

Florence Township Council Regular Session 3/9/22

Florence, New Jersey
March 9, 2022

The Florence Township Council held a Executive Session meeting on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. Members of the public were invited to attend the meeting in person or electronically via Zoom.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Garganio at 7:00 p.m. Council President Garganio led the Salute to the Flag.

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: Notice was posted on the municipal bulletin board on January 7, 2022; published in the Burlington County Times on January 19, 2022, placed on the Township website and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 19, 2022.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Nicholas Haas, Kristan Marter, Paul Ostrander, Bruce Garganio

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie; Stephen Fazekas, Township Administrator; Robert N. Wright, Jr., Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk

Absent: Frank Baldorossi

FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Garganio opened the meeting to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Haas to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – all ayes.

BUSINESS

A. 2022 Budget – Department's Overview

Mayor Wilkie stated that the department heads are going to explain their plans and give an overview for the year and plans for the future.

Police Department

Police Chief Brian Boldizar thanked Mayor and Council for allowing them to move forward with two promotions to the rank of Sergeant. With the recent retirements of Captain Greenberg and Corporal Scully, and the current manpower situation, this helps to fulfill open shifts that would otherwise have to be filled with overtime. There are currently 3 out of 5 Sergeants out on long-term medical leave and one has filed to retire this September. Another will have 20 years in November and has said that he is going to retire. There is also a senior Sergeant that can retire in May of 2023 with 25 years and has stated that when that time comes, he is retiring. In addition to those three, there is one Sergeant that is eligible to take advantage of the 20 and out in November. By allowing them to promote early, they can prepare the new officers to their new assignments in transition when retirement occurs.

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In addition to the sergeants, there is one officer who will have 25 years next June and will also be eligible for retirement. There are also 3 other officers who will have their 20 years, one in October of this year and the other two next October. At this time none of these officers have indicated their intentions of retiring.

There is currently one recruit in the Camden County Police Academy who is slated to graduate in July. He then has to complete our 16-week Field Training Program. The new lateral transfer program allows us to hire someone already trained that comes with experience. The oral boards are scheduled to be completed March 17.

Community events that are planned so far this year are the Law Enforcement Torch Run on June 10, the Adopt a Cop picnic on June 14, the Bike Rodeo on June 18, the Youth Police Academy which runs from July 21-July 29 and National Night Out which is scheduled for August 2nd.

At the end of 2020, we ordered two Ford Explorers that we are still waiting on. The vehicles are in but the camera systems are not in yet. Captain Boldizar said that he would like to order two more vehicles this year to replace the vehicles with high mileage in the fleet. The earlier the vehicles are ordered, the sooner these vehicles will be ready for service.

Captain Boldizar stated that he met with the architect to discuss the building expansion. He explained the need for a female locker room and the cells are outdated and antiquated and we will need to apply for a waiver from the Department of Corrections for the cell area. The cells currently have bars on them and they need a new door or new cells that have to be metal or steel and they need the door to have a food pass-through area where they can also handcuff the prisoner through. In addition, the plumbing needs to be updated.

As far as lowering the speed limit on Front Street and Delaware Avenue, the manual on traffic control devices, which is the national standard for all traffic control devices on roads open to the public for travel, recommends setting speed limits within 5 miles per hour of the 85th percentile of free-flowing traffic. The 85th percentile speed is the speed that 85% of the drivers travel at or below and is one of the best indicators of a reasonable and safe speed. He spoke with someone from the Burlington County Engineer's office and was told that the report should be completed by the end of March and then they will have a better idea if the speed limit should be lowered. The report will contain data from several locations on Front Street and Delaware Avenue. Officers have been conducting detail all year round but most recently they said 4.6% of the vehicles are traveling at 8 mph or more over the speed limit, which is a small amount.

Council Representative Haas asked about the building expansion and whether it triggers the rest of the building code where it is a rehab and is the other side of the building going to have upgrades as well? Administrator Fazekas explained that he spoke to the architect about that and he is looking into several different options. The company that we have been working with is very familiar with police departments, having worked on some throughout South Jersey. He is looking at all options and will come to Council with proposals.

Council Representative Marter asked about the speed limits and testing equipment and if it also counts the number of vehicles. The Chief stated that it counts vehicles and also commercial vehicles.

Mayor Wilkie mentioned that the municipal building is 40 years old, it was constructed in 1982 and therefore is in need of upgrades.

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Water/Sewer

Superintendent David Lebak explained some of the larger projects that will be worked on this year. The first being the new water plant. In 2018 the first phase of the water plant was completed, where the focus was the pumps and how to get the water throughout the entire community. The second phase of the construction just wrapped up last fall, which was more of the chemicals and making sure we have good water quality coming out of the water plant. He happily reported that everything is going really well. There are a few hiccups anytime you go through a new construction project, but the Water & Sewer employees have adapted to the new system without any problems. He invited anyone on Council to come down and tour the new water plant.

Mr. Lebak stated that we are always looking to the future and obviously taking care of the current year, but we are also always thinking 3, 5 and 10 years down the road and what needs to be addressed going forward to make sure to always have good quality water for the town. We are always looking into where we could potentially do a new well and where can we expand our system if needed as the town grows. We have to be ahead of that curve so that the facilities are ready to go.

They Mr. Lebak explained that the sludge screw press project is nearing completion. This is the process we use remove sludge (otherwise known as biosolids) from the wastewater plant. All of the solids that get produced at the plant, end up at the county landfill and they then turn it into compost. This new piece of equipment gives the ability to not only remove sludge quicker, which helps us control the process, but it also frees up manpower. This piece of equipment runs, not necessarily completely by itself, you always have to keep an eye on things, but it really frees up the amount of man and work hours that they have to deal with. This new piece is self-contained, there are no odors, no mess on the floor and there isn't a chance of getting anything on you so even from a safety perspective for employees it is just a better work atmosphere. The old piece of equipment can fill a dumpster in about 10 hours and this new piece will fill one in about 3 hours.

The pump station at Main Street has been online since 1996 and is situated in the woods behind the VFW on Tenth Avenue in Roebing. That was the original wastewater treatment plant for the town until it got demolished. Then it got converted to a pump station and the reason for that is because the pipes are already geared to flow that way for the entire town of Roebing. It takes everything in Roebing, except for the area around Alden and Amboy Avenues. That pump station takes so much flow so it is very important as you get 25-30 years in to upgrade to make sure the pumps are efficient. You don't want to have failures. We have been looking into this for a number of years.

The Hornberger Avenue pump station in Roebing by the creek has done a good job but we are looking forward to building a new one somewhere across the street on higher ground with more modern technology. It is time to upgrade that pump station, especially with some new development coming to that area. That pump station pumps up to Norman Avenue and then the Norman pump station pumps up to Maple Avenue. The Wallace Avenue pump station also ends up at the Maple pump station so Maple is handling three additional pump stations. The thought is to reverse that flow, take Wallace, put it Norman, Norman to Hornberger and get Hornberger over to Mallard Creek. The reason behind this is to take that amount of wastewater over to Mallard and Mallard pumps all the way up Route 130 and down on the Turnpike to the sewer plant. Because it won't come through town, it won't cause odors and it's not going to cause high flow issues. Mr. Lebak said that a concern has always been that the old Norman pump station discharge line goes up through the swamp behind FAAD park and if there is ever a problem, we may not know about it. Redirecting some of this flow with new piping will be better long-term for the town.

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The Wallace Avenue pump was upgraded three years ago. Norman is getting a controller, new service coming in and pumps. These are small jobs that can be broken down and done in pieces. Mayor Wilkie mentioned that before Route 130 gets paved, the plan is to run pipes from Hornberger Avenue over to the Mallard Creek pump station.

Mr. Lebak also addressed the new lead requirements. Since the lead issue in Flint, Michigan everyone started becoming concerned with the drinking water systems, to make sure they are being monitored closely enough. Unfortunately for Flint, MI, the issue arose because they switched the way they were treating the water and the water became corrosive. When water becomes corrosive, it starts to pull lead out of pipes and fixtures. Faucets and fixtures in your home have lead in them.

Another thing that happens with lead piping it forms a slime-like layer inside the pipe that protects and stops the pipe from interacting with the water and almost insulates it. In his 22 years in Florence Township, Mr. Lebak stated that there have never been problems with lead. Tests are conducted tri-annually because our values are so low. If you have a lead exceedance, it will kick you into an accelerated lead testing program where, instead of 30 tests every 3 years, you'll do 60 every quarter for a number of years until they let you come back down to tri-annually because the levels are low enough. It is a very stringent rule once you have a high lead value. He stated that he is very comfortable with our water quality. When the water plant was upgraded, we had an upset and we were putting out a very low PH of about 6.0. We typically run about 7.3 to a 7.5, it keeps the water less corrosive. That starts to really cause some problems, and creates instability within the system so iron and things that are normally in the scale nice and happy, they start to slough off and then that corrosivity starts to compound things in the system. This occurred in the month of August and we did our lead and copper samples in September which was the absolute worse case scenario but we didn't have one hit. This gives us great confidence that even under those conditions, we didn't have any spikes in lead.

In 2021 we tested 34 samples and were almost all undetected. There may have some that were extremely low in value, however, because there is a nationwide push to remove lead from drinking water, they put out new regulations that says we're going to get rid of low surface lines. This is why the letter went out to residents based on those new regulations.

Mr. Lebak stated that we are confident that the 126 homes that are in the lead and copper program are lead tails. That means that there is a galvanized pipe going out. And, because you can't connect rigid galvanized to rigid steel pipe because the ground moves which will cause it to snap, a piece of flexible lead 2-3 feet long goes in and takes that movement from the ground. When they do the lead testing, it is always a home that has a lead tail and is built before 1983 so it has lead solder because they want us to test the worst-case scenario homes. The way the test is conducted, the water has to sit for at least 10 hours overnight at the faucet and it's a first draw sample out of that faucet. And we have never had a problem. If anyone has questions, they should be directed to call the water and sewer plant. We are very comfortable with the town's water quality and we will test anyone's water, especially anyone that received a letter. Mr. Lebak said that he hopes that this does not cause a panic so he would like to go out and speak to the residents so that they understand it better and to satisfy their concerns.

Council President Garganio asked if the lead tails are normally in the street or in the yard and what our regulation is, from the main to the house? Is it the homeowner or are we responsible to the edge of the street? Mr. Lebak said they are in the street and they are in the alleys and the service belongs to the homeowner all the way to the main. We are going to keep our eye on the laws on what we're going to have to do which is going to essentially require more work, manpower, focus and funds. Council President Garganio asked if we are going through this process every time we pave roads just to have the conversation with the residents that they have an opportunity? Mr. Lebak said that a letter goes out to

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advise residents that if they need to replace their service lines, it would be best to do before the road is paved.

Road Program/Township Projects/Shade Tree Commission

Administrative Assistant Ted Lovenduski explained that right now we have Wilbur Henry Drive and the Ninth Street projects, which are both DOT projects. The Ninth Street project is in the design phase and Wilbur Henry Drive had pretty much been designed, we are just waiting to go out to bid on that.

The 2022 Road Program is a massive program and, with the cost of oil going up almost 50% in the past 3 weeks, that will affect the cost of asphalt so we have to see where everything comes in.

The engineer redesigned the new fuel facility since the last update. He visited another fuel facility in Piscataway so he is redesigning the whole thing to make the canopy smaller and the tanks aren't going to be located on the island any longer. We are going to have some underground pipes but it is not enough fuel stored underground to kick us into any DEP permits or anything like that.

The Pine Grove Lane project is 90% complete we are just waiting for asphalt. They have to do the asphalt on the emergency access road and they also have a little bit of an asphalt patch on the inlet at the other end. And also a berm around the driveway to try to keep the water from coming down into that gully past the house.

We are waiting to mill and pave the Potts Mill Road project. All of the concrete is done, the curbing has been replaced and the bridges are complete. At this point it is just mill and pave when the asphalt plants open back up and get moving which is expected sometime in April.

A silicon coating was put on one-half of the roof of the municipal building and the other will be completed sometime this spring.

Last year we did a lot of tree replacements in parks, this year our focus is more on street trees that we have taken out over the years. We are trying to find a more appropriate tree, a lot of trees are planted under wires and Public Service comes in and carves out a big chunk out of the tree. The intention is to plant a tree that only attains a height of 25 feet so that we don't run into that issue any longer. In Roebling, we don't have any wires in the street and we have a little wider planting space so we can put a bigger tree in a spot like that. Last year the Shade Tree planted almost 50 trees, about 20 were donated by Blake Dimon to Michael's Grove, the rest we purchased and put into FAAD Park and a few at the municipal building. We have been trying to spread them out.

Council President Garganio asked the number of trees that would be functional that Shade Tree could handle without making it a full-time job for everyone and if 50 would be a good number? Mr. Lovenduski answered that last year they planted on 3 different days but had a lot of volunteer help so those trees went pretty quickly. As long as the trees are smaller, they could probably organize three planting days, two in the spring around Arbor Day and one in the fall around September. Between 20-25 trees per planting is about as many as you can get with a good number of volunteers, so 50 or more would be a feasible number.

Council Representative Ostrander asked what type of trees would be planted? Ted explained that the smaller trees would be a Kousa Dogwood or some kind of Cherry tree because they flower, they'll look nice and the lifespan is what we want. We don't want to plant a tree that has a lifespan of 70 years and then we're cutting them down after 20 because they are interfering with sidewalks or wires.

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Mayor Wilkie made mention of Michael's Grove and explained that Michael Geary had passed away a few years ago and had dedicated a good part of his life to our Shade Tree Commission and Blake Dimon wanted to create a grove of trees at the end of Second Avenue to commemorate his efforts. Blake wants to carve out some flower gardens in that area this year. The Michael's Grove dedication is planned for Saturday May 7th.

Mr. Lovenduski stated that, with the help of Water and Sewer, Public Works and the Shade Tree we are going to rent a bulldozer and we're going to clear out some areas. Behind the 4th Avenue alley on the gypsytown side, there is a patch of woods there that is overgrown and the trash blows out there. We are going to clear that out and try to make a grove out of it. We want to make it nice for the residents back there and it also makes it easy on Public Works, they don't have to go out and clean the trash out of the woods all of the time. We are also going to do alleys while we have that machine. There are a couple alleys in both Florence and Roebing that are getting pretty bad. The trash truck over time goes down and pushes all of the dirt to the center and the outsides and creates gullies. We are going to get crushed concrete and throw it in there, which serves as a better surface for the trash trucks.

The CDBG Grant is a sidewalk project, we got the grant last year and it has to be completed by fall this year. The sidewalks on the 400 block of West Front Street are in deplorable condition. We are going to do that whole length of sidewalk and a couple of sidewalks along Bodine, between Park and Richardson and between Park and West Fourth. That is our main focus. If we can go farther, there are a couple of spots missing in Roebing along Hamilton Avenue. This grant is a census track grant where you are allowed to use these funds in specific areas that qualify. What we are doing is just creating an avenue for anyone to walk on a sidewalk, it is a safe passage and the handicap ramps are included. Then we have many other sidewalks that have been pushed up by trees over the years. Birch Hollow has some pretty bad spots and Greenbriar as well. Andrews and Filipponi Court also need be done. The tree roots push the sidewalk up as they grow and then the tree is fighting the sidewalk and the sidewalk is fighting the tree. In Greenbriar, we have taken about 100 Ash Trees out over the past three years and the idea is to plant them back. Not between the curb and sidewalk, but in back of the yards. We have to go back a little farther because of the utilities but we promised the residents we would map out what trees are ours so that we can determine who is responsible for what tree in the future.

Council President Garganio stated that it would be nice for the township to fund 50 trees and, possibly if we can even do 100, through the budget process and we can tie Public Works into something like that so we can start filling out some of our parks. If the money is there it would be nice to do that. Administrator Fazekas stated that line item was increased by \$15,000 in the budget for that purpose.

Council Representative Haas stated that in the Recreation report there was mention of an access road behind the recycling center and asked whether or not that is being taken into account with the fuel facility. Mayor Wilkie explained that where the fuel station is located in between the recycling center and the Public Works building and we are going to eliminate that road. That is also behind the recycling center and that is where the dumpsters will go so that Public Works can then service them. The dirt road was fine but there is a culvert from the retention basin going into Oak Mill and if we were to try and put trucks and things on there it was quite a lot of money for something that didn't need to be. We can divert that away from there and access it from the back.

Mayor Wilkie stated that we did not get the grant from NJDOT, so in the budget, the bid will be to put the bike path from Eyre Street to Walnut Street, which is a straight run. From Eyre Street down we need to go ahead and design that. And from Walnut we have to figure out if we are going to anything different because right now you stop at Walnut if you are heading east and have to make a left. That still has to be designed and Council will hopefully be looking at that in 2023 before we pave Fifth Street. The bond

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now for this Road Program will include putting in paving from Eyre Street to Walnut so we can get the construction of the bike path on Fifth Street.

Public Works

Public Works Superintendent, Rich Pendle gave a brief update on their seasonal responsibilities. One of their main priorities is to keep the roads cleared when it snows. Shortly after winter and just before Spring, the public works department start the cleaning of all of the storm drains from all of the leaves and build up from winter. There are 999 storm drains which is quite a project every year. An inspection of each one of those basins is conducted at this time also. Any repairs or upgrades that are needed are documented and then we do our best throughout the year to take care of them. In the Spring we maintain the ballfields, the parks and the playgrounds, with each one being a major responsibility. There is a lot of accomplish in the springtime and it's all grass and mowing. In the fall it is leaf season. We also maintain the recycling center as well as the boat dock and all of the buildings.

He stated that there is an immediate need for a new roll off truck. We are doing at least 10 loads a week for Public Works and Water and Sewer can do about 2-3 loads a day. The current truck is 18 years old and if it breaks down you can see the pileup we are going to have. There is also a need for new mowing equipment. A few years ago, we purchased a "batwing" which is a wide-area mower, and is very expensive, at between \$60,000-80,000 right now. If you purchase a tractor for maybe \$40,000 and for about \$20,000 you can purchase a wide-area mower and go behind it with a hitch and it will do the same job with a little bigger area and for the same price you are getting a tractor with accessories as well as the mower. This seems to be a bigger bang for the buck.

We have two dump trucks that are 32 years old. This year we had a few snow storms and both of the dump trucks went down and there is no quick fix for those things. We really need to have to something that we can depend on. Mr. Pendle stated that he believes that we do a good job clearing the roads and it looks pretty good compared to other towns.

Mr. Pendle said that one other thing that we should consider in a few years is another vac truck. We purchased the current vac truck in 2009 and it is 13 years old now. Some of them can last about 15-20 years. If we get another vac truck, it can be a backup and would be helpful. When we were collecting leaves before purchasing the vac truck, we were using 5-7 guys, minimum to go out for 10 weeks, 6 days a week, every season. So, within about 2-3 years one guy did the job of all of those guys, plus all of the equipment used in the process. Now there is just one guy out there doing it and that truck more than paid for itself within the 3 years from all of the overtime and manpower hours saved.

Council President Garganio asked what a leaf truck was worth? Administrator Fazekas stated that a leaf truck is worth about \$125,000-150,000 and he will have prices for the dump trucks and roll off trucks. A roll off truck is going to be needed because of the new screw press that is being installed at the sewer treatment plant. He will be coming to Council with those requests over the next month or two. He also stated that one of the things they are looking at is to try and make the roll off trucks into multi-purpose vehicles.

Administrator Fazekas thanked Mayor and Council for giving him the opportunity to have the supervisors come in. He thought it was a good idea that Council hear from them.

Mayor Wilkie stated that Council will be receiving the budget books about a week to a week and a half from now. One thing that wasn't really touched on besides what Mr. Pendle was talking about maintaining our parks and playgrounds was that last year we tried to do a survey for folks concerning the playground on West Fifth and Eyre/Foundry Streets, he asked for feedback. The survey information that

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was collected is getting compiled. A survey has been created for the Woodlawn park by ERI but hasn't been released yet. Once the survey concerning the visioning closes next Wednesday or Thursday, we are going to push out another survey specifically about Woodlawn Park. That will give us some ideas about what people would like to see in the area.

Mayor Wilkie stated that he would like to have a Master Plan of our parks compiled. He was initially looking at Waterworks and Veterans Park. He will have an RFP put together for a park planner to look at the parks. We have a lot of parks but we haven't put any new playground equipment in recently. In the last 11 years we made them safer by putting safety surfaces in but we need to modernize some of the parks. We should have an inventory done of our current parks and then this way the recreation committee can meet and look at these things and come up with some recommendations.

ACTION

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Garganio opened the meeting up to the public at this time.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked if Council can find out the cost per tree, maybe Florence can sponsor a tree planting effort in which the residents can donate a tree to this program.

Council President Garganio stated that this is an excellent idea and Ted Lovenduski will get a cost per tree for the residents.

Council Representative Marter mentioned that Mansfield Township had just adopted an ordinance that would make warehouses a non-permitted use in Mansfield Township. Mayor Wilkie stated that he had seen that ordinance and had forwarded it to our solicitor for his review.

Council Representative Marter stated that it was imperative to get the Master Plan in place to help control development. Mayor Wilkie explained that we have had a Master Plan in place for many years. Currently the Planning Board is creating a new updated Master Plan based on the Re-Examination Report from 2018. Once the Planning has the Master Plan document completed it will be presented to Council for review and approval. Council Representative Marter questioned the zoning on the triangle shaped lot on the Wainwright property. Mayor Wilkie stated that it would not be appropriate for Council to comment on that at this time as the parcel she is referring to is part of an on-going Zoning Board application.

Seeing no one else wishing to comment, motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Haas to close the public comment portion. Voice Vote – All Ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion was made by Haas, seconded by Ostrander to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js