



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 1ST, 2024 6:30 PM
MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

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

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Councilman Tommy Marrone

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City, City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Solicitor Bill Blaney Esq., City Clerk Carie Crone, and Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2024 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #16-2024: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman DeRose

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

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

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #16-2024: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Clark
All in Favor, None Opposed.

No discussion.

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

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #16-2024: Councilman Clark;

Seconded: Councilman DeRose

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

Ordinance #16-2024 has been heard and is finally approved.

PUBLIC HEARING – COMCAST - *CANCELLED

Council President LaRotonda: Explained that Comcast requested a public hearing, however, due to their inability to attend the meeting, the hearing is postponed. When the City hears from Comcast about rescheduling, they will let the public know.

Councilman DeRose: Comcast asked him to let the public know that if there are any Comcast issues in the city, to reach out. They are making active effort to ensure positive customer service.

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.

- 115** Authorizing amended Change Orders No. 1 and 2 for the 2023 Road Program for the City of Absecon.
- 116** Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon VFW, Post 9462 Auxiliary.
- 117** Certifying the qualified participants in the Length of Services Award Program (LOSAP) for the Absecon Volunteer Fire Department for the calendar year 2023.
- 118** Restricting hours for the South Jersey Field of Dreams Complex at Pitney Park within the City of Absecon.
- 119** Accepting Volunteer Fire Fighters into the Absecon City Fire Department, namely David Morales, Jr. and David Sonnie.
- 120** Authorizing the City of Absecon to award a contract for the Resurfacing of the Pitney Park Tennis Courts.
- 121** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2024 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$2,800.00 from the State of New Jersey Highway Traffic Safety.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

Motioned to open to the public: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman DeRose

All in Favor, None Opposed.

Councilman DeRose: Asked for Resolution #116 to be removed from the Consent Agenda. Explained that as a member of the VFW, he will be recusing himself.

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

2024 RESOLUTIONS – OUT OF CONSENT

- 116** Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit funds, namely the Absecon VFW, Post 9462 Auxiliary.

Motioned to move Resolution #116-2024: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Parker
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Abstain; Light –Yes; Marrone – Absent; Parker – Yes;
LaRotonda – Yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$ 3,140,078.91

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 7/2/2024

Special Meeting Minutes – 7/22/2024

Motioned to accept: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman Light

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

REPORTS

Councilwoman Parker – Community Affairs: Met earlier that night. Discussed their participation in the upcoming National Night Out, which will be August 6 from 6PM-9PM at the park at Crestview and Pitney. Councilman DeRose will be in the Dunk Tank. Any other volunteers for the Dunk Tank from Council or Police are welcome. Discussed the Halloween Movie in the Park and a potential Costume Contest on the night of Saturday, October 26th, to avoid any other scheduling conflicts. The Creekfest sub-committee met on Tuesday to discuss the event. Creekfest Will be on Saturday, September 21st from 1PM-8PM. Bands (3) and food trucks (11) are booked. Are still in need of volunteers and sponsors. Anyone interested please reach out to Councilwoman Parker. Expressed that the PTO has done a great job this summer working the Heritage Park Concession Stand. Thanked Councilman Light for securing the flags for Flags for Forgotten Soldiers. Will meet again on Thursday, September 5th at 5:30PM.

Councilwoman Cain – Economic Development: Had a meeting on July 3rd, however no one except she was able to attend. Next meeting will be on August 7th. The September Finance Meeting will be attended by the Atlantic County Economic Alliance's Lauren Moore to give a presentation. The City will then discuss the possibility of joining the Alliance.

Councilman DeRose – Public Safety: Meeting on August 5th is canceled. Encouraged the public that if they see something, say something.

Chief Laughlin – Police: Stated the recent Movie in the Park was successful. Noted the importance for Police to be involved in such community events. The events are fun for the officers as well. Officer Bethea is leading this years' National Night Out (this is his 2nd year doing so). Reminded everyone that National Night Out began as an event for people to come out and just say hello to their neighbors. Encouraged people to socialize and get to know their neighbors. Reminisced about a time in Absecon when everyone in an area knew each of their neighbors. Urged for people to use National Night Out as an opportunity to get to know each other better. Reminded the public that National Night Out is also a free event. Announced the Calls for Service from June 1, 2024 to August 1, 2024: 878 motor vehicle stops, 527 citations issued, 75 motor vehicle crashes investigated, 70 arrests made, 57 ordinance violations enforced, 29 shoplifting investigations, 20 warrant arrests, 9 missing person, 8 burglary to motor vehicles, 8 stolen motor vehicles, and 6,147 total calls for service. The revenue that the City earned from the State Highway Traffic and Safety was provided for August because they were so happy with the Police's enforcement in June.

Councilman Clark – Finance: Met in July but will not be meeting in August. Next meeting will be on September 19th. Councilwoman Cain will be there as well, in addition to the rest of Economic Development. Latest focus has been trying to get the Police Chiefs contract completed.

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds: Last met on July 16th. Discussed National Night Out, the newly installed cell phone charging station (Eagle Scout Project), and recent playground and sport equipment improvements. Suggestions included increasing the frequency of port-a-potty cleanings. Commended Joe Marcyk and Travis Stoll for their accomplishment of completing the State Police Academy, and Tony Santamaria for joining the Tampa Bay Rays. Noted the significance of Absecon Pride. Thanked everyone for their support for the Flags for Forgotten Soldiers. Will meet again on August 20th at 7PM. The public is welcome.

Council President LaRotonda – Public Works: Will meet on August 5th at 5PM.

J. Thompson – Administrator/CFO: The County certified the City's tax rate. Tax bills were mailed out 2 weeks ago and the due date is today. The grace period is extended to August 12th. The full tax bill is an increase of \$23 per \$100k of assessed value.

Councilman DeRose: Residents have complained to him that they have not received their tax bill, however they have received emails telling them to pay their taxes. Tax bills were received after-the-fact.

J. Thompson: Pointed out the issue being one with the Post Office. Informed Council that residents have the option to request those emails on the City's website.

C. Crone: Stated that the email was sent about 2 days after the postage was mailed out.

J. Thompson: There was a recent pre-construction meeting regarding the Crestview Ave. Project. Ed Dennis has been communicating with nearby residents for some time now, so they are already informed. Unfortunately, the project will not be completed before school commences again. A road closure will be necessary soon for about 2 days for road work, however the bulk of the construction will not begin until September and for which there is a 70-day timeframe. They are expected to work from 7AM-5:30PM from M-Th. The Engineering Office plans to write up a letter for the school to disseminate to households about the project so that detours may be used by affected parents/guardians if needed.

Councilwoman Parker: Asked if any bus stops will be affected.

Ed Dennis: Construction will work with the bus companies to make sure no one is negatively affected by the work being done.

Council Parker: Asked for the information to be shared with her.

Councilman Clark: Asked how long the project will take.

E. Dennis: About 70-days. Indicated that he would try to push up the start date.

Councilman DeRose: Asked which Company was doing the work.

E. Dennis: Think Pavers.

E. Dennis – City Engineer: The City just approved the award of the contract for the Pitney Park tennis courts, which puts them on schedule to begin work after the summer season. That pre-construction meeting will soon be scheduled with Command Co., whom the City has worked with in the past. The Streetscape Project on New Jersey Ave. is moving along. The Calderon Ave. Project (state-aided) has been helped up by DOT for permitting, but has been resolved and will begin work on August 12th. Currently in the process of lining up a couple more projects to go out to bid (Road Program, some sewer rehab work on Meadowview Dr.) No update on Shore Rd. other than that they are close to having sign off from all residents along the street.

Councilman DeRose: In regard to the Crestview Project, was contacted by a homeowner about a paver wall they are concerned about.

E. Dennis: Told the homeowner to refer to him. Has met with all residents more than once with the message that anything damaged would be rectified to the exact state it was in beforehand.

Mayor Horton: Asked for an update about the old ball field/firehouse.

E. Dennis: No update.

Council President LaRotonda: Asked in regard to Crestview, whether the residents were made aware of the layout.

E. Dennis: All residents ought to be, as they have been met with directly numerous times. A notice will also be sent with more details.

Councilman Light: Asked for a status update of New Jersey Ave.

E. Dennis: Can see that the project is coming along, but needs time to get more exact details, as he just returned from vacation.

Councilman Light: Asked about the remnants of the tree. Thanked Ed Dennis and Public Works for their work. Also asked about the re-paving of Veteran's Highway.

E. Dennis: Indicated the re-paving of Veteran's Highway is part of the 2024 Road Program so information was sent to NJ Transit without any reply so far. Generally, the 2024 Road Program is expected to be done by the end of the year.

Councilman Light: According to the Atlantic County Public Works, they indicated that they would assist in trimming the landscape back when it comes to the paving project.

Councilman Clark: Asked about the raised crosswalk grant.

E. Dennis: It has just been submitted as part of the annual DOT grant program. Expects a response for the money some time in the fall.

Councilman Clark: Asked about the flashing light near Shoprite.

E. Dennis: Indicated that it is in the budget, and that the City just needs to coordinate with the County because they are going 50/50. Will provide update in the future.

City Clerk: Monthly Report – June 2024

- Municipal Court: \$11,868.24
- Tax Office: \$244,764.15
- Construction Office: \$13,086
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$16,217

Mayor Kim Horton: Described how Councilman Light recently organized the Flags of Forgotten Soldiers in Absecon. She, along with the Knights of Columbus, Chief Laughlin, Chief Talley, and several Councilmembers, Police Officers and firefighters, helped place the flags near the Public Works Facility on Pitney Rd. Shared that 660 veterans die by their own hand every month. The display is presented in hopes that it reminds veterans of their importance and remembrance. Received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Knights of Columbus for the City's continued display and support of the Flags for Forgotten Soldiers over the years. Hopes that the powerful visual

encourages everyone to come together to provide care for veterans in need. Attended a birthday party at the Senior Center for Linda Mazzara, who turned 100 years old. Next week, Absecon Police, headed by Officer Bethea will host the City's National Night Out on August 6th. Families are encouraged to attend. Announced that residents are encouraged to call 811 before doing any digging work. 811 serves as a communication link between residents and utility companies with bury lines. The law requires residents call before any digging projects. More information is available on the City's website.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Harry Hartmen – 632 Woodland Avenue: Following up on Union contract. Noted that the PBA Contract seems to be in flux.

Councilman LaRotonda: Shared that he directly emailed him the MOA.

H. Hartman: Confirmed and expressed that it was helpful information. Wants clarification on understanding the steps and their payscales. Criticized how late the contracts were being worked on, considering it's 7 months into the year. Asked about the GWU Contract.

B. Blaney: Stated that the GWU Contract has been sent to the GWU for review, but is completed. Currently awaiting on signatures.

H. Hartman: Asks because pay raises are supposed to be as of the first of the year.

B. Blaney: Raises are initiated when the MOU is completed.

J. Thompson: The PBA is close to completing their contract. It was approved back in April.

Council President LaRotonda: Explained that these timelines are typical for public contracts.

B. Blaney: Also added that the Unions are, in fact, the entity holding these specific contracts up, not the City.

Councilman DeRose: While budgeting in February, the City was aware the contracts were upcoming and so they had that in mind when creating the budget.

H. Hartman: Asked about how projections are calculated if the contracts are not completed, and its impact on the budget. Indicated the raises are significant. Needs someone from the City to thoroughly explain the increases to him.

Councilman DeRose: Offered to have H. Hartman come to City Hall so that the particulars of the contract he is confused about can be explained.

B. Blaney: Nicole, from his office, worked on the Police contract numbers, so she can be included in that conversation. He did the numbers for the GWU, so he could provide insight for any questions about the GWU Contract.

Mayor Horton: Told H. Hartman to set up an appointment with J. Thompson.

B. Blaney: Noted that the number of PBA attorneys have seemed to dwindle in recent years.

Brendan Santangelo – 150 Crestview Avenue: In regard to the Crestview Ave. Project, asked whether the street would be closed for the entire 70 days.

E. Dennis: No. There is a drainage crossing (in the middle of Crestview) which will likely require some traffic control at some point. But the rest of the project will be conducted so that traffic may continue on the street.

Council President LaRotonda: Through traffic will be affected during some periods, such as when there is work on the drainage crossing.

E. Dennis: Confirmed. Indicated that during sidewalk work, is sure contractors will be asking home owners to not use their driveway for a couple days to let the sidewalk properly dry. There will be communication between the contractor and all affected homeowners.

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

CLOSED SESSION - #122 – Contract Negotiations

B. Blaney: 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 personnel issues and contract negotiations. Action may be taken after.

Motioned to enter Closed Session: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Clark
All in Favor, None Opposed.

(Closed Session)

Motioned to adjourn Closed Session and re-enter the meeting: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Clark
All in Favor, None Opposed.

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

- 123** Authorizing the Mayor to an Employment Agreement between the City of Absecon and Chief James R. Laughlin for the position of Chief of Police

Motioned to move Resolution #123-2024: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Clark
Roll Call: Cain – Yes; Clark – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Absent; Parker – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 9-5-24