

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SESSION

SEPTEMBER 11, 2013

8:00PM

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

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

A Moment of Silence was held in remembrance of the victims of 9/11.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: Notice was sent to the Register News for information; posted on the municipal bulletin board; placed on the web-site on January 3, 2013; and advertised in the Burlington Co. Times on January 6, 2013.

ROLL CALL

Present: Frank Baldorossi, Ted Lovenduski, Paul Ostrander, David Woolston, Jerry Sandusky

Also present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie; Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator; Kelly Grant, Esq., Township Solicitor; Joy M. Weiler, Township Clerk.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public.

Sandy Agathokleous, 218 Fifth Avenue, inquired about a play that was performed at the Main Street Community Center called "Roebbling." She wanted to know if it was going to be performed again. Mayor Wilkie suggested she get in contact with the Roebbling Museum; they organized the performance in 2010.

MOTION was made by Ostrander; seconded by Woolston, to close the public comments. Roll call vote – all ayes.

BUSINESS

Township Water and Sewer Engineer

Review Bids: Cedar Lane Water Tower

Administrator Brook advised that the bids for the water tower would not be received until next Tuesday. He said if all goes well with the bid, Russell Trice the Water & Sewer Engineer, would be at the next meeting to go over the results with Mayor and Council and make a recommendation for awarding the project. Administrator Brook said the township would like to get the job done before the winter if at all possible. If not, the latest it would be done is the spring.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

Township Engineer

Pulte Homes, Estates at Oak Mill: Bond Reduction Requests

Mayor and Council received a letter from Engineer Biegen dated August 14, 2013. It covers four bonds for Pulte Homes - Phase II paving, Phase III paving, Phase III Stormwater and Phase III partial site. The engineer recommends a reduction of each bond in the amounts indicated in the correspondence. There will be resolutions prepared for the next meeting of the Township Council.

It was the MOTION of Woolston, seconded by Lovenduski to approve the engineer's report. Roll call vote – all ayes.

Hornberger Avenue – Streetscape Discussion

Administrator Brook explained that there are two residents that wanted to discuss an issue that is of concern to them. At the turn from Route 130 onto Hornberger Avenue to the right there is a body of water that used to look like a lake or pond. It was very nice and picturesque. A tour was set up of the Roebling Steel Plant with Tamara Rossi of the Environmental Protection Agency, resident Anthony Drangula, resident Michael Lubik and Engineer Biegen. Mr. Lubik also brought pictures to share. This is the beginning of the revitalization of the appearance of this area of the community. There are issues because the township will need to work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA.

Michael Lubik, Mansfield, said when the Roeblings built the Brooklyn Bridge, there was a system used to pump out mud to get the stanchions to go down to be stable enough to support the bridge. The Roeblings used a sluice pump, a pump that works with the tide of the river. When the Roebling's built the plant, they used one of these pumps to connect the river and the creek. When there was a need to get rid of corrosives or contaminated soil, it had been pushed into the lake area and it has raised the lake area to about 14 feet. The EPA said it was going to remove the contamination and that was done. It was put on the river shore line and it will be covered with fill dirt. He said the area was cleaned out but for some reason it was filled back in. He referred to aerial photos of the area taken in July. He said it shows that there is just mud in the area. He said the dirt is like quicksand. He worries about the safety of the area and feels there is too much material in the body of water. He would like the material to be removed as the fill for the work that needs to be done along the Roebling shore line. He said the lake is filled with topsoil and that is what is needed for capping at the site. The top soil in the lake is encouraging unattractive vegetation to grow.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

He referred to a photo showing the peninsula that is jutting into the creek. The owner of the property is willing to have it removed. Removing it would create a very nice view coming off the highway. He said the entrance off Route 130 onto Hornberger Avenue could be used as an asset to help sell the Roebing Steel Plant site. He believes if the area were returned to its original condition it would make a good impression.

Mayor Wilkie explained that the plant is a large project and the priority economic development-wise is Route 130 and Florence-Columbus Road. The steel plant is part of the whole Master Plan and he is developing a committee to focus on it. The Township Engineer has already begun to do a traffic study of the area. There was some discussion about moving the entrance into town further down Route 130 to provide a cross road. There are many conversations being held focusing on the steel mill site. The township will need to meet with the DEP. Mayor Wilkie met with the EPA and got an update on the project. The EPA did what they did because the DEP said it was required. He hopes to meet with the DEP and share the information from this evening to see what can be done. Documentation of restoration is very important. Mayor Wilkie agreed that the area needs some beautification.

Mr. Lubik would like the fill from the creek be used for the capping in Roebing. He fears the dirt will never be used and the area will be swampy forever.

Mayor Wilkie disagreed. He explained the main part of the steel plant is not being capped at this time. The EPA had to clean all the contaminated soil and cap the slag area. The main part of the site is not capped at this point. He believes it is a possibility that the soil in question could be used for the main plant area. A developer will have to cap the area. The EPA will not cap the area. Mayor Wilkie agreed it is good soil.

Council President Sandusky suggested that if there is an opportunity, Mr. Lubik should attend a DEP meeting to share his information.

Review: Best Practices Worksheet

Mayor Wilkie explained that over the past few years the Department of Community Affairs has required municipalities to show they are following certain practices. If certain criteria are not met, state aid is withheld. Mayor Wilkie explained it is money that was supposed to be given to the municipality, but was taken by the State of NJ and called "aid". It is actually tax that belongs to the town. Administrator Brook said it is the Energy Receipts Tax money that previously went to municipalities.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

Several years ago the State of NJ decided to collect it and distribute it, but it was siphoned from. The money returned to the municipalities was reduced significantly.

Administrator Brook said *Sandra Blacker, Chief Financial Officer*, would assist in the explanation of the *Best Practices worksheet*. He proceeded to do an overview and highlight some of the questions. The first question deals with shared services, Florence Township does have shared service agreements.

Administrator Brook explained that if there are too many negative answers to the point where it is excessive, the State of NJ will reduce the amount of aid provided. Many of the questions are common sense and reasonable for municipalities to do.

The township has been using shared services for many years before they were encouraged. He provided examples: Gas Services Agreement with the School Board of Education; Animal Control Services with Bordentown Township and sharing trucks with other towns when needed. He said the next deals with traffic safety policies. The township is extremely active when it comes to traffic safety. The new road program that is being undertaken contains a review by the police department. Safety is a top priority.

Another question deals with the State Comptroller's Report and the review of it. The report is dated June 25, 2013. A copy was provided to Mayor and Council. CFO Blacker and Administrator Brook have both reviewed it in depth. It deals with the control of excessive and improper payments for legal services. It stems from a review that was done in several municipalities. There were also some school districts that were part of the process. Florence Township doesn't have problems with legal services, the attorneys are contracted. They are appointed through the fair and open process. There are policies for the review of the bills. He believes the township meets the guidelines of the report.

The next issue is Pay to Play. Florence Township follows the State of NJ's regulations for Pay to Play. Florence does not have an ordinance that is more restrictive. There is a chance one will be put into place in the future. Sometimes an ordinance makes things more restrictive and makes it hard for government to run smoothly.

The township does keep an up to date website that includes legislation, the budget and audits in full. Some municipalities post a synopsis. The State of NJ is seeking transparency, and Florence Township strives to provide as much information as possible to the public in a timely manner.

Florence does not require its elected officials to attend courses. Administrator Brook thinks the State of NJ forgets that sometimes elected officials have other jobs and responsibilities. The Mayor and Council attend many conferences and seminars and all came out on their own time to attend a safety seminar. These are not approved for continuing education, but the elected officials are not required to be certified. There is no need for continuing education credits.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

The ordinances of the township are codified. Clerk Weiler is responsible for this and she makes sure the municipal code is updated on a regular basis. The collective bargaining agreements also stay at approximately two percent.

The next issue deals with the internal accounting control processes. CFO Blacker discusses the finances with Administrator Brook and Jack Maley, the Township Auditor. She provides reports regularly to Mayor and Council.

CFO Blacker explained that a purchase order begins with the initial need. It is approved by the department head. CFO Blacker certifies the funds and the department head will sign off on it and then it goes to Administrator Brook. With the new software there are now requisitions. There is an approval process for these also. The purchase order is reviewed by Administrator Brook then is put before Council for approval. A bill list is provided for approval twice a month. The authorization is in place and there are many eyes looking at each purchase. Every check is signed by the CFO and Clerk Weiler. She said there is good control in this area.

Administrator Brook said there are four signature locations on each purchase order that must be filled in every single time. He said there was an issue at the Water & Sewer Plant. The plant is being broken down in stages right now, to take care of a problem that will be a significant cost. If it is not addressed now, it will only get worse and the township could violate its permit. If this happens, there is the potential for heavy fines. The Director of Water and Sewer has notified the State of NJ that there is an issue with the plant and there will be significant work done. This is an example of something that was not planned for but has to be addressed.

There are checks and balances in place in the township. The Township Auditor reviews every office and inspects all of the accounting procedures.

Florence Township does try to obtain savings in the energy market. Florence was one of the first municipalities to form the New Jersey Sustainable Energy Meeting to pool resources for natural gas and electricity. Assistant Administrator Sahol is working on changing the lighting. This will reduce the number of fixtures and reduce the cost.

There is a Finance Committee that meets on a regular basis. There is constant monitoring of the state of the financial accounts for the township. For many years the Annual Financial Statement was prepared by the Auditor. Over the past several years the CFO has been required to be very involved with the preparation of the statement and the Annual Debt statement.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

There was discussion regarding a Procurement Card Program. There are no township credit cards except for a Home Depot card to buy supplies needed right away. CFO Blacker explained that the use of a Procurement Card for the township would not be a good idea because you have to go through a financial institution and there may be fees involved. The card would be like a credit card that would be distributed to certain individuals to use for supplies. The card has a limit. It can be set per transaction or per month. It is primarily for vendors that want payment right away. The cards are also used for on-line purchases. She said the township would not use the card very often. She did not believe it would be of value to the township. The cards cannot be used for meals, travel, lodging – no personal expenses.

Member Ostrander said there is an administrative cost for a purchase order, if an item is less than this cost, it might be beneficial to use the card. CFO Blacker said she will look into it and get more information on the use of cards. Administrator Brook explained that the township is not adverse to the idea and there have been discussions regarding the card and it may be a possibility in the future. CFO Blacker said the same internal controls would apply to the cards.

Administrator Brook said the grant revenue is reviewed regularly and the public is aware of surplus and there are reports generated regularly. Debt service is reviewed regularly and the township does look to the future regarding finances. There are regular reports provided to Mayor and Council.

The township regularly evaluates if there is a need for reassessment. Mayor and Council are kept up to date regarding tax appeals and market values.

He said the township does not pay for healthcare coverage for its elected officials. There is also a review of health claims monthly. At this point the township is in the State Health Benefits Program but that is changing in October. At that point the question on commission or flat rate will apply.

The township also submits its contracts to the Public Employment Relations Commission. They are submitted electronically and as hard copies. The public is welcome to information related to salaries and the information is posted on the website. Accurate records are kept regarding employee time off. The township does not have a policy to not pay employees for sick days accumulated after a certain date. There are caps in all contracts and personnel policy. There is also a limit to accrued vacation time. The governing body does approve accumulated absences in the budget. When someone retires, it is in the budget. The township does have light duty available for employees to be able to return to work more quickly. The municipality does refrain from supplementing temporary disability benefits.

Administrator Brook explained the last section of the checklist deals with what happened as a result of Superstorm Sandy. Some of the questions don't apply to Florence because the municipality is not in the type of location that is vulnerable to that kind of storm.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

The municipality does regularly review its emergency management plan. Phil Drangula, the Emergency Management Coordinator, reviews it on a regular basis. He always offers ways to make it better.

Administrator Brook said the township will receive all of the money it is due from the State of NJ this year for its answers to the checklist. It will be submitted electronically to the State.

Council President Sandusky thanked Administrator Brook and CFO Blacker for their review of the checklist.

Action

**Resolution No. 2013-183
Honoring Local Volunteer
Judy King**

Council President Sandusky said the honor is not a surprise and Mrs. King is being honored on Saturday, September 14, 2013 at St. Stephen's Church.

It was the MOTION of Lovenduski, seconded by Woolston to approve Resolution No. 2013-183.

Upon roll call Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Lovenduski, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None. Motion carried. Unanimous approval.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2013-18
AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP OF FLORENCE, IN THE COUNTY OF
BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY TO ENTER INTO A FINANCIAL AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP AND TURNPIKE CROSSINGS III URBAN
RENEWAL, L.L.C. FOR CERTAIN PROPERTY
WITHIN THE ROUTE 130 REDEVELOPMENT AREA
(2nd Reading) (Public Hearing & Adoption)**

It was the MOTION of Lovenduski, seconded by Ostrander to open the meeting to the public regarding Ordinance No. 2013-18.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

Mayor Wilkie said this is the third project that has been available to the township in the past year and a half. It is another part of the NFI project and is near the Subaru building. It will provide about 700 jobs. The tenant is relocating from another location in Burlington County and at least 100 of the jobs will be new. The building is about 220,000 square feet with the potential to expand. The company was approved two weeks ago by the EDA for a grant. There is Planning Board approval in place. The building should be completed by January. After it is built, the warehouse will be fitted for specialized distribution. They may want to expand in the future with another 49,000 square feet. It is a significant number of employees for the community. Administrator Brook said this means the development of other parcels on the Route 130 corridor. Mayor Wilkie said there is a minimal environmental impact. Vehicles coming in will be mostly cars and small vans for distribution. It is a very positive project.

No public comments. MOTION was made by Ostrander, seconded by Lovenduski to close the public hearing of Ordinance No. 2013-18. All ayes.

It was the MOTION of Baldorossi, seconded by Woolston to adopt Ordinance No. 2013-18.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

AYES: Baldorossi, Lovenduski, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None Motion carried. Unanimous approval.

Public Comments

Mr. Lubik said he forgot to mention that there are Eagles living near the water he discussed earlier. He said Eagles cannot live on what is there; there needs to be more water for the Eagles to be able to scoop up fish.

Bob Hatolovsky, 20 Third Avenue, said the entrance to town is an “eye sore”. He remembers when the area looked better and there was more of a view. He used to fish in the pond and there were many ducks at one time. He said it was beautiful. He would like to see it cleaned up.

Joseph Csik, 45 East Fifth Street, wanted to know if the Environmental Commission would be a part of the refurbishing of the pond. Mayor Wilkie said that during the process the Commission will be kept apprised of the situation.

Mr. Csik said the grass near the railroad tracks needs to be cut.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, it was the MOTION of Ostrander, seconded by Lovenduski, to close the public comments. All ayes – motion carried.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 09/11/13

Administrator Brook said Nook's Pour House submitted a request to hold an Oktoberfest event. It is a new business. Chief of Police Alvin Scully provided a lengthy report of concerns. The event was scheduled for October 5, 2013. Administrator Brook is not sure if the property owner was notified and does not know if the other businesses were consulted. He does not think the establishment is ready for an outdoor beer garden. Administrator Brook suggested it is not well thought-out. He suggested the establishment wait until next year. Mayor Wilkie suggested faxing the report to the establishment to give them the courtesy of being able to address Mayor and Council. He thinks that at this point it would not be approved. Administrator Brook suggested holding the event next year after the owners of the establishment meet with the Chief of Police to discuss safety issues and other concerns addressed in the Chief's report.

Mayor Wilkie said next week is **Back to School Night**, he and other Council Members will be attending but he thinks all of them should make it to the meeting on time.

9:08 PM MOTION by Ostrander; seconded by Woolston to adjourn. Roll call vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

9:08 PM: Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Joy M. Weiler, RMC/MMC
Township Clerk

/aek