

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/12/20

Florence, New Jersey
August 12, 2020

The Florence Township Council held a regular meeting on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. The public was welcome to attend in person or to participate virtually.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Sandusky at 7:00 PM. Council President Sandusky led the Salute to the Flag.

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was published in the Burlington County Times on April 3, 2020; placed on the Township website, and given to the Trenton Times for information.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Frank Baldorossi, Bruce Garganio, Paul Ostrander, Dave Woolston, Jerry Sandusky

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Stephen Fazekas, Township Administrator, Thomas A. Sahol, Assistant Administrator, Kelly Grant, Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Martin Eckert, Recreation Director; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Clerk

Absent: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Closed Session of March 11, 2020
- Regular Session of July 8, 2020
- Closed Session of August 5, 2020

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to approve the minutes as submitted. Voice vote – all ayes.

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

- CFO's Budget Reports and Cash Reports for July 2020
- Tax Collector's Monthly Tax Report for July 2020

Motion of Garganio, seconded by Ostrander to approve the reports to receive and file. Voice vote – all ayes.

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Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Sandusky, to approve the **Treasurer's Bill List**.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Unanimous vote – Motion carried.

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

None at this time.

APPLICATIONS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a motion was made by Garganio, seconded by Woolston to close Public Comments. Voice vote – all ayes.

REVIEW OF 2019 AUDIT

Township Auditor, Kevin Frenia of Holman, Frenia and Allison, P.C. made a short presentation about the completion of the 2019 audit. He said that everything was in order, the internal controls are in place and the presentation was good. Things are tightening up with the budget but there is still a healthy surplus. The revenues and the general fund are pretty steady and probably will not be affected by COVID-19.

As in the past, there are no findings or comments, the staff was great across the board and the report will be filed with the state.

Mayor Wilkie explained that things are in good shape. He talked about stability and how they underestimate the PILOT money every year. Administrator Brook was very good at making sure that surplus regenerated itself. That only happens when you plan for it. This budget has \$1.7 million for PILOT money and we are already estimating that we are getting over \$2 million. That is how you rebuild your surplus each year so that you can do it. It is all about stabilization. We did not want to have an increase in taxes like after the 2008 recession. The budget will be done differently in 2021 and any new items should be discussed in the fall.

Administrator Fazekas informed Mayor and Council that 94.32 % of the third quarter property taxes have been collected and year to date the collection rate is 97.19%. This rate is excellent considering everything that is happening right now. Mr. Frenia stated that the tax collections have been strong so far across the board with a lot of his clients.

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RESOLUTIONS

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-150
Approve Annual Audit for 2019**

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to approve Resolution No. 2020-150.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None Unanimous vote – Motion carried

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-151
Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-152
Cancel taxes on Township Owned Property**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2020-153
Authorize Refund of Tax Overpayment**

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Ostrander to approve Resolution Nos. 2020-151 through 2020-153.
Voice vote – all ayes.

ORDINANCES

None at this time.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

None at this time.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie spoke about the “Welcome to Roebing” signs. The Historical Society has asked to be able to replace those signs, which have been gone for a few years now. If Council does not have any objections, the township administration will work with the Historical Society on this.

Mayor Wilkie stated the St. Stephen’s Church cancelled their car show because of COVID-19. He is assuming the Historical Society is cancelling their open house but it is not confirmed at this time. There is a letter in the packets from Judy King that he shared, thanking the responsible parties within the township for donating the railroad crossing sign which was delivered to the firehouse. Assistant Administrator Tom Sahol was responsible for retrieving the sign and arranging for the water and sewer department to construct a metal base and place it in the firehouse. This completes the display regarding the track removal on Fifth Street which was done in June.

The Mayor spoke about two items that the administration put together, one is a curbside material collection rejection sticker and the other is a trash collection rejection sticker. This is a great way to help improve communications and educate and enforce the rules. The stickers will begin to be used in the upcoming weeks.

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Administrator

Administrator Fazekas explained that the electric sub-code official is retiring at the end of August. Interviews were conducted and that position will be filled.

Acting Police Chief Greenberg contacted Council today to advise of an incident where the investigation of a shooting victim on Cedar Lane has turned into a larger investigation that netted an individual being charged with possession of several firearms, illegal magazines and heroin. He complimented and congratulated the police department and the detectives working on that case for a job well done.

Administrator Fazekas spoke about the Tall Pines Estates, just prior to COVID-19, Council had a discussion regarding extending water and sewer to the homes in that development that do not yet have it. The roads are due to be repaved on the next road program and the utilities should be installed prior to the paving. Some of the residents have contacted the township regarding their septic systems that are starting to reach maximum age. Many of the homeowners would rather hook into the public sewer than replace their septic systems. Administrator Fazekas said he would meet with Water and Sewer Director Dave Lebak and Township Engineer Jim Biegen to start investigating.

Administrator Fazekas complimented Township CFO Sandra Blacker and her staff on a great job for the audit. Township Auditor Kevin Frenia stated that there were “no comments” and that is due to an outstanding job by she and her staff.

Regarding the Rails to Trails project, there was a meeting with Jim Murray on the warehouses that IPT is constructing in the township. Within the next few days, the silt fencing will be removed and then the township will be taking it over to maintain.

Administrator Fazekas said that the paperwork was submitted through the county and state OEM for FEMA reimbursement for COVID-19 and he is happy to report the Florence Township received their 75% which is a total reimbursement of \$14,284.91.

Administrator Fazekas thanked Tom Sahol for his many years of service to Florence Township and all of the help he has given him since becoming Township Administrator. Mr. Sahol has a wealth of knowledge and he wishes him the best in his new position in Chesterfield and wanted to thank him personally.

Assistant Administrator

Assistant Administrator Tom Sahol reported on the Road Program. He stated that they have now vacated Station Road and they completed the flat work and the concrete curbs. They are moving on to Wallace Avenue and they are also working on Morris Court and Morris Lane. They are going to be going up to Grove and Second to Oak Street this week and they are moving along nicely. There have been very little by way of complaints, even though they are working in tight, congested areas.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

BOARD OF HEALTH

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None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

Council President Sandusky mentioned that he thinks it may be time to ask the county for help to seek a reduction in the speed limit on Front Street to Delaware and possibly put in a few speed bumps. He has noticed more and more trucks without the trailer coming through town. And he has seen more and more trucks on Broad Street as well. He is thinking if we solicit some help from the county, maybe something can/will happen.

Mayor Wilkie said he was in a meeting with the assistant engineers about traffic recently. He stated that when we request the traffic to be reduced, they will monitor it and, if the number comes in higher, they will not reduce the speed limit and they may even increase it. He said it is a matter of enforcement. Pedestrian crosswalks are on the list to be done.

At Delaware and Railroad Avenue, the County has requested a traffic study be completed and, based on that, the goal is to make a no left turn on Delaware and Railroad which will direct everyone to Cedar Lane. They also had conversations about the whirly bird which was constructed in the 1950s and what can be done and how that can be addressed to make it more compliant. These are all things that continue to be discussed but it all comes down to financing and the different priorities.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to open the meeting up to the public. Voice vote – all ayes.

Kristan Marter, 220 East Front Street, asked about the two Griffin projects on Front Street and the issue with trucks crossing over Route 130 and going the wrong direction as to the driveways in order to be able to get in. She stated that in 2016 or 2017 Mayor Wilkie promised that all of the driveways would be heading towards Burlington Township and she was by there and none of the driveways are going towards Burlington Township. And with the way that they have put the landscaping there is no way to put driveways in that face in that direction. She would like to know what happened to the promise that was made by Jim Murray, as well as the promise that the construction traffic would not come through town. She said that she loves Florence Township but the truck traffic that continually goes by is damaging the walls of her basement.

Mayor Wilkie said that on the east side Council has ordinances being developed that will not allow a truck from the east side to make a right so the truck traffic will have to go left which will take them through Burlington Township. The last design that he saw for the West side has the driveways going to the right, and it will be very difficult to make a left. Council will be putting that ordinance in place to prohibit left turns.

Ms. Marter asked then if the only way those ordinances can be enforced is if there is a police officer sitting right there, because truck traffic can still come in from Burlington Township. Once they get out of that driveway there is no way for a police officer to know that they came out of that driveway and made a left. She asked on the east side, once they come out of the driveway how is that enforced unless you have an officer sitting there 24/7? She also asked why the driveways didn't get enforced?

Mayor Wilkie said that the engineers make adjustments as far as safety traffic concerns go that are outside of our control. He said he will look into the approved drawings and where we are today and he will get back to her with those answers. The goal is to lower the weight limit on Delaware and River

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Road and that can only happen over the next few years with the cooperation of Burlington Township, the state and the county.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, a motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to close Public Comments. Voice vote – all ayes.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to adjourn to Closed Session.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None Unanimous vote – Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Woolston to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/jns