



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

Carie A. Crone, RMC  
Municipal Clerk

Phone (609) 641-0663x101  
Fax (609) 645-5098

CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

AUGUST 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2023 6:30 PM

MINUTES

**FLAG SALUTE**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE** – Honoring New Jersey Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver; And local residents, Bill Hoch Sr., Angelica Hickson, and Giuseppe LaRotonda.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Richard DeRose, Betty Howell, Steve Light, and Council President Nick LaRotonda

**ABSENT:** Councilman Tommy Marrone

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mayor Kim Horton, City Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson, City Solicitor Kyle Weinberg Esq., City Engineer Ed Dennis, City Clerk Carie Crone, Police Chief JR Laughlin

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

**PRESENTATION – GALLOWAY EMS**

**Galloway EMS Chief Chuck Uhl:** In anticipation of Absecon EMS's closing operations, Absecon Councilmembers contacted Galloway EMS to ask whether they could provide temporary EMS coverage for Absecon while a long-term solution is pursued, to which Galloway EMS agreed. From social media, became aware of Absecon and Galloway residents' concerns regarding how this change may affect the quality of EMS service provided. Galloway EMS has had several meetings with Absecon Councilmembers and Police Dept. to collaborate on decisions aimed to ensure the continuation of successful EMS operations in both Galloway and Absecon. Noted while it's not uncommon to see smaller EMS agencies close their operations for a variety of reasons, Galloway EMS is not in that position. Galloway EMS has been operating in Absecon for the past week, with a 6:53 average response time from the Galloway EMS Station at 300 E. Jimmie Leeds. There are current considerations for Galloway EMS to become Absecon's permanent EMS agency, which would allow for long-term cost savings. Galloway EMS's coverage has a 4-mile reach and the agency maintains robust staffing at two EMS stations in different locations, utilizing the dynamic deployment model to minimize response time. Prides themselves on maintaining a response time that mirrors the national average, despite their coverage has expanded from just Galloway, to Port Republic, Egg Harbor City, and part of Bass River. Clarified that, in regard to finances, the EMS does not necessarily get the money they request for their service due to billing limitations imposed on EMS

agencies. Reiterated that over the next few months, Absecon will be considering long-term EMS options, but informed the public that, in regard to response time, Galloway EMS's service is near identical to that of Absecon EMS. Shared that although Galloway EMS requires an ambulance to be located in every municipality they cover in order to provide safe and high-quality service during inclement weather, they were not pushing that requirement for Absecon at the current moment, instead, just focusing on helping their neighbors with an issue. Commended recent Concerts in the Park and Absecon's National Night Out, which Galloway EMS attended.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Opened meeting to the public.

**Councilman DeRose:** Emphasized the importance of public safety. Expressed his appreciation for Chief Uhl and the Galloway EMS.

**Richard Hudson – 4 Stone Circle:** As former EMS Chief, clarified to the public that problems with Absecon EMS began many years ago when a prior City Administrator and Mayor withheld EMS funding. Cautioned the current Governing Body to avoid making similar mistakes. Emphasized the importance of public safety, declaring the cost of high-quality public safety to be a necessity. Criticized the Absecon EMS's failure to provide the City more notice, claiming that they knew their operation would have to close well before they finally choose to share the news with the City. Praised the City for securing Galloway EMS so quick and smoothly. Asked Council whether the City had any contract with the former Absecon EMS.

**Council President LaRotonda:** There was no existing contract between the City and Absecon EMS, however, moving forward, there will be a contract agreement between the City and its servicing EMS agency.

**R. Hudson:** Concluded by reiterating the need to invest money in high-quality public safety.

## **PRESENTATION – ACUA**

**ACUA President Matt DeNafo:** Introduced himself as the newly appointed ACUA President. Was invited by the City to speak about recent issues with collections. Addressed complaints posted on social media and also received by the City and ACUA directly. Lamented about industry-wide staff shortages. Explained that the ACUA must sometimes skip yard waste collections, however it is part of their strategic response to organizational issues. Explained that summer is the peak for yard waste. Informed the public that the ACUA is looking for ways that they may increase efficiency. Noted ACUA's reputation for great customer service. Admitted that their efforts to go above and beyond have resulted in the overexertion of a struggling workforce and a company which finds itself overpromising and underdelivering. They are working on short-term plans to increase efficiency, which include hiring more employees. Long-term plans include upgrades from semi-automation to full automation. Apologized for the poor service provided recently. Asked for patience while they improve operations. Assured the public that things will improve. Addressed complaints from residents about landfill odor. Shared that one of his goals as President, is to improve the ACUA's relationship with community engagement so that there is better communication and transparency. Transitioning from reactionary responses to a proactive approach. Described measures being taken to alleviate oppressive odor, which includes the installation of wells. Warned that while the wells are being constructed, the odor will temporary get worse. Explained that the odor is stronger in certain weather conditions, such as in cold temperatures or when there's high winds. Regarding landfill capacity, they currently have 5.5 years remaining on their current site, so they have begun the process of considering a more innovative course of action in the future.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Shared that residents have complained about being charged when delivering their yard waste to the ACUA after it is neglected to be picked up. Asked whether the charge could be waved, considering residents pay for pickup in their taxes.

**M. DeNafo:** The ACUA is currently considering providing a roll-off container in Absecon, so residents wouldn't need to drive to the ACUA to dispose of the uncollected yard waste.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Fully supported the idea. Indicated he would reach out to M. DeNafo to discuss the idea further.

**Paul Bishop:** Questioned whether the mounds at the landfill had a height limit.

**M. DeNafo:** Confirmed, sharing that they have reached their height capacity.

**Councilman Light:** Emphasized the need for all ACUA delays to be posted on the City's website, to keep residents properly informed.

**M. DeNafo:** Appreciates the City's partnership with the ACUA, as well as the resident's kindness.

Motioned to codify that Galloway EMS will be acting as the temporary EMS provider for the City of Absecon: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Council President LaRotonda  
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Absent; LaRotonda – Yes

## REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

**Council President LaRotonda:** Explained that Absecon will be creating a contract with Galloway, but because they share the same attorneys, conflict counsel must work it out.

Motioned to add Resolution #101-2023 – *Authorizing the award and Non-Fair and Open contract for Conflict Legal Counsel*: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilwoman Howell  
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Absent; LaRotonda – Yes

## 2023 RESOLUTIONS

- 94 Providing for the combination of certain Bond Ordinances and determining the form and other details of the offering of \$5,436,000 General Improvement Bonds, series 2023, providing for their sale.
- 95 Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2023 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$4,200.00 from the State of New Jersey Shore Pedestrian Awareness Campaign.
- 96 Resolution to Amend Change Funds.
- 97 Authorizing to join Southern Coastal Employee Benefits Fund.
- 98 Appointing a Fund Commissioner and Alternate Fund Commissioner for Southern Coastal Regional Employee Benefits Fund.

- 99 Authorizing to cancel taxes on property that is exempt from taxes.
- 100 Authorizing the Tax Collector to prorate a portion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter taxes of 2023 and cancel the remaining 2023 Final/2024 Preliminary on the property located at 28 Delray Lane.
- 101 Authorizing the award and Non-Fair and Open contract for Conflict Legal Counsel.

**PUBLIC PORTION** – (Agenda items only)

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

No Discussion.

Motioned to close to the public: Councilman Light; 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 Resolution #94-101 by title.**

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

**APPROVAL OF BILL LIST** – \$ 3,381,839.83

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Regular Meeting Minutes – 7/6/23

Special Meeting Minutes – 7/20/23

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Howell

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – Absent; LaRotonda – Yes (7/6/23), Abstain (7/20/23)

**REPORTS**

**Councilman Burroughs – Public Works:** Shared that his proposal to change traffic flow around Route 9 and California Ave. has been moved from the County to the State. Ed Dennis has made progress with upgrades to Heritage Park in terms of permits. Improvements have been made in fixing potholes on Illinois Ave. Lloyd Jones has made progress with the water station project. The Green Team is focusing their efforts on helping with the water station project, addressing invasive plants and insects, and possibly creating community garden. Next meeting will be August 15<sup>th</sup> at 3:30PM. The public is welcome.

**Jessica Thompson:** Mentioned that one of the meeting attendees is graciously providing the City 25 “No Smoking” signs for the park.

**Councilman Richard DeRose – Public Safety:** Next meeting will be August 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM. Anticipates further discussion regarding the City’s EMS situation. Thanked the Police Dept. for another successful National Night Out.

**Chief JR Laughlin – Police Dept.:** Shared that the Police Dept. is looking forward to their new partnership with Galloway EMS. Noted that Absecon PD is unique in that Officers respond to all medical calls, supplied with medical bags which contain stabilizing items that would allow an Officer to provide medical aid until EMTs arrive. There have been such instances when responding Absecon Police Officers have ended up playing the most critical role in ultimately saving the lives of people suffering a medical emergency. Has unfortunately observed that within recent years, people have been calling for ambulances increasingly for superficial injuries and common non-life-threatening ailments. Stressed the irresponsibility of such actions. Urged residents to visit their primary doctor or Urgent Care for minor medical issues instead (e.g. common cold, flu, etc.). Explained that calling an ambulance for a minor medical issue prevents someone suffering a serious medical condition from getting the quality medical attention they need. Thanked everyone who helped and attended National Night Out, and gave a special thanks to Officer Da’Zhon Bethea for his hard work in spearheading the event this year. The Police Dept. looks forward to developing their community engagement and continuing their involvement in local community events. Announced a recent motor vehicle fatality and took the opportunity to caution people to slow down on the roads. Credits speed as the main factor in car accidents. Encouraged people to take effort in time management and proper planning so that they are not compelled to rush in high speeds which may result in tragedy. Cautioned all drivers to stay off their cellphone and to be aware of their surroundings.

**Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs:** The City recently had a successful Movie in the Park and National Night Out, both of which were hosted by the Absecon PD. Thanked Officer Bethea’s hard work.

**Chief Laughlin:** Praised the amount of time and hard work Police Officers, City employees, and volunteers put into creating these wonderful community events. Could not be more proud of the Officers of his Police Dept.

**Councilwoman Howell:** The next big community event is Creekfest which will be on September 17<sup>th</sup> from 2PM-8PM. Thanked Caleb Cavileer and Deb Reilly for their help in preparations. Currently taking names for 3-shifts of volunteers. Those interested may contact Councilwoman Howell directly. Community Affairs is currently considering fall activities to host (e.g. Scarecrow competition, Halloween Movie in the Park, Tour de Lights, etc.). Next meeting will be September 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Councilwoman Cain – Finance:** Have not met since last Council Meeting. Mentioned that the City will be changing their Health Benefits which will save the City money. Next meeting will be September 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30PM.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Emphasized cost savings of changing the City’s health benefits.

**Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds:** Echoed sympathy for the passing of Bill Hock Sr. Thanked the Knights of Columbus, Absecon PD, Absecon FD, the Green Team, City Council, and Mayor for their support in securing the Flags for Forgotten Soldiers. Was very happy that the City was able to secure the Flags in time to coincide their display with National Night Out. Also thanked

Lloyd Jones and the rest of Public Works for their hard and efficient work throughout the City. Mentioned that there have been two rain dates for Concerts in the Park. Thrilled to see people in the community enjoy and dancing to the music. Encourage the public to join them. The next meeting will meet on August 15<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Thanked the Knights of Columbus and Councilman Light in securing the Flags for Forgotten Soldiers.

**Alex Perri:** The Green Team attended National Night Out and met many Absecon residents. Enjoyed the opportunity for community engagement. Next Green Team meeting will be August 8<sup>th</sup> at 6PM located at Garden State Brewery. All are welcome.

**Councilman Light:** Encouraged everyone to join the meeting.

**J. Thompson – City Administrator/CFO:** Elaborated on Resolutions just passed by Council: Resolution #94 pertains to the City's rating and Resolution #97 regards the changing of City health insurance which will be effective as of October 1<sup>st</sup>. Informed the public that tax bills have been mailed out and that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr. Due date has been extended until August 21<sup>st</sup>. Noted that while municipal and school taxes did not increase, county taxes were raised. The City newsletter is available on the City website. The City's 2022 Audit is currently wrapping up and will be completed in upcoming weeks. Provided update that the City's budget is on track and 65% expended. Thanked Sgt. Levin for providing recent employee training.

**C. Crone – City Clerk:** Monthly Report – June 2023

- Municipal Court: \$7,008.07
- Tax Office: \$272,239.69
- Construction Office: \$10,332
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$10,990.47

**E. Dennis – City Engineer:** The 2023 Road Program will be going out to bid within the next few weeks. Anticipate awarding the bid at the first Council Meeting in September. Everything for the Road Program is currently on schedule. Working on installing water and sewer at the Heritage Park Concession Stand. NJ American Water will be handling the water service with the rest being bid out. Provided an update that they are soon to complete the first phase of televising City sewer lines. Worked with Lloyd Jones to decide that the first roads to be prioritized will be Meadowview Dr. Spartan Lane, and Faunce Landing Rd.

**Councilwoman Howell:** Asked for any update for Shore Rd.

**E. Dennis:** Had no updates.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Has been informed that there are certain parts of the recently dredged creek that are concerningly shallow. Asked if there is a state contact who can be alerted to the issue before it become a larger problem.

**E. Dennis:** Indicated that if Council President LaRotonda provided specifics, he has a contact to reach out to.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Will send pictures and videos.

**Councilman Light:** Asked whether there had been construction on Meadowview Dr. within recent years.

**E. Dennis:** No, but stated that the road had been repaved in relatively recent years. Lloyd had also coordinated minor repairs in the past, but the constant issues is the reasoning behind prioritizing its televising. Praised all those involved in creating the handicap/observation lane at the City's 9/11 Memorial.

**Mayor Horton:** Thanked Officer Bethea for his hard work this year for National Night Out and also thanked Lt. Huenke for all his past years of spearheading the event. Thanked Chief Laughlin and his Police Officers for their heartfelt efforts in strengthening Police Dept. community engagement. Recognized Joe from Public Works for his kindness towards Absecon residents and their dogs. Honored the memory of Bill Hoch Sr.

### **PUBLIC PORTION**

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

**R. Hudson** – 4 Stone Circle: Described the shallowness of water in the creek. Expressed concern about the water height (1.7 ft) at the Faunce Landing Boat Ramp. Warned that the problem will not go away without intervention and emphasized the risk for boaters.

**Mike Reilly** – 444 4<sup>th</sup> Street: Suggested incorporating the EMS service into the Absecon Fire Dept. as a long-term solution for the City's current EMS situation.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Thanked M. Reilly for the suggestion, indicating it would be an option considered.

**Councilman DeRose:** Noted that the City's priority recently has primarily been to secure a temporary EMS so that the City was not without. Assured M. Reilly that they will be open to hearing all suggestions to find the best solution.

**M. Reilly:** Asked whether the City has looked into installing solar panels on the Fire Dept. yet.

**E. Dennis:** Have not looked into that project yet, but have discussed a potential RFP to install solar panels at other locations around the City. There are complications with the Fire Dept. which need to be resolved before that project can become a possibility. Solar panels were part of the original Fire Dept. plans, but became a secondary project.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Assured M. Reilly that it is the City's intention to pursue solar panel installation.

**M. Reilly:** Shared a negative experience he recently had with EMD services that took a long time to respond.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Informed M. Reilly that when using a cellphone to call 9-1-1, the call sometimes gets mistakenly routed to a less appropriate EMS agency due to location confusion.

**Councilman Light:** Suggested that instead of installing solar panels on individual building structures, to establish on the ground.

**Chris Seher** – 707 Chelsea Road: Asked for clarification regarding Closed Session discussion pertaining to New York Ave.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Believes it to be common knowledge that the City is researching possibly developing a portion of New York Ave. The City is continuing discussions to ensure deciding on the best course of action.

**C. Seher:** Questioned whether discussion about the development of New York Ave. is appropriate restricted to Closed Session.

**Kyle Weinberg:** Informed C. Seher that all topics pertaining to any prospective real estate transactions are eligible for Closed Session.

**C. Seher:** Asked whether any transaction is anticipated.

**K. Weinberg:** No, however the discussion topic itself encompasses the possibility.

**C. Seher:** Questioned for specifics. Asked whether contracts or outside parties were involved.

**Council President LaRotonda:** Stated that there are outside parties involved in the conversation but he would leave it at that.

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

#### **CLOSED SESSION - #101 – Contract Negotiations**

**K. Weinberg:** In accordance with the Open Records Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, the City Council went into Closed Session. Explained the reason to go into Closed Session is to discuss contract negotiations (New York Ave. Project, Sewer Rates/Pleasantville, PBA, and City Insurance Coverage)

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

*(Closed Session)*

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Respectfully submitted,

  
Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 9/7/23