



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

AUGUST 4TH 2022 5:30 PM

MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE: Led by Mayor Horton.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: In honor of Mary Graziano, long-time resident and active member of the community, who recently passed away. In addition to being awarded, both, "Outstanding Citizen of the Year" by the VFW and "Citizen of the Year" by the Absecon Lions Club in 1999, Mary had been a business owner, Director of the Absecon Shade Tree Committee, and Coordinator for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Social Action Committee.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Caleb Cavileer, Nick LaRotonda, Donna Poley, and Council President Betty Howell

ABSENT: Councilman Steve Light

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Administrator/CEO Jessica Thompson, City Engineer Ed Dennis, William "Bill" Blaney Esq. (Attorney), City Clerk Carie Crone, Police Chief J.R. Laughlin

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

REGULAR MEETING

2022 RESOLUTIONS

109 Appointing a Full-Time Patrol Officer, namely Hannah Fishel.

Motioned to move Resolution #109-2022: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Poley

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

110 Appointing a Full-Time Patrol Officer, namely Charles Ferrara.

Motioned to move Resolution #110-2022: Councilwoman Cain; Seconded: Councilman Cavileer
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Absent; Light – Yes; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

OATH OF OFFICE – POLICE

Chief Laughlin: Provided a brief bio for new full-time Police Officers.

Police Officer Hannah Fishel

Hannah Fishel attended Ocean County College, majoring in American Sign Language and Interpretation. She subsequently graduated from the Ocean County Police Academy as a SLEO II Officer in May 2017, and received full certification from the Atlantic County Police Academy in June 2020. She joins the Absecon Police Dept. from the Stockton University Police Dept., where she has served since April 2020. Currently Hannah is assigned to the Absecon PD's Patrol Division in the Field Training Program.

Police Officer Charles Ferrara

Charles Ferrara earned his Bachelor Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Stockton University. He subsequently graduated from the Ocean County Police Academy as a SLEO II Officer in May 2019, and received full certification from the Camden County Police Academy in July 2020. He joins the Absecon Police Depart. from the Stockton University Police Dept., where he has served since June 2021. Currently Charles is assigned to the Absecon PD's Patrol Division in the Field Training Program.

2022 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 12** Approving a storm sewer easement for 802 Highland Blvd. (Blk. 42, Lot 1) and ratifying and authorizing the execution of all documents necessary to implement said agreement.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilwoman Poley; Seconded: Councilman Cavileer

Ed Dennis: Provided a brief explanation regarding Ordinances 12 and 13, which are both related to the Intersection Project at Highland Blvd. and New Jersey Ave. that was completed a few years ago. This project has a lot of moving parts. Ordinance #12 is to establish an easement for some existing utilities that are already in the ground and run along Ambassador Drive and the New Jersey/Highland Blvd. area. Ordinance #13 has two parts. One part vacates certain right-of-way and the other dedicates new right-of-way. Because the City reconfigured that intersection, the City must also reconfigure the right-of-way so it matches with the new roadway alignment. Because the City is taking right-of-way and turning into private property and taking private property and turning it into right-of-way, it's necessary to make sure any utilities in the ground that will ultimately end up on private property are within an easement.

Council President Howell: Asked if this was established prior the construction there.

E. Dennis: Informed her it was not.

Councilman Cavileer: Asked if there's anything else that needs to be done to finish this project.

E. Dennis: Informed him there was not. Explained how previous construction contract was closed out, and this is just the paperwork out that needs to follow. Clarified that where Highland Blvd. is today, although not in a City right-of-way, it's basically on a City lot. So it's still on public property. This cleans it up and makes it right-of-way.

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on September 1, 2022.

- 13** Vacating a portion of Highland Blvd. and a portion of Ambassador Dr. located in the City of Absecon, County of Atlantic, State of New Jersey, and conveying such land to the adjacent property owner.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilwoman Poley; Seconded: Councilman Cavileer

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on September 1, 2022.

- 14** Authorizing the acceptance and dedication of public roadway.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilwoman Poley; Seconded: Councilman Cavileer

E. Dennis: This Ordinance also pertains to the same situation as Ordinances #12 & #13.

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

This Ordinance will be posted, laid over, and published according to law. A Public Hearing, second, and final reading will be held on September 1, 2022.

2022 ORDINANCES FOR ADOPTION

Motioned for the second reading of Ordinance #11-2022: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Poley

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

- 11** Amending Ordinance #02-2016 – Requiring the registration and maintenance of certain real property by mortgagee; providing for penalties and enforcement and regulation of abandoned real property within the City of Absecon.

Motioned to open the meeting to the public for comment or discussion of Ordinance #11-2022:

Councilman Cavileer; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

All in Favor, None Opposed.

(No Discussion)

Motioned to close the public portion: Councilman LaRotonda; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain

All in Favor, None Opposed.

Motioned for the final reading and adoption of Ordinance #11-2022: Councilman LaRotonda;

Seconded: Councilwoman Poley

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

Ordinance #11-2022 has been heard and is finally approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 111** Accepting the award of \$201,364 from the State of NJ Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP).

J. Thompson: The City is accepting the grant award that it received from the state, and authorizing the contract.

- 112** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2022 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$201,363 from the State of NJ Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP).

J. Thompson: This is to allow the City to add the awarded grant into its budget.

- 113** Authorizing Remington & Vernick, City Engineers, to administer the construction and inspection of improvements for the 2022 Road Program.

J. Thompson: The City went out to bid for the Road Program this week. This is for the remaining costs from the engineering firm for that project.

- 114** Authorizing the City of Absecon to award the contract for the 2022 Road Program.

E. Dennis: This is regarding the construction contract for the Road Program. The three bidders came in competitively and within budget. The City is awarding the contract to Arwak Paving, so the City can get this project moving and construction completed.

- 115** Approving the insertion of a Special Item of Revenue into the 2022 Municipal Budget to allow for the receipt of \$1,800 from the State of New Jersey Highway Traffic Safety.

J. Thompson: This is regarding another grant we are adding into the budget for Drive Sober.

- 116** Authorizing the execution of a Settlement Agreement and release with Policemen's Benevolent Association, Mainland #77.

J. Thompson: This is an authorizing a settlement that we did with a grievance.

- 114** Authorizing the institution of an IN REM tax foreclosure on Block 40, Lot 1 in the City of Absecon under tax sale certificate 09-0004.

J. Thompson: This authorizes the foreclosure of a property surrounded by City land.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

(No Discussion)

Motion to close public: Councilwoman Poley; Seconded: Councilman LaRotonda
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 Howell read Resolutions #103-106 by title.

Motioned to move the Consent Agenda: Cavileer; Seconded: Councilwoman Cain
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Yes; Cavileer – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes; Light – Absent; Poley – Yes; Howell – Yes

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$1,695,885.42

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes – 7/7/2022

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

REPORTS

Councilwoman Poley – Community Affairs Committee: Met earlier that day, August 4th. Thanked the Absecon PD who have been very busy with the community. Movie in the Park was on July 8th and very well attended. National Night Out was on August 2nd and was VERY well attended, was an overall an amazing night with lots of community members and children having fun. Reminded the public that Creekfest will be on Sunday, September 18th. Encouraged everyone's attendance. There will be music and a food truck festival. Bands include the Billy Walton Band, Mel & Tony, Motts Creek Pickers, Don't Call Me Francis. There will be food, beer, music, and fun, all along the Absecon Creek. Also in September is the anniversary of 9/11. Every year the City always does a special ceremony. There will be more information about that in the future. In October we have several events. On October 7th there will be another Movie in the Park, sponsored by Community Affairs. The Absecon PD will play a movie for the community on their new movie screen, which they are very excited about. Also, on October 30th, the City will have their Annual Howling Decorating Contest. For the Contest, the judges will drive around on a jitney to check out the decorated houses in Absecon and interact with its residents. Encouraged the public to check the Absecon Community Affairs Facebook page. Asked the public, that if there were other events for the community that the Committee was unaware of, to please contact Community Affairs and they will share that information. The next meeting will be September 1st at 4:30pm in the Conference Room.

Councilwoman Cain – Public Safety Committee: Met on July 11th after the July Council Meeting, and at that time, Chief Laughlin informed the Committee that two new Police Officers would soon be starting. The Absecon PD is now looking to hire a couple new Class II Officers. The Fire Dept.

shared the following safety tips about grills. Although speeding remains an issue, the issue seems to be improving. The PD will not be giving out "warnings," rather, they will continue writing tickets for those who they catch speeding. Due to a shortage, the City has yet to acquire the police cars included in the Municipal Budget. This is the wide-spread situation, not unique to just our City. The Committee then met again on August 1st. The City's Emergency Management Coordinator, Jim Eberwine, was happy to report that the City submitted \$35,000 in receipts to FEMA for COVID expenses, and as a result, the City will be reimbursed \$15,000. The next batch of receipts, due in September, will yield a reimbursement of 90%. National Night Out was already mentioned in the Community Affairs report, but reiterated that it was a great night and very successful. In Fire Dept. matter, repairs are being done on the tower and one of their trucks. Asks the public to keep former Fire Inspector Ed Vincent in their thoughts and prayers. The Fire Dept. will be sending out mailers soon in order to raise money for their fundraiser.

Chief Laughlin – Police Dept.: Thanked Councilwoman Cain for her assistance in the hiring of the two new Police Officers. The PD is trying to get through gun permit applications as quickly and efficiently as possible, but, because the two new Officers have yet to complete their training program, the police are a bit short staffed. Assured the public that the PD is working on the applications every day and will review every single one. Observed how nice it is to see the children and youth of Absecon enjoying the outdoors this summer. Up until recently it hasn't been too hot so it seems there have been a lot more kids out and about playing. The Absecon PD has is concerned about the lack of helmets being worn by kids riding their bikes or scooters around the city. The PD is no longer able to enforce those in the public to wear helmets when riding bikes or scooters. Asks parents, when purchasing a bike or scooter to make sure a helmet is also purchased and then require their kids to wear a helmet when using either means of transportation. Police Officers in other municipalities have also witnessed careless acts on the scooters where the riders are disregarding traffic signals and traffic laws, basically riding as if they are the only beings on the road. So, in order to avoid a tragedy, implores the parents of Absecon to keep this in mind when purchasing these items for their kids. Mentions how proud he is of the men and women of the Absecon PD. They did a fantastic job at National Night Out. Explained how National Night Out is a 12-month process for the PD, however the most intensive work is demanded on the day of the event when they start very early in the morning. Thanked the Police Officers for their hard work especially on such a hot day. Also thanked the Council for their attendance and help throughout and for the event.

Councilwoman Cain: Due to Labor Day, the next Public Safety meeting will be pushed from the first Monday of September, to second Monday of the month, September 12th at 4:20pm in City Hall.

Councilman Cavileer – Finance Committee: Have not met this month yet. Elaborated on the Ordinance that was just passed accepting \$201,364 for a LEAP Grant. Overall the state is awarding out \$2.4 million for the LEAP Program, and about \$500,000 was awarded to Atlantic County and over \$200,000 of that is going to Absecon. Can't say enough about the extraordinary work of Absecon's Director of Information & Technology, Jenn Harvey, and City Administrator, Jessica Thompson, for working on getting us that grant money. This is one of the largest amounts of money given to strictly a municipality. Most of the awards are going to county-wide places, a few of the awards supplement the salaries of county coordinators of the Leap Program. The implementation of the Shared Service with dispatch has saved the City \$160,000 annually. So this, in addition to money to be received from the LEAP Grant, is a "win" for the tax payers of Absecon. Reminded the residents that the Absecon tax bills are delayed. The Absecon Tax Office needed to wait for the County to release the county tax rate before they were able to send out the tax bill to residents. The tax bills are currently in the process of being printed out, and are anticipated to be out in the mail by the third week of August. Therefore, the tax bill "grace period" has been extended to September 8th. Mentioned how the new county tax rate has increased a bit. Included in the overall tax bill is county tax, municipal tax, and school tax. The municipal tax and school tax have maintained a flat rate.

J. Thompson: The new county tax adjustment is a \$10 increase per \$100,000 of a property's taxable value.

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works Committee: No report. Next meeting was scheduled for August 16th, however, due to a conflict, it is rescheduled for September 20th.

Councilman LaRotonda – Economic Development Committee: Met August 3rd. Councilman LaRotonda and Councilwoman Poley discussed the initiative to bring new businesses to the City's downtown on New Jersey Ave. Also mentioned that a new brewery intends to be operating within the City by early next year. Next meeting will be Wednesday September 7th.

J. Thompson – Admin/CFO: Reiterated how pleased the City is to have been awarded the LEAP Grant. Thanked Jenn Harvey again for her help in earning the Grant. The Shared Service Agreement has been very successful and the City has benefited from it, not only financially, but also in regard to public safety.

E. Dennis – City Engineer: Provided a timeline for the completion of the Road Program. The contract (awarded earlier that meeting) is a 60-day contract, once the City issues the Notice to Proceed. Doesn't expect this project to take the full 60 days to be completed. There's a lot of mill and pave work on this job, which is a relatively quick operation. The typical process here is as follows: This Road Program includes some state-aid roads, so now that the City has awarded the contract, a packet needs to be submitted to the DOT so they can concur with the award, which could take a few weeks. In the meantime, the City must get their contract with the contractor squared away. So in from 2-4 weeks the City will have a pre-construction meeting, and then issue the Notice to Proceed. Then, with a 60-day clock, at latest, the work should be complete by the end of October. Anticipates the work will end earlier than that, but no matter, the work should be completed before the cold hits and there could be potential weather issues. Other City projects are in various stages of engineering and updates will be provided in the future. The New York Avenue sub-division is almost ready to go to the Planning Board. There have been several twists and turns, but that is typical in matters of land development. So everything will be soon wrapped up and then go through the Planning Board process.

Councilman Cavileer: Besides the state aid portion, which will be reimbursed, and the roads that were halfway completed by the gas company, asked for estimation of City savings.

E. Dennis: Clarified what Councilman Cavileer asked about. In the past the City had the gas company and the water company doing a lot of work in town. The benefits of this included upgraded lines, etc., and also the completion of a lot of paving around the city. But ended up happening was, because pipes were only on one side of the street, the companies only had to pave that half of the street. Over the last two years the City has piggybacked off the previous work and as part of the Road Program paved the other half of the street, so that there is a brand-new street, but the City has only paid for half of it. So, if you look at a list of all the roads part of the Road Program, about 75% of them fall into that category. Also, the balance of the project, for the most part, is being funded by the state through our DOT Grant. So, all in all, we are getting a 1 ½ miles worth of roads paved, at a fraction of the cost to the City.

Mayor Horton: Thanked the Absecon PD and all the First Responders for a fantastic National Night Out. The free and wonderful family event included informational booths, games, fire trucks, ambulances, a movie, delicious foods, etc. Informed the public that earlier that day she contacted one of the School Board members to get an update on the appeal regarding the high school situation. The update is that the Absecon School Board has already filed two appeals. One appeal is

more informal and is directed at the DOE, asking them to reconsider their consideration. Was told that decision would be rendered in 45 days. If that plan doesn't work out, the other appeal will be sent to the appellate court. The court will take all the information and render a decision, one in which the City hopes is in its favor. Gives another honorable mention to Mary Graziano, an Absecon resident who recently passed away.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

(Discussion)

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

GOOD OF THE ORDER – Council President Howell: Since the last Council Meeting, the City Council has ensured there have been plenty of activities for its residents to participate in. In the past three weeks, the City has held a Christmas in July Movie in the Park, Sunday night Concerts in the Park, a book swap, a Parkinson's Foundation fundraiser led by Councilwoman Poley, and the Police Department's National Night Out and movie. However, not all City efforts are social. Besides the daily maintenance, the Mayor and Council President have met with two new businesses which will be hopefully be opening within the next 4-5 months. Also, due to the effort of Jessica Thompson and Jenn Harvey, out of the \$522,000 that the state awarded to Atlantic County for the LEAP Grant, the City of Absecon will be receiving \$201,364. Thanks all the members of Council for their constant effort, hard work, and ability to improve things in and around Absecon.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned to adjourn: Councilwoman Cain; Seconded: Councilman LaRotonda
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,


Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 9-1-22