

## **Florence Township Council Executive Session 2/8/23**

Florence, New Jersey  
February 8, 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 Vice President Haas at 7:00 p.m. Council Vice President Haas 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, Kristin Marter, Paul Ostrander

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: Bruce Garganio

### **FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES OF PUBLIC COMMENT**

Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a Motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Marter to close the public comment portion. Voice Vote – All Ayes.

### **BUSINESS**

#### A. Mark Remsa – Updated Mapping and Plan Implementation Agenda

Mark Remsa spoke about the Plan Endorsement process and explained that the County helped the original riverfront towns to restart plan endorsement over a year ago. Florence Township is getting close to its actual plan endorsement and they are anticipating that happening next month. There are a couple of things that have to happen before we qualify for Plan Endorsement.

One of the first things is the state policy map which Mayor Wilkie pulled up on the screen for everyone to view. Mr. Remsa explained the policy map the State had prepared and noted that, other than tidying it up, there were no significant changes in the map since the mid-1990's. The two significant changes were the inclusion of the residential area and the Roebbling Steel Mill.

The second part of what is involved with the Plan Endorsement is the Plan Implementation Agenda, or PIA which basically outlines the planning tasks that are required. A lot of this has been done already with the updating the Master Plan and creating a vision for the town. The interesting thing about the PIA is a lot of the tasks that we are in the process of putting together will be submitted in an application to Sustainable Jersey. By doing all of those Sustainable Jersey items, you are also going to be covering the PIA items in your tasks.

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A resolution is prepared in standard language that the State wants municipalities to adopt prior to going to the State Planning Board in March sometime if they are going to pursue the plan endorsement process. Mayor Wilkie stated that he hopes Council can agree to approve them tonight, otherwise we will have to draft a letter stating that Council has reviewed them and will be looking at them in the future.

Council Representative Marter asked if any of the things that we are doing for the project will help with additional points for the Environmental Commission? Mr. Remsa explained that there is a whole lot of things in that plan implementation agenda. He is working with the Environmental Commission and has identified 150 points. He was originally looking at February but there are some new resolutions that council will be asked to approve so we are actually looking at May.

Mr. Remsa said that there is so much overlap between the PIA and Sustainable Jersey that both will be able to be accomplished at the same time. There are a lot of things that are overlapping.

Mayor Wilkie explained some of the activities that Mr. Remsa took on last year to include the Master Plan, the Economic Development Committee and outlining some projects we are working on there, the work with the steel plant, he drafted the letter that was sent off last week to the Commissioner on the Florence-Columbus Road/Route 130 improvements, he is working with the River Road connector, and he has continued to work with the Delaware County Regional Planning when it comes to the steel plant.

Mr. Remsa explained that as part of the Master Plan a visioning document was created and we put out a survey to the residents of the township which yielded a very good response rate from the residents. Almost 500 people responded and that helped craft your vision which is going to get credit for Sustainable Jersey and also helped form the new Master Plan for at least the next ten years or so.

He explained that the Economic Development Committee developed a template for encouraging people to support local business with an outreach effort to local businesses and creating spotlights that are going to appear on the website. There were 4 or 5 businesses completed at the end of last year. The goal is to double or triple that and compile a nice list of all of the local businesses so the people in town can view that list on the website and find out who does what, what their hours are, what their website is, etc. and, through social media, we can highlight or spotlight the businesses periodically to help promote local businesses. This is another sustainable item that you will get credit for.

Mr. Remsa stated that he worked with Ted Lovenduski to inventory vacant commercial properties in Florence and Roebing and then along Route 130, which is a little bit more complicated. The goal is not only to have an inventory but also have some guide incentive because some of these areas may qualify for redevelopment and you may want to create special zoning to encourage the revitalization of pockets of areas in different parts of town.

Regarding the Roebing Steel Mill RFQ/RFP Mr. Remsa said that maybe some of the developers started to get cold feet with the residential component and, looking at older remediation data and costs that were in EPA documents, they were possibly scared of capping and maintenance costs. He and Administrator Fazekas are going to do an exit survey and reach out to these developers with a questionnaire to help get a better understanding of what caused them to stop the process.

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The other thing they are planning to do is to reach out to the EPA and talk about refreshing all of that information about the capping and the costs involved. The original capping costs that are on the website for EPA include the entire 200+ acre site. The slag area has been redeveloped, the museum and the area around it is done along with the light rail station so there are all of these successes which means the remaining capping is going to be reduced. It would probably be helpful to get that information and then work with the EPA so we can get that back out there and, if you choose to do a new RFQ/RFP, we will be armed with some more up-to-date information.

Mr. Remsa stated that the EPA always wants more controls and a thicker cap for residential. There is so much potential there for the mixed-use development, commercial and other things and we want to get a better handle on that so when we go back out not only are we all better informed but the developers can be better informed as well.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is very excited to be working with the town because they are doing a higher-level market analysis for this site. They are gathering data and information that is important for understanding the market for residential, commercial, commercial retail and industrial and they are going to do a little more homework on the dependent uses like marina and continue to work on that. The objective is to provide Council with an analysis so that you are well-informed when you are doing the planning for the future of that property and it will help the developers as well. They are including some case studies of other places around New Jersey as well as the Northeast that have dealt with waterfront developments and some contamination and have successful progress.

Mr. Remsa stated that with Florence-Columbus Road and Route 130, we continue to bang our head against the wall with NJDOT. Preliminary Engineering is the next important step and Mayor Wilkie has been pressing the State and just recently sent a letter to the Commissioner about getting this moving. This is a very important stage because it is where all of the heavy-duty engineering is done and also where you figure out what the cost will be and it sets the stage for all of the construction and the final design, basically getting it buttoned up for bid documents and traffic control.

Council Representative Ostrander stated that the Commissioner seems very interested in looking into this project. She stated that there are 300 projects in design right now and they are averaging up to 3 years but she said that she will take a look at it. Mr. Remsa said we need to get it onto the radar and get it on the Transportation Improvement Program to get the funding for the preliminary engineering. That is the next key step.

The River Road connector to Daniels Way has gotten a lot of traction now that the County is basically taking it over and pushing forward with the design. Mr. Remsa states that they just got their permissions to go on properties to do their survey so things are moving forward now for that connector road and that is a vital part of the overall intention of getting trucks off of Delaware Avenue/Front Street.

The other thing that the DVRPC is looking at is a seasonal ferry service. The DVRPC produced a document but it was not as conclusive as he hoped. It stated that if there is going to be a ferry service it most likely would be a shorter ferry service operating down in the Philadelphia/Camden area because that is where the attractions are. It is not going to be viable to go all the way up to Bordentown City or even Trenton because it is probably too costly and there are too many obstacles. According to their study, there is a lot more opportunity at the Camden and Philadelphia waterfronts. Burlington City may be the furthest reach and concluded that more study is needed. He is not so excited about it because he thinks it may not be able to be economically viable.

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Mayor Wilkie asked Council if they are amenable with moving forward with the resolutions on the agenda. Council agreed.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mayor Wilkie stated that there are two more vacancies on the Recreation Committee and he hopes to have names to Council in March. Also, a new resident on Third Avenue asked for lines to be put in for parking. He said he will respond explaining that we do not put the lines in because you actually lose spaces and Council will get a copy of that correspondence.

**ACTION**

**RESOLUTIONS**

- A. 2023-55, Acceptance and Implementation Agenda and Proposed Mapping for NJ State Planning Commission Plan Endorsement
- B. 2023-56, Sustainable Land Use Pledge Made to Sustainable Jersey by the Township of Florence and Authorization to take Actions to Fulfill Pledge

It was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution No. 2023-55 and 2023-56.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion of Marter seconded by Baldorossi to Adjourn. Voice vote – All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC  
Township Clerk  
/js