

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SESSION

May 11, 2011

8:00PM

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

Council Vice President Baldorossi called the meeting to order and led the Salute to the Flag.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

The Opening Statement was read: Notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was published in the Burlington County Times on January 2, 2011 and on January 16, 2011; given to the Register News for information; posted on the municipal bulletin board.

ROLL CALL

Present: Frank Baldorossi, Sean Ryan (8:01 pm), Jerry Sandusky, David Woolston
Dennis O'Hara (8:22 pm)

Also Present: Mayor William Berry; Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator; Thomas Sahol, Assistant Municipal Administrator; Dante Guzzi, Township Engineer; William J. Kearns, Jr., Township Solicitor; Joy M. Weiler, Township Clerk

PUBLIC COMMENT

NOTE: 8:01PM Council Member Ryan present.

John Smith, 10 Boulevard, noticed the legal advertisement in the Burlington County Times for the Area in Need of Redevelopment and asked what that involves? Administrator Brook explained the township is trying to convert the former Duffy School on West Second Street to senior housing to put the property to good use and to help the municipality meet its affordable housing requirements under NJ State law. Over the past several years the housing market and the tax credit market has been very difficult. Trying to get tax credits for this application has been very hard, even though the township is using one of the top affordable housing developers in this area. Administrator Brook explained that the building is not fit or conducive for actual housing and the state of deterioration is only getting worse; the cost to renovate is extremely prohibitive. The idea came up to demolish the building and reconstruct it in a likeness as close as possible. This would provide a much better living condition for the seniors that will be living in the building. One way to help the application process is to designate it as an Area in Need of Redevelopment. He explained that this designation is only specific to Duffy School and a small residential property that is attached to it (which the owner is interested in selling). It does not involve condemnation. The purpose of this designation is to help enhance the application before the state to try to receive tax credits. If the township does not receive an award this time, the only option may be to demolish the building so no one gets hurt.

Mr. Smith asked if there would be more units in the building then originally planned? Administrator Brook stated that there are no plans for additional units on the corner property where there is a house. The purpose of including that property in the Redevelopment Plan is it would create more open space or parking and enhance the project if the owners wanted to sell the property. Another option would be to renovate the home for the superintendent of the building to live in, in case he has a family. The property owners have been advised that if they have no interest in selling, the municipality has no desire to purchase.

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Mr. Smith noted that the township does not get much as far as ratables from the Roebing Inn and asked what this project will do in the way of ratables for the township? Administrator Brook stated that the township has not received tax money from the Duffy School property over the years. He stated that the township does receive some money, not a lot, for buildings such the MSA building but it provided housing for people that are physically disabled and helped provide affordable housing for people that need it. Administrator Brook also explained that if a township does not comply with affordable housing requirements, a developer can come in and determine exactly what they want to build through a builders remedy. Mr. Smith is somewhat confused as to why the township wants to satisfy their obligation in light of what is going on in the state. Administrator Brook stated that even though the State of NJ is not sure of what they are doing as far as affordable housing, the mandate for affordable housing came from the courts and the governor cannot get rid of affordable housing. He believes affordable housing is here to stay and it is a good thing if the township can provide affordable housing on a run down property.

In response to Mr. Smith's mention of the former Roebing Village tavern, Administrator Brook explained that the goal of the residents years ago was to have the building demolished and build a parking lot. The township took the property and working with Burlington County Community Action Program developed a project for senior citizens to live that helped meet the affordable housing requirements of the municipality. He believes that the township preserved a piece of history and that the building is an asset to the community.

Mr. Smith stated that the point he wanted to make is that he does not understand why the township is moving forward with affordable housing with all that is going on in the State of NJ. Council Member Ryan understood Mr. Smith's point. He stated that Florence Township has always been ahead of the curve with the affordable housing requirements and they are protecting the municipality from other affordable housing remedies that are mandated. Mr. Smith understood that and stated he was part of the first plan.

Bob Carmen, 52 Trainor Circle, stated that there are several members of Greenbriar's board present at the meeting since some of the Maintenance Bonds are coming up soon. If the governing body has any questions as they discuss the matter, please feel free to call upon the residents.

All residents having an opportunity to be heard, MOTION by Woolston; seconded by Sandusky to close the public portion of the meeting. All ayes - motion carried.

TOWNSHIP ENGINEER

Greenbriar, Section 4: Maintenance Bond Release

Dan Guzzi, Township Engineer, reviewed and does not recommend releasing the Maintenance Bond until the items on the punch list are complete. A copy of the punch list was provided. To stay within the required time limits, Administrator Brook stated that a formal Resolution denying the release will be prepared for next week's meeting

Greenbriar, Sections 2, 3 and 5: Status Report on Cash Bonds

Mr. Guzzi stated that Performance Bonds were released last year subject to the posting of Cash Bonds to handle some minor outstanding items that could not be completed at that time due to weather conditions. There was a separate cash bond for each section. Mr. Guzzi reported on each section:

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- Section 2: Swale has not been repaired; does not recommend release of Cash Bond.
- Section 3: Underdrain and updated “as built” for one property was not completed; does not recommend release of Cash Bond.
- Section 5: All items were completed; does recommend release of the Cash Bond.

Council Member Sandusky asked if the developer was given a timeframe to complete the outstanding items? Mr. Guzzi explained that because of the Municipal Land Use Law he cannot give specific timeframes or deadlines, but if it goes on too long the township can seek a remedy by notifying the bonding company. He stated that the developer advised him that they plan on finishing these items when they work on the punch list for Section 4. He noted that with a cash bond, if they do not get the work done, the township can use the cash to get someone else to finish the job.

Administrator Brook noted that Greenbriar Horizon is kept up to date on any reports from Mr. Guzzi.

Shoppes at Mallard Creek, Phase I: Release Maintenance Bond

Mr. Guzzi reviewed and recommends denying the Maintenance Bond Release due to outstanding items. A Resolution will be prepared for next week’s meeting.

ABC RENEWALS

Joy Weiler, Township Clerk, stated that it is the time of year that applications for ABC Renewals are sent out. Stephen Fazekas, Chief of Police, has provided a report. The applications and fees are beginning to come in. Clerk Weiler stated that if there are any applications that Council has any concerns with, the owners can be asked to come in before Council.

HARDWARE STORE REQUEST

Administrator Brook read aloud a letter from Joyce Carugno, owner of Florence Hardware Store asking that Council consider revising Chapter 91 of the Florence Township Code and allow the store to once again display merchandise on the sidewalk in front of her store, which would be done in a limited area close to the building as not impede any sidewalk traffic. She explained that it was an asset to their business when they were able to display merchandise outside of the building bringing customers into the store. Since the closing of the Beneficial Bank branch and two (2) businesses on her block as well as the drastic downsizing of Griffin Pipe, traffic through town on Front Street has dropped dramatically and any means of attracting business into town is an asset.

NOTE: 8:22PM Council President O'Hara present. (He apologized for attending late and explained that he had a work related commitment.)

Ray Carugno, father of Ms. Carugno, stated that he was part of selling things in front of the store on the sidewalk. It was usually good furniture, not junk. He stated that he has been doing it for 20 some years and did previously receive permission from Council. The Carugno’s were notified recently that the sidewalk was county property and they could no longer display merchandise out front. There were also concerns regarding a store in the same block that was displaying merchandise in front of their store.

The Township Administrator stated for the record that the problem had not been Mr. Carugno’s property or business.

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It was on the MOTION of Sandusky, seconded by Ryan to authorize Solicitor Kearns to amend the Ordinance to allow the display of merchandise in front of the Front Street stores. Solicitor Kearns will work on the wording and draft an Ordinance for discussion. Roll call vote – all ayes. Motion carried.

Permission was granted to Mr. Carugno to go back to displaying merchandise in front of the store as he has done in the past. Council Members noted that they like to support the local businesses in town.

FLORENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY: OPEN HOUSE SPRING 2012

It was on the MOTION of Sandusky, seconded by Baldorossi to allow the Florence Historical Society Open House in the spring of 2012 at the former firehouse on W. Third Street. The Historical Society will work with Administrator Brook on the insurance and any other necessary details.

Mr. Smith asked if there were any problems with the Florence Historical Society using the Third Street firehouse for storage? Administrator Brook stated that there are no problems. Mr. Smith expressed concern that the Historical Society does not have a place to store their items other than what the township is letting them use and he believes that now there is discussion of putting the firehouse up for sale. Council Member Ryan stated that Council Members looked at a list of municipally owned buildings that are vacant or are currently being lent to different groups within the community. Council Member Ryan is the one that requested the list. He wanted to know what buildings were not being utilized or were being utilized by a community group or could have potential for future development. He wanted this information for his personal information. He asked that his request of the list not be misconstrued; he is on Council and he likes to be continually aware. Council looked at the list, no decisions were made, no closed session meetings were held; it was simply a memo that could be shared with Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith stated that the Florence Historical Society does not have a permanent home. Council Member Sandusky stated that Council is aware of that. When they came before Council a couple of years ago, Council approved that they be allowed to take their items out of storage and store in the Third Street Firehouse, which saved them money. That evening Council suggested that the historical society seek grants to help with their funding. It would be nice to have the building open to the public for more than just an open house.

Council Member Ryan believes that if the opportunity were to arise regarding a building that is occupied by a community group, that Council would do their best to accommodate that community group in a different vacant building elsewhere in the community.

Judy King, president of the Florence Historical Society, has investigated the grant process and you can only receive a grant if you have a building.

Upon roll call for the above MOTION Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Ryan, Sandusky, Woolston, O'Hara
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

Unanimous approval.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Solicitor Kearns noted that the Burlington County Chamber of Commerce is holding an event at the Roebing Museum next week.

SOUTH JERSEY MAGAZINE: FLORENCE TOWNSHIP

Council President O'Hara stated that the Mayor had a very nice article in the South Jersey Magazine and Florence was ranked #1 in the list of best Burlington County Towns; Florence ranked 4th in the top property values for towns with a population over 8,000; Florence Township ranks 5th in the lowest residential taxes per average residential value population over 8,000; Florence Township ranks #1 in the lowest crime incidents per 1,000 people population 8,000. It is an excellent article about Florence Township.

DEFEATED SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET

Mayor Berry met with the School Board Administrator. They have to come up with a dollar amount to adjust the budget. He stated that they have approximately a week to take action and advised that a subcommittee be organized to work with the School Board to make any additional cuts other than those that Mayor Berry and the School Board Administrator worked out last week. Council President O'Hara noted that an email was received from a woman involved with the school stating that the budget that was introduced and defeated was a bear boned budget. He also stated that the School Board Administrator advised that some substantial increases came in after the budget was introduced. A subcommittee consisting of Mayor Berry, Council President O'Hara and Council Member Woolston will meet before next Wednesday.

BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES

Administrator Brook stated that they will be moving forward with the sale of Bond Anticipation Notes (short term borrowing). They waited until they believed the market was favorable with respect to long-term rates. If all goes well, a Resolution will be on the Agenda next week related to the Bond Sale in addition to Mr. Thompson's (Phoenix Advisors) contract.

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP POLICE OFFICER

Administrator Brook reported that Patrolman Sadar was hurt earlier this week searching for a young girl from Florence Township that is missing. He was climbing a fence and slipped. There was a tremendous gash through his hand that required a significant number of stitches both inside and outside of his hand. He should not have permanent damage to his hand. The Administrator noted that Officer Sadar was more concerned about the search and working with his fellow police officers than he was about his hand.

9:05PM MOTION by Baldorossi, seconded by Sandusky to adjourn to Closed Session. Roll call vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

9:05PM: Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

JOY M. WEILER, RMC/MMC
Township Clerk
/mab