

Florence Township Council Regular Session 2/1/23

Florence, New Jersey
February 1, 2023

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 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 8, 2023; published in the Burlington County Times on January 8, 2023, placed on the Township website and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 10, 2023.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

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

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Stephen Fazekas, Township Administrator; Thomas J. Hastie, Jr., Esq., Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk

Absent: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting of January 11, 2023
- Regular Meeting of January 18, 2023

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

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve the following correspondence.

- Municipal Treasurer's Cash Reports and Budget Reports for December 2022
- Treasurer's Bill List

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

None at this time.

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APPLICATIONS

- A. Social Affair Permit for Florence Township Education Association’s Night at the Races at the Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on February 11, 2023
- B. On-Premise Merchandise Raffle and On-Premise 50/50 for FTMHS Parent Organization from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on March 19, 2023 at the Florence Township Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling
- C. On-Premise Merchandise Raffle and On-Premise 50/50 for FTMHS Parent Organization from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on March 31, 2023 at the Florence Township Memorial High School, 1050 Cedar Lane, Florence Township

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Ostrander to approve the applications.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, stated that the Trenton Times published a list of towns that received money from the Federal Spending Bill and asked if we applied for any of those funds. Administrator Fazekas asked Mr. Kamienski to forward the article to him and he would look into it.

Seeing no one else 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. 2023-52
Appoint Traffic Engineer**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-53
Appoint Special Legal Counsel**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-54
Appoint Municipal Finance Consultant**

Mayor Wilkie explained that the Traffic Engineer and the Special Legal Counsel are for the NFI Land Use applications for properties on Florence Columbus Road. Litigation has been filed by NFI for one of the decisions and we expect additional litigation to be filed on the second application.

The Municipal Finance Consultant is the required by the state until the Treasurer gets her CFO license, she is currently waiting on her exam results now.

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It was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution Nos. 2023-52 through 2023-54.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-01

**Amending the Salary Schedule for the Township of Florence and
Implementing the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the
Township of Florence and the Communication Workers of America (CWA)
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing & Adopt 2/15/23)**

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-02

**Providing for the Creation and Certification of a New Township Tax Map
and GIS Mapping of the Township’s Stormwater Conveyance System
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing & Adopt 2/15/23)**

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-03

**Bond Ordinance for Park Improvements including
Wilkie Park Tennis Courts, Water Works Park Playground and
Roebing Park Fishing Pier
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing & Adopt 2/15/23)**

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Ordinance Nos. 2023-01 through 2023-03.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

Council Representative Marter asked about the tax mapping and whether that is something that we do every so many years, what prompts us to redo our tax maps and is the township mapping the same? Mayor Wilkie explained that the GIS is something that has been in discussion for years and this is the first time we will be doing that, right now they are not done by GIS. Administrator Fazekas explained that under Stormwater Management we have to have the MS4 report and the state is having us go to GIS mapping on all of our outfalls and inlets and that needs to be done for the permit by 2024. Both of these projects will be fully funded because we had cancelled some ordinances and now we have leftover funds to do them without incurring any debt to the town.

Council Representative Marter also asked about the improvements in the park and the addition of pickle ball courts and why that is not included and is it still on the table? Mayor Wilkie explained that pickle ball courts are in one of the layouts with the tennis courts. This ordinance will put the funding in place and the final designs will be shared. The survey results will be brought to Council on February 15th and

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the Park Planner will go through the results and it will be then made available to the public and the Recreation Committee at that time.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Council Representative Marter asked about the new bike path and if there is going to be any fencing or anything along there to contain the path so that no one can drive their car across it or is it finished now? Mayor Wilkie explained that there are still some things to be done that were not included in the initial contract with the paving company and the finishing touches are still being discussed with the Park Planner, the Engineer and the Shade Tree Commission.

Council Representative Marter mentioned that she is not in agreement with the fact that the community can no longer comment on or respond to the Florence Township Facebook page. She thinks that we are cutting off a voice that we had before and missing an opportunity by limiting the ability for someone to reach out and give feedback, whether positive or negative and is requesting that it be turned back on. She asked to have it on the record that she disagrees, that people should be able to comment on the Township Facebook page and that there was never a problem with it up until a few weeks ago.

Mayor Wilkie explained that the commenting was removed due to “flagging” and when he reached out to the township solicitor, he was advised to either remove all comments or remove no comments. Our mission is to protect the public and we aren’t permitted to screen comments and remove those that are inappropriate so, on the advice of Counsel, all commenting was deactivated.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie stated that he received notice that Bonduelle (ReadyPac) will be changing their operation in Florence Township and there will no longer be production activity here. They are consolidating all of their operations to Swedesboro and the Florence location will become a distribution center for New Jersey. This will affect about 300+ employees who are supposedly going to be offered jobs in Swedesboro but otherwise they will be unemployed. This represents about 25% of the revenue of the Water & Sewer Department so as we go through the budget process for 2023, we have to try and minimize the impact of the loss in revenue to the Water & Sewer budget. Mayor Wilkie stated that when he first took office, ReadyPac made up between 35-40% of the Water & Sewer Department budget, using our water to clean the vegetables. Over the years the usage had reduced to 25% and, in our budget, it is between \$500,000-800,000. \$800,000 is what we received this past year so we are going to have to find a way to replace that revenue. ReadyPac has been a part of our community for 20+ years.

Council Representative Marter asked if we have any numbers as to what that means from a truck standpoint? Mayor Wilkie explained that noticed had just been received that there could be additional traffic. This will have to be reviewed to see if it creates a violation of their site plan approvals. Council Representative Garganio stated that if all finished product is coming here to be distributed there would be more truck traffic.

Council Representative Marter asked about the 25% water usage, if we are not providing that water now will there be any kind of savings because it is water going out? Mayor Wilkie stated that the savings will most likely not be substantial and counteract 25% but it will be looked into during the budget process.

Division of Law

Township Solicitor Thomas Hastie stated that if Council Representative Marter would like to discuss the Facebook page and his reasoning he would be happy to discuss with her.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Dave Lebak, Water & Sewer Updates –

Water and Sewer Superintendent David Lebak explained that a letter went out to residents regarding the updated PFOA status. Overall, he said he thinks people have been very understanding because we already went through the really rough part of it in the fall with the first introduction of what this is and what we are dealing with. He thinks it softens the blow to be able to say that the water is in compliance now. The only problem that remains is the running average so we have to drop off the first quarter one and pick up a second quarter one this year and hopefully that will bring us into overall compliance. From October until now the numbers are in the single digits which is very good for us.

Mr. Lebak stated that his major concern was the way the letter was written as it sends a mixed message because it states that we are out of compliance. The DEP essentially writes the letter and we went back and forth with them and suggested changes and they marked it up and sent it back with a chart to show progression, which is currently below the .014 limit at .0078, which is almost half and is very good. Most of that news is being positively received but there are still people that have concerns, which is understandable as they want to protect themselves and their families.

Council Representative Garganio asked which wells were taken offline and if that is one of the ones that we were looking to redo? Mr. Lebak answered that Well #3 was taken off line and we have to figure out if it can be fixed, treated or if it is going to be deserted. Administrator Fazekas stated that we are looking at several options with the Water and Sewer Engineer and that will be part of what will be discussed after we go through the letter and that there are several options being explored.

Council Representative Garganio asked, with ReadyPac going offline at this point and one well being off, do we have any issues and are we going to have a problem with the wells that we do have? Mr. Lebak said that not having that amount of flow draw in the system from both a process standpoint and an allocation standpoint will help us because we'll have more capacity so, as the Mayor indicated, if we had a big user that wanted to come to town we would certainly want to embrace that. When we are pushed harder to the limit in the summer, we go from roughly 1.6 mgd (million gallons per day) to upwards of 2.5 mgd due to all of the irrigation demand. With that kind of increase you are calling for more wells especially during peak periods and with some of that load taken off we won't call on as many wells which makes it easier for us to operate. We shuffle the wells in the order that they run. Mr. Lebak stated that he thinks we will be fine in the summer even with Well #3 being offline.

Administrator Fazekas stated the he had a virtual meeting with NJDEP regarding the letter that was just mailed out and advising them of how we are going to correct this issue long term. Representatives from Florence Township visited Moorestown Township to tour a PFOA treatment facility recently constructed. Our Water & Sewer Engineer will be designing a similar treatment facility to be located adjacent to our water plant at 6th and Summer Streets. We are aiming to reduce the level of PFOA to as low as possible as the NJDEP may reduce the allowable limit in the future. Once the concept plan is devised it will be brought to Council for review and approval.

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Mr. Lebak explained that there are a couple of main types of products that are used on the market and both have been very successful in removing PFOAs from drinking water. And although they won't guarantee zero they will pretty much get you to zero. Mr. Lebak stated that he had visited the facilities in Moorestown and he plans to visit another one in Deptford, both are experiencing really good results. There are a lot of towns that are having this problem. While there is still no national standard, the EPA recommends 70 parts per trillion and the state is at 14 parts per billion as a recommendation. Each year they kick it down a little but the EPA is going to come out with a federal guideline that may be stricter so we are trying to make sure we get the numbers as low as we can, we don't want to just be under 14.

Mr. Lebak stated that this year the EPA set out to do a fifth round of unregulated contaminate monitoring and these are things they want to look for to see if they need to develop regulations. So PFOAs came out because we were part of the ECMR in 2015. They found the PFOAs nationwide and the EPA said they need to develop a regulation and they were moving to do that. In 2022 the NJDEP just started to move forward and are going to implement 14 parts per billion. Now there are 29 more type of chemicals that they want to look for. At some point, if they are seeing that over the next few years, they'll start to develop regulations for those as well. There will always be immerging contaminates because science and testing is getting better so that is going to be something we are always going to have to react to and be ahead of. He thinks this type of treatment has additional benefits of removing some of these additional chemicals as well.

Administrator Fazekas has already reached out to Senator Menendez and Congressman Kim's office requesting what assistance we can get and which grant funds. He thinks Moorestown paid 12 Million for their single well, which is about 2000 gpm. We are bigger than that with our combined wells. Council President Garganio said that you would hope that with the federal government coming in and changing the regulations and making it a national regulation there would be some sort of funding that would follow.

Administrator Fazekas explained that last year we discussed lead tails and the connection into our main. We looked into it and, during the budget schedule, we will be rethinking that since getting the news about Bonduelle. Administrator Fazekas stated the he and Mr. Lebak discussed options for replacing the lead tails. It was determined that rather than hire an outside company, it would of greater benefit to hire new employees in the Water & Sewer Department to do this work. It will take approximately eight years to replace all of the lead tails. These employees will also be cross trained in all aspects of the Water & Sewer duties. There are several current Water and Sewer employees who will be retiring within those eight years. This will allow us to have fully trained staff ready to take the place of those retiring.

Council Representative Marter stated that when the letters reached the residents the comments/posts started online but they were actually residents defending the .0078 because we were able to put the actual numbers on over the quarter and it really showed that it was a huge difference. Then, if we keep that number and the high numbers start dropping off those quarters, it's just going to get better. Mr. Lebak agreed and said that we have very knowledgeable people and he has had some good conversations with residents who really understand what we are doing. He explains that the NJDEP is the authority driving the bus and we are doing what we have to do at this point. He hopes that everyone trusts the process.

NEW BUSINESS

Council Representative Marter recognized and acknowledged Captain Albert Jacoby with regards to assisting the Woodbury Police Department with a situation on his day off. She wanted it on the record that Council is proud of Captain Jacoby and his heroics. Mayor Wilkie added that Captain Jacoby is also a firefighter and always goes above and beyond and was nationally recognized in 2013 in a house fire where he put his life on the line.

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BOARD OF HEALTH

None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Bryan Hewitt, 1080 Grove Street, stated that the actual problem regarding commenting on the Township Facebook page was that people could not comment at all and it was not a filtering issue.

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

ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION

Resolution 2023-51 Resolution Authorizing the Mayor, Township Council and Support Staff to meet on Closed Session and Authorizing the Exclusion of the Public from that Portion of the Meeting Dealing with Specific Issues Requiring Non-Public Discussions:

Contract Negotiations – Florence Township School District

It was a Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:43 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:02 p.m. on a Motion by Marter, seconded by Baldorossi. Voice Vote – All Ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Ostrander seconded by Haas to Adjourn. Voice vote – All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js