



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 17TH, 2025 6:30 PM
MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE – Mayor

ROLL CALL

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Marrone, City Solicitor John Amenhauser Esq., City Clerk Carie Crone, Engineer Ed Dennis, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin.

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2025 RESOLUTION OUT OF CONSENT

136 Honoring Jackson and Logan Murray.

Council President DeRose – Council has really strived to recognize awesome citizens in the City, people who go above and beyond and just everyday do good things for other residents. After speaking with Council, we really wanted to make it something special as we honor different residents throughout time. Saw a Social Media post that went viral throughout the City. Jackson and Logan were doing a lemonade stand to help a classmate's family during a medical time. I reach out to other Council Members to tell them we found out first two people to honor. It was a quick, unanimous agreement and we came up with Resolution #136-2025 – read the resolution in full.

Motioned to move Resolution #136-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
Roll Call: Clark – Yes; Evans – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Parker – Yes; Sykes – Yes; DeRose – Yes

2025 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 05** Bond Ordinance providing for various 2025 Capital Improvements, appropriating \$1,000,000 therefor and authorizing the issuance of \$952,000 Bonds or Notes of the City to finance the cost thereof.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #05-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans

Discussion – Councilman Clark – The goal was to start cutting Bond Ordinances down, for years we've been living off one bond after the other. We unfortunately raised taxes hoping we could wean off these bonds. Reasons for the Bond – Road Program is \$500,000, cut from \$1,000,000, two Police cars we're looking to get for next year and a dump truck. And little excess for work in Capital since we currently have next to nothing, in case of any emergency, if we don't use that \$250,000 we can move it to next year and can raise less money in our bond. **Council President DeRose** – If we don't spend the money, it will not be frivolously spent. This is a practice most municipalities do, which hasn't been done in Absecon in a very long time, which is you should always have a little extra in the Capital, we never did, we always bonded exactly what was needed. This bond is specific to items from the Capital Improvement, but will also have money left over.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 06** Establishing Salary Ranges for the City of Absecon.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #06-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker.

Discussion – Council President DeRose – Historically the City has done multiple salary range changes every year due to lack of future planning. Anytime anyone's salary goes above, even by a dollar, you have to legally change the salary range so we're in compliance. This ordinance raises and lowers some positions, but we believe this will allow us to cover the City for the next few years.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 07** An ordinance amending ordinance 12-2023 – Amending Chapter 216 of the City of Absecon Code, Governing Hotel and Motel Registration.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #07-2025: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilman Sykes.

Discussion – Mayor Marrone – Up to 2 ½ years ago we did not have a Length of Stay Ordinance, which currently states 28 days. What we’ve done alongside with the Police Department’s advice, is changed it to be more enforceable, because we’re still seeing an uptick in people from other Cities and Counties being sent to our motels as long-term housing and homeless shelters – which they are not equipped or designed to be doing.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 08** An ordinance amending Chapter 258 of the Code of the City of Absecon establishing prohibitions against aggressive solicitation within the City.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #08-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman LaRotonda.

Discussion – Council President DeRose – This addresses some key areas where folks have reached out to Council about being solicited, e.g.- leaving a bank or ATM. This creates ranges where you cannot solicit. **Chief Laughlin** – It also includes outside dining.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 09** An ordinance amending Chapter 330 – Vehicles in Traffic, of the Code of the City of Absecon, establishing regulations for the parking of roll-off containers along roadways within the City of Absecon.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #09-2025: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman Light.

Discussion – Mayor Marrone – Code Enforcement has brought to our attention multiple roll-off items that come off trucks; e.g. dumpsters, have been in the streets and it’s become an issue for people trying to drive through. **John Amenhauser** – there’s a definition that gives more detail to what will specify directly what this applies to. **Councilman Clark** – it’s a safety issue. **John Amenhauser** – yes, a pedestrian and vehicular safety hazard.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 10** An ordinance amending Chapter 270 of the Code of the City of Absecon, establishing regulations for prohibition of commercial vehicles in residential zones.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #10-2025: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Clark.

Discussion – Mayor Marrone – there's a lot to talk about in this one, in what it means in terms of prohibition of commercial vehicles. Our solicitor has very clearly stated the types of commercial vehicles that are the issue and that complaints have been coming in about. It's a nuisance in neighborhoods, with noise, parking and safety. **Council President DeRose** – This is extremely high level, there are exceptions carved out for specific things. Please read all of these Ordinances and if you have any questions reach out to anyone on Council. **Mayor Marrone** – It's important to note, that everything here, for all Ordinances, all of us collectively support, it's for the safety of the public and to keep the safety of the streets.

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 August 7th, 2025.

- 11 Amending Ordinance 11-2024 – Amending Chapter 254 of the City of Absecon Code thereof titled Peace and Good Order.

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #11-2025: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans.

Discussion – Clerk Crone – This Ordinance removes the section of the Code where begging was previously placed, due to the Ordinance just adopted now covering it.

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 August 7th, 2025.

Council President DeRose – A lot of Ordinances for introduction, the reason is because we do take the resident's concerns seriously. Thank you to Leigh Gadd who was very instrumental, the Police Department and John, our City Solicitor, for working through these and making sure that they were appropriate but also addressed the concerns of the residents

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.

- 137 Endorsing the fourth round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.
- 138 Approving a fourth round Affordable Housing Trust Fund Spending Plan and requesting program and court approval of the Spending Plan.
- 139 Authorizing the acceptance of, and when authorized, the release of various street opening permit security deposits.

- 140 Authorizing Change Order No. 1 for the Meadowview Avenue Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Project.
- 141 Authorizing Change Order No. 2 for the 2024 Road Program.
- 142 Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2025 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$2,100 from the State of New Jersey Highway Traffic Safety.
- 143 Authorizing the establishment of facsimile signatories for the City of Absecon's bank accounts.
- 144 Releasing a Performance Guaranty and accepting a Maintenance Guaranty on property known as Block 203, Lot 1.01 – Firestone (Phase 1A).
- 145 Approving the installation of Pedestrian Safety Equipment.
- 146 Adjusting the bid threshold for the City of Absecon.
- 147 Accepting Volunteer Firefighters into the Absecon City Fire Department.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth – The Affordable Housing plan approval when approved by the Planning Board had some questions and concerns. We approved this, but there's a portion in there that allows for second unit housing to be counted as for the plan. We have to provide for so many units, don't have to be created, but provide for so many. Board thinks there should be strict wording on how that gets implemented. Is this the time to discuss this or doing the Ordinance period?

Jenn Heller – City Planner – Ordinances in the plan are drafts, per the directive from the State and the courts, the ordinances have to be adopted by March of 2026. They'll be back in front of the Planning Board and Council for consistency review.

Greg Seher – Rather them potentially being drafted and there being concerns, I'm voicing my issues so that they can potentially be drafted properly. The State has pushed the idea of allowing a second unit on a single-family universally. Every home can turn into a duplex, and be rented out and then face the possibility of having a bunch of slumlords in the City. Hoping the City fights back against that. Planning Board discussed potentially, to have this as an Affordable Housing mechanism, the separate unit should be incorporated to an owner-occupied dwelling. That was our main concern, but would also like some mechanism of Zoning or Planning Board approval for each individual unit to make sure conforms with zoning.

Council President DeRose – Plan to be as strict as the law allows, but not letting the City get sued.

Jenn Heller – City Planner – I authored the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in accordance with the amended Fair Housing Act and the Mount Laurel Doctrine. We prepared it, it went to the Planning Board for adoption, now back to Council tonight for their endorsement, along with the Spending Plan. These are draft Ordinances, we have plenty of time to tweak them, but the more mechanisms we put in, the better shot we have of getting deemed to be fair in our plan. We proposed to limit them to ten affordable housing accessory apartment units. May not need that, shortly after the Planning Board adopted the Housing Element, the Veteran's Village came back and said they'd do the deed restrictions, so we'll be getting more credits now. Tonight, Council endorses it, then we wait till August 31st to see if there's any challenges to our plan. I recommend we start getting them in draft form by the end of this year so the following year we're ready to adopt.

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

CONSENT AGENDA VOTE

Motioned to move Consent Agenda: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Evans

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$3,291,449.50

Motioned to accept: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilman Sykes

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 6/18/2025

Motioned to accept the Minutes: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Light – Public Works: We met on the 7th of this month. We discussed the Road Program, Shore Road Improvements and laying out a plan moving forward for pedestrian safety and looking into some of the grants that are available. Had a couple residents with concerns with potential deficiencies in the previous Road Program, we will look into that. Thanked the Public Works and all the staff here for all their hard work

Councilman Clark – Finance: Met this evening, went over some budget stuff, from a budget standpoint we are doing great. We now have checks and balances with the new CFO. Looked at some of our cost. Police overtime down significantly and court cost are doing better then they have in the years past.

Councilwoman Evans – Community Affairs: Last meeting was June 5th. Continuing to move forward with Creekfest; open to any volunteers, please reach out to myself or Councilwoman Parker.

Councilwoman Parker – Public Safety: Fire Department reported on doing some training over the last month. A lot of Fire and Public Safety questions were answered in the first Gazette. Police reported how well the new six officers are doing in the academy. Discussed the non-emergency number for the Police Department and followed up by a Facebook post explaining how to use the non-emergency number.

Chief Laughlin: Thanked Leigh Gadd for all his help with the Ordinances. Would also like to recognize him on his persistence with the clean up and maintenance of the commercial properties along Route 30. Ordinance violations have been issued and some have gone to court, it has been very effective and we're going to continue to work hard at that. Traffic safety, last couple years we have received grant money for aggressive driving, this year we got extra for pedestrian safety. We put a couple plain clothes officers out in the crosswalks, and summons were issued, important to stop for a pedestrian in the crosswalks. Working hand-in-hand with the County Task Force on aggressive driving and that has been very successful. Prosecutor, Bill Reynolds, will be holding a

mass, for healing and honoring the victims of fatal crashes, promoting our traffic safety slogans. One loss of life due to speed or intoxication, is one life too many, and impacts all. Hooked on fishing was huge success, great turnout. August 5th, National Night out, everything is free. No July movie in the park, looking to do something with Field of Dreams after school starts. All proceeds will go to the Field of Dreams and not to our Christmas program.

Councilwoman Parker – Community affairs, since we didn't have our Halloween movie last year due to conflicts with dates of other Halloween events discussed having our movies as a back to school movie. We would like to help you with your efforts in planning a movie. Chief Laughlin – To put on a movie, the movie alone cost \$500, with us tightening the budget this year I think it's a fantastic idea and we can make it one huge event. Already talked to Field of Dreams, they think it's a great idea, just need to figure everything out.

Councilman Sykes – Parks & Playgrounds - Didn't meet this month. Had a great concert in the park this past Sunday. August 5th is National Night Out, it's a great family event. Should have an update next meeting for the lights being put on at the Absecon Fields. In talks with Home Depot about donating shingles for the Blue Devil's Field House. Also reaching out to local roof installers and see if we can get a volunteer to put the shingles on. Roof is 22 years old, so trying to get it done before any difficulties happen.

Councilman Clark – Working on updating the process for coaching badges, Chief came up with a better system, you no longer have to redo fingerprinting for renewals you just have to fill out the form that's on the website. **Chief Laughlin** – part of the Ordinance is that the badges must be worn, we do all this work to get the badge out and, in the past, they haven't been picked up. **Councilman Clark** – the badges will be given directly to Pete Higbee, the Rec Director, to distribute so they won't sit here.

Council President DeRose – Want to commend the Parks & Playgrounds Committee, the Police Department, along with Pet Higbee for getting a long-term lighting issue around the walking path solved.

Councilman LaRotonda – Economic Development – Passed first readings on a few good ordinances tonight that I think will have a positive impact on economic development, especially the aggressive solicitation. If you have an aggressive solicitation situation, please report it, the Ordinance will only be that good if people report it so we can apprehend and stop the solicitors.

City Clerk: Monthly Report – June

- Construction Office: \$7,069.00
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$17,344.00
- Municipal Court: \$9,075.44
- Tax Office: \$231,777.62

Engineer Ed Dennis: Resolution on the consent agenda approving the installation of pedestrian safety equipment, that's a flashing crosswalk sign on New Jersey Avenue at Highland Blvd. the County is doing a 50/50 with us on the cost. Couple projects in the works, all in the engineering phase – 2025 Road Program is in design, raised crosswalk project, the upgrade to the front of the City Hall for ADA compliance, road work on Delaware Ave. and Shore Road project. All projects have some outside source of funding. Applied for three grant applications; for Franklin Blvd., new sidewalk on Highland Blvd. and discretionary aid from the DOT to redo stripping and signs throughout the whole City. Working with NJ IBank for some significant projects and grant opportunities that are in the initial stages, will report on that once more defined.

Mayor Thomas Marrone: Honored to be a part of a group that took the time to recognize the Murray's for their efforts for an ailing friend. When we talk about community we spoke a lot about the Ordinances tonight, everything is in the name of public safety. Are services are stretched way too

thin. We do a very good job taking care of the homeless, but becomes very burdensome when other Counties/Municipalities are sending homeless to our hotels. Had our first Homeless Taskforce meeting and next day read an article claiming the Mayor of Toms River was sending from an encampment in their municipal and library parking garage to Absecon. We were extremely proactive and County Commissioners for Ocean County are looking into it. Advised the Mayor of Toms River of our Ordinances and expressed that if we continue to be inundated with other areas homeless we will pursue litigation. It's about the safety of our community and the homeless people.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth. Request detail of what is being changed.

John Amenhauser – Timeframe has shrunk to 28 days to 14. A cumulative period of time of a maximum of 45 days. Fines have increased fairly significantly. A form created by the City, a registry in a sense so we can actively monitor these things.

Greg Seher – Soliciting Ordinance. Is there a reason why it isn't everywhere? **Chief Laughlin** – Aggressive begging is everywhere, if someone calls we can enforce it everywhere, however it's prohibited in the areas listed. **Greg Seher** – it's only prohibited there because by some other law it can only be approved there? **Chief Laughlin** – Correct.

John Amenhauser – It's not a prohibition against begging, we can't do that, there's a constitutional right to it. It's specifically defined to what exactly where prohibiting and where and we tried to contour that to be as narrowly as possible so we don't face constitutional challenges.

Greg Seher – Any progress on getting pilons to prevent people from turning left on Mill Rd., going to be worse now that Jersey Cow is opening.

Ed Dennis – The State has been out, but I haven't heard anything, will reach out again.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned to adjourn: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker

All in Favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 8-7-25