you can see what we discussed. You asked for a list on what we decided on or passed up and that information would be available in those minutes.

H. Hartman – I follow the budget process more then most citizens and I know the fact that you went with the 4¢, went down hard because that's contrary to every republican mantra about budgeting.

T. Marrone – The issue here with the 4¢ and republican mantra is that the republican mantra of the nation isn't the people sitting here having to make some tough decisions because we were in a bad spot. Did we want to raise taxes, no, but at the end of the day we had to make sure real tough decisions with the police department.

H. Hartman – It's very easy to justify things by saying safety, welfare and all those things, but some of these things you can't tell me they're directly related to safety.

A. Clark – No, and they don't have to be.

J. Thompson – the note that we're borrowing for is only for the Road Program.

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #13-2024: Councilman Light;
Seconded: Councilman Clark

Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Absent; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Absent

Ordinance #13-2024 has been heard and is finally approved.

2024 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.

- 80 Supporting proposed legislation strengthening the regulation of Cooperative Sober Living Residences.
- 81 Accepting a Volunteer Firefighter into the Absecon City Fire Department, namely Tyler Madison-Correll.
- 82 Allowing for the Absecon Parent Teacher Organization to hold a City-Wide Yard Sale.
- 83 Authorizing the City of Absecon to award a contract for the reconstruction of Calderon Avenue.
- 84 Authorizing the Tax Collector to prorate and cancel portions of the 2nd Quarter taxes of 2024 and cancel the property taxes for 2024 Final/2025 Preliminary on the property located at 1112 Lavender Lane.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

No Discussion.

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

CONSENT AGENDA VOTE

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$2,749,973.55

Motioned to accept: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Cain - Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose - Absent; Light – Yes; Marrone - Yes; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Absent

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 2/15/24

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

REPORTS

Councilwoman Parker – Community Affairs Committee: Earth Day Event was a great success. Many residents came with shredding, also filled two trucks with electronics to take to the 4H that afternoon, along with many volunteers doing road clean ups. Memorial Day Parade, Monday, May 27th – Oakcrest Band, bike brigade, posters out to the schools, Butch Stewart will be Grand Marshal. Senior Brunch, June 1st @ 10:30 at the Methodist Church. Creekfest will be Sat. Sept. 21st. Maddog Morgan will be booking the food trucks, band have been confirmed and social media and support letters should launch next week. Free Masons offered volunteers and being involved in events.

Councilwoman Cain – Economic Development: Marrone and Clark in attendance. Blooms Flower Shop has opened downtown. Aldi has been working in the old White Horse Liquors location. Few of the Councilmembers attended a dinner at the Absecon School for a program with quiet a few members of the Absecon Business District. They're formulating a project, kind of like interns, for the older students. Would like to get ABCD back up and running and getting business involved and get this project off the ground with the school and Council's support. Cannabis Stores have been in contact and getting their buildings ready, no opening dates yet, but have been in contact with Jessica on their process.

Councilman Light – Well planned out and successful event at the school. Great idea for the kids.

Councilman Marrone – Public Works Committee: Did not meet since last meeting. Next meeting is May 6th @ 5pm. All are welcome. Very nice event at the school, glad so many could attend.

Councilman Clark – Public Safety Committee: Getting a lot of public safety calls over the last 2-3 weeks, one talking about how awesome our Volunteer Fire Department has done with all the tragedies that have been happening. Everyone recognizing all the great job they've done. And second was the Police Department, they have been everywhere and anywhere, people are loving the fact that the cops are out there. We appreciate all that they are doing and its well noticed by all.

Chief Laughlin – Another tragic fatal motor vehicle accident. Fire Department along with tow truck drivers and police were out there for approximately seven hours over night. SLEO Officer Hartman will be debriefing some of the Fireman as well as our Officers due to the nature of the crash, it's important for their well-being. Drone Unit was out and an intricate part of making sure no one was ejected from the vehicle and that there weren't other victims from the crash. Also assisted with photographing the crash site and was out with the Galloway Twp. Police Depart. the other day and assisted in helping locate a missing person. Increase in complaints at the bulkhead area, out of noise complaints have made a couple arrest and trash according to public works has become a full-time job. IT Director arranged to move the camera trailer down there and we'll be doing stick enforcement of that entire area. Distracted Driving Grant for the month of April we had 112 motor vehicle summons and 3 arrest.

Councilman Clark – Finance Committee: No meeting since last meeting, at which we approved the budget. Next meeting 5/16 @5:30.

Councilman Light – Parks and Recreation Committee: Haven't met, will meet on 5/21 @7pm. Concerts in the Park bands are all picked. Engineer and Contractors are working to bring the water line in. Thanked Parks and Playground. Thanked Public Works for job that they do, with as small of a group they have. They work extremely hard and are really talented and save the City money.

J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO: Spring leave collection runs through May 10th.

E. Dennis – Pre-Construction Meeting for the New Jersey Ave. Streetscape scheduled for Wed. May 8th, so once that meeting is complete we can issue a notice to the contractor to proceed, then will get a schedule from him on when the work will start. Awarded Calderon Ave., which is a State Aid project, so we'll get that pre-construction meeting started once the DOT signs off on our award. Myself and staff met with several residents on Shore Rd. A lot of good questions, went house by house and explained what we're going to be doing. Generally, all happy about it and those located immediately adjacent to the project will have to sign off on a temporary easement for us to go on their property and blend everything in, and currently no objections to that. Last piece of the puzzle is the County, and I have an answer on the schedule.

Mayor – Have you been putting pressure on them to open Route 30.

E. Dennis – We're taking about the entrance to the new White Horse Wine site coming off of Route 30, which has been closed. The answer is yes, I have been putting pressure on them. I spoke to the developer this week, they are planning on starting that work within the next two weeks. Once that work is done the DOT will need to sign off.

S. Light – Train Station, lights out between the stairs and the platform, do we have resource to reach out to. **Chief Laughlin** – I'll handle that.

S. Light – Any projection on how long for the Shore Road Project?

E. Dennis – Hoping to start the drainage work in the fall and wrap up before the winter weather hit, let all the trenches settle over the winter and then in spring, when the weather warms up, pave it. All in time span, may be six months, but for two months you may see nothing happening.

S. Light – Requested a map or ledger of City Owned land.

Mayor Kim Horton – Senior Center Director as resigned. Thanked Dr. Dooley and Mr. Burns, the Absecon Community School and the 46 local businesses for planning and educational experience for our students. Stopped by several residents while walking in Heritage Park who think the Public Works department is doing an incredible job keeping the City looking terrific. I applaud the work these six men do every season. Thanked Chief Laughlin for the drone update.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Harry Hartman – 632 Woodland Ave. – Cellphones issued to Councilmembers are they subject to OPRA?

B. Blaney – Yes, that's the reason they were issued. If they were to use their personal cell phones they would be sent out if there was an OPRA request, which would make them lose use of their own phones.

H. Hartman – So anything on their personal phones should not be city business and since they have city issued phones does that mean their personal phones is not subject.

B. Blaney – If their doing it the proper way and city business should be on the city phone.

H. Hartman – How much do the phones cost?

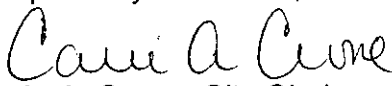
J. Thompson - \$41.30 each per month. About \$4,000 a year.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 6-6-24