



CITY OF ABSECON
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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 2ND, 2024
MINUTES

Council President LaRotonda: Announced that Jacob Hackett will be the Honorary Council President to commemorate this July as Disabilities Pride Month.

FLAG SALUTE – Honorary Council President Jacob Hackett

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Sandy Cain, Alex Clark, Richard DeRose, Steve Light, Tommy Marrone, Christine Parker, and Council President Nick LaRotonda

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson, City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Solicitor Matt Rooney Esq., City Clerk Carie Crone, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2024 RESOLUTIONS

110 Recognizing Disabilities Pride Month.

Honorary Council President Jacob Hackett: Thanked everyone for coming. Emphasized the need to encourage the community to help each other, by being an advocate, voice, etc. Thanked Council for their recognition. Urged the importance of informing the public about programs dedicated to those with disabilities. Encourage people to get involved. Thanked the City again for recognizing July as Disabilities Pride Month.

Mayor Kim Horton - Proclamation: Read aloud her Proclamation honoring Jacob Hackett and Disabilities Pride Month, as well as designating July as the official Disabilities Pride Month in the City of Absecon.

Congressman Jeff Van Drew – Proclamation: Honored Jacob Hackett, recognizing him as an inspiring symbol of American Exceptionalism. Presented a Proclamation honoring Jacob's hard work

and accomplishments and also Disabilities Pride Month. Also presented Jacob a Challenge Coin (Explained that a Challenge Coin is something given to a person who represents American Exceptionalism. The Challenge Coin presented to Jacob is minted and personalized with District-related references (e.g. the Pinelands, farmland, beach, etc.) Described the history of Challenge Coins, stating that although the tradition originated in Ancient Rome, Challenge Coins have maintained their significance through present day. Explained that the holder of a Challenge Coin is expected to always keep their Coin on their person. Noted that this District is the largest in New Jersey. Informed Jacob Hackett that he will give a speech about Jacob Hackett at the Capitol, listing all his accomplishments and explaining the Field of Dreams program. Commended Jacob's passion, vision, and determination to get things done. Stated his pride in Jacob. Explained that a granted-request will ensure that his speech about Jacob will be saved in the United States' permanent records.

Councilman DeRose: Shared with Jacob that he too has a Challenge Coin from his duration in Iraq.

Council: Congratulated Jacob Hackett again.

Council President LaRotonda: Opened to the meeting to the public to discuss the current topic of discussion.

Lynn Caterson – 904 Marlborough Avenue: Stated that the law does not require businesses to be ADA compliant unless they do renovations. Has been working with Jacob Hackett and the County to get work done. Wants to make sure that all businesses in Absecon become ADA-friendly. Wants to reach and contact those who will be able to ensure this change.

Anne Baker – 19 Heart Lane, Ventnor: Met Jacob Hackett last year, but has been familiar with the Field of Dreams program for years. Amazed by Jacob's integral influence in the Field of Dream's success. Observed that Jacob has gone above and beyond to make life better for others. Appreciates all his hard work. Emphasized the need for every public building and all businesses to be ADA. Indicated that she would reach out to businesses directly in order to encourage ADA compliance. Thanked Jacob for all that he has done.

Reverend Dave Ledford – Pastor of Absecon United Methodist Church: Explained that this recognition has provided him so much hope. Noted the unifying nature of the matter. Mentioned the common goal of making life more ADA compliant. Emphasized the importance of focusing on our similarities instead of our differences. Appreciates how Jacob Hackett has actively chosen to concentrate on making life better for himself and others.

Motioned to move Resolution #110-2024: Councilman Marrone; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

2024 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 16 Amending and supplementing the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 61 entitled "Personnel".

Motioned for the first reading of Ordinance #16-2024: Councilwoman Parker; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

J. Thompson: The amendments pertain to updates in the City's Personnel Manual. Vacation days have been added at the 23-year mark, Juneteenth has been added as a Holiday, and language changes have been made in regard to Sick Leave to mirror State changes.

Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – 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 August 1st, 2024.

2024 RESOLUTIONS – CONSENT AGENDA

- 111 Renewing Alcoholic Beverage Licenses within the City of Absecon.
- 112 Cancelling outstanding checks in the Sewer Fund Account of the City of Absecon.
- 113 Authorizing the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Government Workers Union for the years 2024 through 2026.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

No Discussion

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

CONSENT AGENDA VOTE

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$ 1,921,655.05

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Closed Session as to form and content only – 6/6/24

Regular Meeting Minutes – 6/20/2024

Motioned to accept: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Marrone

Roll Call: Cain – Abstain (6/6), Yes (6/20); Clark – Abstain (6/6), Yes (6/20); DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; Parker – Yes (6/6), Abstain (6/20); LaRotonda – Abstain (6/6), Yes (6/20)

REPORTS

Councilwoman Parker – Community Affairs: Have not met since last Meeting. The Committee continues to move forward with preparations for Creekfest. A date has yet to be decided for their next Creekfest meeting. Next Community Affairs Meeting will be August 1st at 5:30PM.

Councilwoman Cain – Economic Development: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be tomorrow at City Hall.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety: Next meeting will be August 5th at 6PM. Last meeting was the previous day. They discussed some residential concerns.

Chief Laughlin – Police: Announced that the City has a new Police Officer, Gregory O'Connell, who is beginning his field training in the upcoming week. The City's Movie in the Park will be on July 12th. Encourages all to attend. National Night Out will be on August 6th.

Councilman Marrone – Public Works: Next meeting will be on August 5th. Met this passed Monday with City Engineer Ed Dennis and Councilman Clark. Several items were discussed. Applications have been submitted to construct raised crosswalks to ensure more safety in the community. The Crestview Ave. Project is currently out to bid and is anticipated to be approved by the end of the month. Noted that it seems momentum has recently picked up with the Community Garden.

Council President LaRotonda: Expressed his excitement at the possibility of receiving grants for the crosswalks. Thanked Ed Dennis for his work on that task.

Councilman Clark – Finance: Nothing to report from the last meeting.

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Will meet on July 16th at 7PM. Recently met with the Eagle Scout, whom is very passionate about the solar-powered cellphone charging station. Has been in communication with Pete Higbee and Public Works about the project. The Community Garden is moving forward, as the posts for fencing have already been installed. Thanked the City and Donors for their help making it happen. The recent Concert in the Park was canceled due to rain. Thanked Jacob Hackett and his friends and family. Praised Jacob for helping this community and thereby the whole surrounding region. Thanked Public Works for their hard work on the fields and parks.

Council President LaRotonda: Thanked Absecon Veterinarian Hospital for inviting the Governing Body to a recent tour of their facility. Saw the operating rooms and met their staff. They are looking to do more with the community as well as expand. Thanked them for all they have done for those in the community. Announced that the City is no longer using the Zoom platform to present Meeting videos, and instead, they will be recorded via camera and uploaded to Youtube, where they will remain to access.

J. Thompson – CFO/Admin.: Announced that the Contractor for the Calderon Avenue Project plans to mobilize around July 15th. They will be meeting with Shoprite to ensure no interruptions with deliveries. Streetscape work is also taking place on New Jersey Ave., while there has been Police Detail monitoring the area. Completed grant reporting for the LEAP Grant. Reached out to the approved cannabis-related businesses for an update. Red Oak Dispensary (White Horse Pike) is currently focusing on building renovations but plans to open in the Fall. Off the Charts (New Jersey Ave.) hopes to open in August. Did not hear back from the remaining businesses. The City is still working on finalizing the PBA contract. Work on the GWU contract is also being conducted. Wished everyone a happy holiday.

Council President LaRotonda: Clarified that an agreement has been reached between the City and the PBA, however work continues on the language and final version.

E. Dennis – City Engineer: The Streetscape Project is under construction. Calderon Ave. will start construction around July 15th. In addition to repaving the street, drainage will be installed to catch water on New Jersey Ave. before it travels down to Highland Blvd. The Crestview Ave. Sidewalk Project (Phase 1) is out to bid. Phase 2 includes a cut-through. Bids for Phase 1 will be opened on July 16th. Hopes to receive a 3rd crosswalk grant to implement more improvements.

Council President LaRotonda: In regard to the Crestview Project bid opening, Council may call a Special Meeting before the next Council Meeting scheduled (August 1st) for its approval, so that work may begin sooner rather than later.

Councilman Light: Asked for an update about a grant for a handicap ramp at City Hall.

E. Dennis: Indicated that they applied for a grant through the CBDG Program to utilize funds for an accessibility ramp behind City Hall. While they were successful in receiving the CBDG grant, the ACIA recommended that the City not only install a handicap ramp, but also new steps in the back of City Hall. So, they amended the application to include the new suggestions and they have yet to receive a response. There are supplemental funds in the budget for that project, so once a response is received, they will know whether the project will actually be larger than initially intended.

Councilman Light: Wants improvements with the access road near White Horse Pike. Spoke with the County Executive, and others, about possibly receiving help with landscape maintenance. Asked E. Dennis to follow-up with them about the matter.

Councilman DeRose: Asked whether the property in question belonged to NJ Transit, not County.

Councilman Light: Confirmed.

Council President LaRotonda: Commented that Transit has not been responsive to their concerns. Has notified the Senator that he is not satisfied with the status of NJ Transit's government relations.

Councilman Light: During a conversation with NJ Transit that took place several years ago, they indicated that they would be unable to conduct maintenance, but expressed that volunteers would be allowed to maintain the overgrown area as needed.

Councilman DeRose: Indicated that he would also follow-up on the matter.

Councilman Light: Emphasized how the landscape maintenance would compliment the paving as well as the new business in the area.

Mayor Kim Horton: Welcomed Michelle Wetzel as the Absecon's Senior Center's new Director. Thanked Mary Polson for managing the Senior Center during the hiring process. Michelle plans on implementing enhancements, however her primary goal at this current time is to increase the Center's membership. Recently assisted the Senior Center in their 4th of July BBQ. Wished everyone a safe and happy holiday. Welcomed the public to join her Mayor's Walking Club, which is on Saturday at 11am at Heritage Park (1-mile walk).

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Christopher Emmel – 1104 Spring Lane: Encourage the introduction of hydropower to Absecon. Explained that hydropower creates clean renewable energy from moving water. Believes the change would be cost-effective, as the City would be able to use energy needed and then sell surplus energy to outside entities. The use of hydropower will facilitate future betterment. The potential monetary savings would also allow the City to hire more law enforcement, which is an apparent need. Emphasized that Absecon ought to use its locational advantage (nearby water) and initiate the use of hydropower. Mentioned the region-wide benefit of using hydropower. The shared usage of hydropower would reinforce strong relationships between neighboring municipalities, who could provide additional security and assistance in times of need.

Councilman DeRose: Offered to connect Chris with some contacts in the hydropower industry. Commended Chris' speech and encouraged him to continue his pursuit so that the matter could be discussed further.

Councilwoman Cain: Wished everyone a happy 4th of July. Reminded pet-owners to keep in mind the impact holiday celebrations (i.e. fireworks) have on animals and to take appropriate action to ensure they are as comfortable and safe as they can be.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,



Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 8-1-24