

Florence Township Council Regular Session 4/6/22

Florence, New Jersey
April 6, 2022

The Florence Township Council held a regular 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 Vice President Ostrander at 7:00 p.m. Council Vice President Ostrander 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: Frank Baldorossi, Nicholas Haas, Kristan Marter, Paul Ostrander

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: Bruce Garganio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting of March 16, 2022

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

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve the following correspondence. Voice vote – all ayes.

- Court Administrator’s Monthly Report for March 2022
- Township Clerk’s Monthly Report for March 2022

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Haas to approve the **Treasurer’s Bill List**.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Police Chief’s Monthly Update Report for February 2022

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Marter to approve the correspondence. Voice vote – all ayes.

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APPLICATIONS

- A. Request from Florence Township Volunteer Fire Co. No. 1 and Boyd's Pharmacy to use Wilkie Park on Saturday, April 9, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. for the Annual Easter Egg Hunt (rain date April 16, 2022)
- B. Bingo License for Duffy School Tenants Association on June 4, 2022 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. located at 225 W. 2nd Street, Florence, NJ 08518

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Marter to approve the applications. Voice Vote – all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council Vice President Ostrander opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was the Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to close the public portion of the meeting. Voice vote – All ayes.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2022-81 Introduce 2022 Municipal Budget

Mayor Wilkie highlighted a few key points in the budget for the public. He explained that, unfortunately there is a \$.02 increase in the taxes, which is the first increase in ten years, while Water and Sewer rates remain the same. The tax collection rate this past year was at 98.98% which is probably as close as you will ever see. Our tax collector continues to work very hard to make sure people pay their taxes. When people don't pay their taxes, Florence Township has to pay the county, the school district, the fire district in full first and then we pay the township. So, if people don't pay their taxes the township gets the shortfall. That is one of the reasons why the PILOT system is set up, so that the money comes into the town and then the town decides the distribution because the town is the collector of these funds and has to make sure all of the other taxing agencies are made whole. One of the reasons why taxes increase when the economy goes bad and people aren't able to pay their taxes is because the towns have to pay.

Mayor Wilkie explained that there are a few items of revenue that are creating an issue. With COVID, our court revenue numbers are down about \$100,000. This has also required us to put money in for the Public Defender which is normally handled through the court fees. Health insurance is increasing by \$30,000. We made a switch around 2014 to a self-insurance program and, when comparing those costs, if we were to still be in the State Health Benefit System, we would be paying more than \$136,000. By making that switch we saved money and we also saved our employees from paying at the higher rate. Also, with rising gas prices, fuel costs have increased a little over \$20,000.

Mayor Wilkie went on to explain that we have put some money in the budget for our community. We added \$15,000 with tree replacement and Council has agreed to hire an architect and we will be looking into a park planner as well. Those projects are the upgrade to municipal building and looking at our park inventories. We will also be working on converting old Public Works garage into the field house and trying to meet the Environmental Commissions goal of the Green Team endorsement. There also ends up being an additional cost of \$5,000 for elections due to the county switching over to electronic poll books.

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Mayor Wilkie mentioned that we have an aggressive road program in place that is continuing so, while we are paying a little bit more in taxes, he anticipates that we will still be one of the communities with the lowest tax rates in Burlington County and the State of New Jersey. Township employees, based on negotiated agreements, are receiving a 3% raise, except for the Police Department, they negotiated at 2 ½%. There is an additional bond payment this year. We went to a permanent bonding on funds and this happens to be the year when it spikes up and then levels off and may decrease but that is at an increase of \$307,000 that has to be made up.

Mayor Wilkie stated that we have included the hiring of 3 new police officers in the budget. We have had some officers retire and we have some anticipated retirements. A few years ago we dropped the recreation fee for sports and we are continuing to allow township children to participate in recreational sports with no township fee. We continue with the School Resource Officers and our partnership with the school district. In addition to us fully funding a police officer there, we are also giving the school district \$40,000 which we have been doing for a number of years and we also have \$35,000 in the budget to go to the fire district towards reimbursement for expenses that they may have. It is a good fiscally sound budget and he appreciates the support.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution No. 2022-81.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-82
Approve Fireworks for Patriotic Celebration Day**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-83
Approve Water & Sewer Payment Plan, B137, L8**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-84
Emergency Temporary Appropriation**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2022-85
Urging the Swift Passage of S-330/A3804 Restoring Energy Tax Receipts to Municipalities**

Mayor Wilkie explained that the funding for this actually came from the energy companies to the municipalities. In order to make things more efficient, many years ago the State collected those funds and agreed to process them and give the money back to the communities. What has actually happened is that they continue to syphon off of those funds for their operations and not return the money in whole to the communities. The League of Municipalities have been requesting that the State of New Jersey give this money back to the communities and this Resolution is something that the League has been requesting for a number of years. He hopes it happens, especially now that the State is talking about the billions of dollars that they have.

It was the Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution Nos. 2022-82 through 2022-85.

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Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT : Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE NO. 2022-04

**Fixing the Compensation of Certain Officials and Employees of the Township of Florence
(Intro & 1st Read)(2nd Read & Adopt 4/20/22)**

It was a Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2022-04.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

ORDINANCE NO. 2022-05

**Bond Ordinance for Acquisition of Police Vehicles
(Intro & 1st Read)(2nd Read & Adopt 4/20/22)**

Administrator Fazekas explained that each year, Florence Township has always replaced two vehicles. Back at the end of 2020 we put in for two vehicles and we are just receiving those two now. This is being put in now so we can get those ordered and hopefully receive them before the end of the year. By taking the two oldest cars out of rotation, it keeps our fleet up to date and current.

It was a Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2022-05.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

ORDINANCE NO. 2022-06

**Bond Ordinance for Reconstruction and Upgrade of Sewer Pump Stations
(Intro & 1st Read)(2nd Read & Adopt 4/20/22)**

It was a Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Haas to approve Ordinance No. 2022-06.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Baldorossi, Haas, Marter, Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Garganio
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

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REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Council Representative Haas mentioned that the Economic Development Commission reviewed the plan endorsement and the State was very pleased with the amount of people who participated in the survey. He also mentioned that the inventory of open businesses and lots that members of the Committee are keeping a record of is still proceeding forward

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie read an excerpt from the March 18, 1882 Council Meeting minutes.

He went on to congratulate Sergeant Nicole Bonilla for being named the Southern Officer of the Year by the New Jersey Narcotics Enforcement Officers. Sergeant Bonilla was recently promoted to Sergeant. He also mentioned the passing of Joe Csik, explaining that he had been a regular attendee at the Council meetings for a number of years and was appointed to the Environmental Commission many years ago and wanted to recognize his service to the community.

Next Wednesday, at the April 13th Council Meeting, the Unified Basketball team will be recognized for winning their tournament. Saturday, April 9th, the annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held at Wilkie Park at 10 a.m. The Odd Fellows also have their open house Saturday at 12:00 p.m. on 4th Avenue and it is also opening day for both baseball and softball at 12:30 p.m. It will be a busy day.

Administrator

Administrator Fazekas stated that bids were received for the Wilbur Henry Drive project. The engineer will go through them to make sure they are all in order and he will be bringing that back to Council at the April 20th meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

BOARD OF HEALTH

None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council Vice President Ostrander opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was a motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to close the public comment portion of the meeting. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Haas to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:20 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – all ayes.

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ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 7:47 p.m. No action was taken. Motion of Marter seconded by Haas to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
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