



CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
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Absecon, New Jersey 08201

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CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2023 6:30 PM

MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE

MOMENT OF SILENCE – Honoring the CFO/Administrator's husband/local resident John Thompson.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmembers Butch Burroughs, Richard DeRose, Betty Howell, Steve Light, Tommy Marrone, and Council President Nick LaRotonda

ABSENT: Councilwoman Sandy Cain & City Administrator/CFO Jessica Thompson

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Kim Horton, City Solicitor Rep. Nicole Curio 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

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

2023 ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 13** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 282 – Sewers, Article IX-Rates, Section 49-Sewer Charges and Section 51, Payment of Sewer Charges; Changes in Charges.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Absent; DeRose – No; Howell – Abstain; Light – Yes; Marrone – 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 October 5th, 2023.

- 14** Amending the Code of the City of Absecon, Chapter 330, to designate a Multi-way Stop Intersection at Pennsylvania and Oakhurst Avenue.

Motioned for a first reading: Councilman DeRose; Seconded: Councilman Light

Council President LaRotonda: Chief Laughlin and Ed Dennis have been instrumental in making this decision for a safe way to school.

Chief Laughlin: Several residents in the area have expressed their concern about the intersection, urging that it become a 4-way stop. There have been many calls to the Police reporting that many children disregard the stop sign. The sight line of the area is very poor, so in order to ensure safety, the City will be making it a 4-way stop.

Councilwoman Howell: Complained that she brought this issue up 2 years prior. Referred to going out to the intersection with Chief Laughlin to watch traffic.

Chief Laughlin: Corrected Councilwoman Howell in that the issue of focus at that specific time was people making illegal left-hand turns to avoid the traffic light, which is a very different complaint. Now, there are several children and other pedestrians taking a route in that area with poor sight lines and so the City is taking steps to ensure their safety by implementing a 4-way stop.

Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Absent; DeRose – Yes; Howell – Yes; Light – Yes; Marrone – 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 October 5th, 2023.

2023 RESOLUTIONS – CONSENT AGENDA

- 122** Supporting Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day, October 6th, 2023.
- 123** Authorizing the execution of a contract renewing membership in the Atlantic County Joint Insurance Fund.
- 124** Permitting a Charitable Organization to solicit fund, namely the Absecon VFW Post 9462.

PUBLIC PORTION – (Agenda items only)

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

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth Avenue: Asked for a further explanation of Ordinance #13-23.

Council President LaRotonda: Explained that the City will be increasing their sewer rate fees, and will be implementing new sewer bill late fees, in the next calendar year.

G. Seher: Asked what the increase will be.

Council President LaRotonda: The rate will increase from \$396 to \$500.

G. Seher: In regard to Resolution #123-23, is aware that Egg Harbor Township is pursuing alternative insurance. Asked whether Absecon also concerned alternatives.

Council President LaRotonda: The Finance Committee has discussed looking for alternatives. Jessica Thompson would have more information to provide about that initiative.

Councilman DeRose: J. Thompson was tasked with getting research done and to come back to the Finance Committee to discuss their options for the future.

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.

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

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST – \$ 349,019.84

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Closed Session as to form and content only – 7/6/23

Regular Meeting Minutes – 9/7/2023

Motioned to accept: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilwoman Howell
Roll Call: Burroughs – Yes; Cain – Absent; DeRose – Yes (7/6), Abstain (9/7); Howell – Yes (7/6), Abstain; Light – Yes; Marrone – Yes; LaRotonda – Yes

REPORTS

Councilman Burroughs – Public Works: Traffic flow at California Ave. and Route 9 is still progressing through the state. Improvements at Heritage Park are also progressing. E. Dennis has had meetings regarding the Shore Road Project, and for which the City is currently pursuing more permits for property acquisitions. Next meeting will be October 17th at 3:30PM.

Council President LaRotonda: Recently spoke with County Administrator Gerald DelRosso regarding New Jersey Ave. and the County cutback. Council President LaRotonda requested Administrator DelRosso to expedite the process, as there has been no evident progress. Also spoke with County Executive Dennis Levinson earlier that day, who assured Council President LaRotonda that he would contact Administrator DelRosso and County Public Works in order to ensure there is proper movement.

Councilman Marrone: Asked E. Dennis whether he knew the timeline for the Shore Rd. Project.
E. Dennis: Did not.

Councilman Richard DeRose – Public Safety: Next meeting will be October 17th at 6:30PM. Highlighted the need for kids (18 and younger) to abide by the laws of the road when riding on scooters. This includes wearing a helmet. Warned of several close calls. Reminded parents that their children must obey the law.

Chief JR Laughlin – Police Dept.: Pleaded for parents to effectively parent their children and teens. Informed that just an hour prior, the gazebo was severely damaged. The police were called to ensure the area was safe for tonight, however this will burden the already-busy Public Works. There have also been issues with groups of juveniles harassing local residents in the community. There was an issue at the recent football game as well. Cautioned to all that the Police will have zero tolerance for this. Warned parents to be aware of where their kids are hanging out and what they're doing. Also make sure kids wear their helmets. Would prefer not having to make City rules (curfew, restricted areas) similar to local shore towns, in order to curb the rowdy/destructive behavior.

Councilman DeRose: In regard to the recent issue at the sporting event, the Blue Devils are meeting tonight and are expected to reach out with the City to discuss.

Chief Laughlin: Clarified that the issues have permeated to practically all aspects of community life. There have been issues and complaints regarding juvenile misbehavior at community events (e.g. Creekfest) and even at the local Wawa. It needs to stop.

Councilwoman Howell – Community Affairs: There were two 9/11 ceremonies at the 9/11 Memorial. Thanked all who attended. Absecon Police Officers and Councilmembers bagged food at Shoprite to raise money for the local foodbank. This past Saturday was the grand opening of The Hangover Pretzel Co, and Sunday was Creekfest. Thanked Caleb Cavileer and Deb Reilly for their help ensuring the event was a success. Criticized the behavior of some juveniles and echoed Chief Laughlin's sentiments. Would prefer not having to make the event adults-only in the future. The City will be having Shredding and Community Cleanup Day on October 7th. October 13th will be the free Halloween Movie in the Park. The Police would appreciate all who are able, to bring an unwrapped gift for Toys for Tots. October 20th will be the City's Tour de Lights; more information will be provided in the future. Next meeting will be October 5th at 5:30PM. In regard to Planning Board updates, Chipotle is breaking ground, and at their next meeting, they will be discussing another new business possibly coming to the city.

Councilwoman Marrone – Economic Development: Have not met since last Council Meeting. Next meeting will be on October 4th at 4:30PM. Praised economic development throughout the city, particularly during the prior two weeks. Referred to the opening of The Hangover Pretzel Co. and the Oddball Vintage flea market. Noted that other businesses on New Jersey Ave. were elated as well, and shared with him how much the flea market had improved the typically-slow Sunday. Commended the display of community support. Shared that he and the Mayor, along with many other Absecon residents, recently attended an ALS benefit in honor of the Hunter family. Made the assertion that the Absecon community is one of the most tight-knit in the state/country.

Council President LaRotonda: Echoed Councilman Marrone's sentiments, and expanded on his excitement for the anticipated development.

Councilman Light – Parks & Playgrounds: Met on September 19th at 7PM. The Committee addressed Code of Conduct and dangerous/speedy driving at the Blue Devil's fields. Thanked Public Works for their hard work and shared that they will now be responsible for lining the sports fields. Several residents expressed concern about cracks that have formed in tennis courts, there is a plan to discuss possible solutions with E. Dennis. Expressed significant disappointment in the off-hour activities and damage occurring at the Field of Dreams. Reminded the public the purpose of the Field of Dreams, and more particularly, who it most serves. The Field of Dreams organization is considering their options, which possibly include closing the fields down to the community during off-hours. Parking concerns at the Wagon Wheel have been expressed, the Committee will consider the situation. Urged for enhancements/improvements to Veteran's Parkway, ideally before Veteran's Day. Two sites have been identified for potential water stations, with the City just waiting on pricing estimates. The costs of the water stations are expected to be paid for with County grant money. They are also considering an area around the Public Works Facility for a community garden.

Alex Perri – Green Team: Hoping to meet with the City soon to finalize details about the anticipated water bottle stations and also submit grant. Also looking forward to meeting with the City Solicitor to sort the details and Ordinance for the Community Garden. Hoping to engage sponsorship to help finance the project. Green Team Volunteers have continued with their invasive species removal in Heritage Park, and additionally helped with Creekfest. On Sunday, October 1st the Green Team will be having their first Adopt-A-Road Cleanup (downtown New Jersey Ave.) On Tuesday October 3rd

they will have their next meeting at Garden State Brewery at 6PM. Volunteers will continue removing invasive species at Heritage Park on most Friday and Saturday mornings until mid-October.

Council President LaRotonda: Plans to have a meeting with A. Perri, Bill Blaney, and other Green Team members to make progress with the water bottle stations and Community Garden.

Councilman Light: Residents have reached out to request more dog waste stations (Senior Park) and power washing of city streetscape downtown.

Council President LaRotonda: Spoke to Lloyd Jones, who said he has the equipment and ability to get that done. Expects that to be taken care of soon.

Councilman Light: Next meeting will be October 17th at 7PM. Public is welcome.

E. Dennis – City Engineer: The 2023 Road Program has been awarded and contracted to Arawak Paving Co. They are expected to be in the City within 2-3 weeks. It will be a relatively quick mill and pave project. There is some drainage work required on Highland Blvd. Once a defined schedule is set, it will be shared to the public. Residents on the streets directly effected will be contacted specifically with informative Notices. Several other projects will follow the Road Program project including the installation of utility lines to the Concession Stand at Heritage Park, the streetscape project on New Jersey Ave. (near the redevelopment site), and the Crestview Ave. Sidewalk Project.

Council President LaRotonda: In regard to the pedestrian crosswalk on Morton Ave., asked when the sign would be installed.

E. Dennis: Has requested a schedule from the contractor. Will share it when he receives it.

Council President LaRotonda: Shared with the public that the City will have a flashing pedestrian sign installed at the Field of Dreams and entrances to the park.

Councilman Light: Asked for the lighting package in the next streetscape project to be LED.

E. Dennis: Confirmed.

Councilman Light: Indicated several residents have complained that crosswalks are worn. Asked whether they could be repainted.

E. Dennis: If it's a County or State intersection, the City would need to reach out to them to initiate. Suggests creating an inventory of the crosswalks and their status for Public Works. Noted that they freshen up the paint when road projects are conducted. There are small side-projects included in the Road Program so suggested the possibility of adding.

Councilman Light: Asked for an update regarding NJ American Water's galvanized pipe project.

E. Dennis: Reminded the public that this State-required project to replace lead piping. NJ American Water Co. has begun that process in Absecon, and their first task is to visit homes of which they are unsure of the piping to confirm its piping.

Councilman Burroughs: Shared that there is a self-report option via NJ American Water's website.

Mayor Horton: If you've missed their visit, you can reschedule.

E. Dennis: Strongly encouraged residents to self-verify.

C. Crone – City Clerk: Monthly Report – August 2023

- Municipal Court: \$6,135.80
- Tax Office: \$5,046,918.98
- Construction Office: \$12,905
- Municipal Clerk's Office: \$6,313

Mayor Horton: Recently gave a presentation about tax relief options, with Tax Collector Jessica Synder, at the Senior Center. Commended the recent Creekfest event. Thanked volunteers, Chief JR Laughlin, and the Police Officers. Has heard excellent feedback from those who attended. Participated alongside Senator Polistina and County Executive Dennis Levinson in the Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce's recent panel discussion about the economic landscape of Atlantic County. There was discussion about the role of local government in supporting local business and entrepreneurs. Contributed to the conversation by discussing the need for more grant programs. At the event, thanked County Executive Levinson for working with E. Dennis for Shore Road Project. Also mentioned Absecon's Streetscape Project and the importance of public safety.

PUBLIC PORTION

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

Greg Seher – 625 Yarmouth Avenue: Discussed the clearing on Wescoat Rd. (EHT, NJ) for the upcoming development of 650 homes. Pointed out the inevitable increase in traffic on Mill Rd. and Route 30. Complained about the already-dangerous traffic situation in that area. Acknowledged that Route 30 is County road, but urged the City to stress to the County, the importance of addressing that particular area's traffic situation.

Councilman DeRose: Shared that, in light of the anticipated development, he actually spoke with people at the County about the light calibration in the area. The County informed him that they were conducting a whole traffic study in that area to determine what action must be taken to ensure safety and efficient traffic flow. Stated that he could write a letter to the County regarding the matter, and that he would try to gain access to their traffic plans.

Council President LaRotonda: Informed G. Seher that after he made his request, Council President LaRotonda followed up with the County about the request for traffic bollards, but was told by the County that they do not install them anymore, as they were continuously knocked down. Confirmed that the County will be doing a traffic study in the area.

G. Seher: Pointed out that there had been fatalities on Pitney Road. Encouraged the City to install speed humps to ensure slower driving speeds.

Councilman DeRose: Questioned whether speeds humps could be put on a road of that speed limit.

G. Seher: Wants action taken to slow drivers down. Pointed out that there are nearby schools and parks. Urged the City to implement traffic calming techniques, even if some people's vehicles may suffer potential damage.

Councilwoman Howell: Mentioned that another issue is that most people are in favor of a speed humps until it's placed in front of their house.

Council President LaRotonda: Shared his own observations of dangerous driving by people speeding to make the light on Wyoming. Previously had a Commissioner observe the area for potential improvements.

Mark Mazzone – 616 Pitney Road: As a resident in the area, criticized the efficiency or accuracy of a "2-hour observation." Shared that 3 cars have flipped over on Pitney Rd. so far this year, and constant rear-end accidents. Listed other incidents of dangerous driving, he himself has observed. Wants a stronger police presence at 5-corners. Contested the claim that any local residents would challenge the implementation of a speed hump. Local residents have been pleading for traffic calming measures for over 10 years and it's getting worse. Urged the City to make stronger efforts in having the County address these issues. Complained about a particular car commuting through the area that is especially noisy and often sounds like a gunshot. Assumes the Police are so preoccupied with matters on Route 30, they are taken away from issues in other parts of the city. Demanded the issues on Pitney Road be soon addressed, before another major accident occurs.

Council President LaRotonda: Asserted that the City will continue their efforts in urging the County to address these issues and make improvements. Informed M. Mazzone that if he were to attend a County Commissioners meeting and express his sentiments to them directly, it would likely have a significant impact on their ultimate course of action. Offered to provide the dates and additionally offered to attend the Commissioners meeting with him. Reiterated that he has personally made efforts to have this situation addressed, to, unfortunately, no avail.

M. Mazzone: Complained that people, including City Councilmembers, do not care about the issue because they themselves do not live there, and are, therefore, not directly affected.

Council President LaRotonda: Corrected M. Mazzone, reminding him of the efforts those in the City have made. Affirmed that the area in question is not a City roadway and therefore the City does not have the proper authority to address issues at that location, however, indicated that they will continue their efforts urging the County to take responsible action in finding appropriate solutions.

E. Dennis: Shared that, even though it's a County road, the City has invested its own funds to install improvements in the area (e.g. sidewalk installation), proving that the City is doing what it can to help curb the issues. However, ultimately, the road belongs to the County.

Alex Perri – 620 Yarmouth Avenue: In July, sent City CFO/Administrator and some Councilmembers a draft of an invasive plant ordinance. Asked if it has been considered or discussed amongst Council.

Council President LaRotonda: Have not had opportunity to discuss it amongst each other, however, a Code Enforcement Committee has been recently formed. Assured A. Perri that the matter will be discussed by the Committee before the next Council Meeting. Will let A. Perri know when the next Committee Meeting is so that he may bring the draft to discuss with Committee members.

A. Perri: In August, also wrote to the City CFO/Administrator and several Councilmembers about an opportunity available to the City to partner with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to address restoration. The partnership would essentially allow the City to have free work done. Asked if the paperwork has been reviewed by the City or discussed by Councilmembers.

Councilman DeRose: Indicated that it had been discussed. Asked for A. Perri to give them some time (2 weeks), as J. Thompson has been out of the office.

A. Perri: At several Council Meetings this year, has addressed the importance of municipal Environmental Commissions. Asked Council, again, to consider forming such a Commission. Inquired further whether Council has deliberated on whether one would be formed.

Council President LaRotonda: Council decided it would be best to first let the newly re-established Absecon Green Team gather strength, which it has. Indicated that Council would consider possibly forming an Environmental Commission maybe in the upcoming year.

A. Perri: Clarified that the Environmental Commission would be a completely separate entity from the Green Team. Suggested that maybe it could be taken on by members of the Planning Board. Shared that there are free webinars offered by NJAC. Mentioned a potential parking issue at Pitney Park that has the City considering expansion into the woods. Asserted how that would be an unsustainable solution and encourages Council to consider more creative solution.

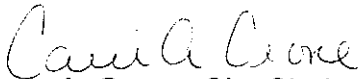
Motioned to close to the public: Councilman Light; Seconded: Councilman Burroughs
All in Favor, None Opposed.

ADJOURNMENT

Chief Laughlin: Tomorrow night from 5pm-8pm, the Absecon Fire Dept., Galloway EMS and Police, and Atlantic County Prosecutor Office and BearCat will be at Shoprite for Community Night. Crystal Barth, of Shoprite's Community Relations, has been working very hard to create opportunities for community engagement.

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

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 10.5.23