

**Florence Township Council Regular Session 3/15/23**

Florence, New Jersey  
March 15, 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, Bruce Garganio, 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

Absent: None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Regular Session of March 1, 2023
- Executive Session of March 8, 2023
- Closed Sessions of March 1, 2023 and March 8, 2023

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

**FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE**

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

- Tax Collector’s Water & Sewer Monthly Report for January 2023
- Municipal Treasurer’s Monthly Cash Reports and Budget Reports for January 2023
- Township Clerk’s Monthly Report for February 2023
- Court Administrator’s Monthly Report for February 2023
- Tax Collector’s Monthly Tax Report for February 2023
- Tax Collector’s Monthly Water & Sewer Report for February 2023
- 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

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**REGULAR CORRSPONDENCE**

Motion of Ostrander seconded by Baldorossi to approve the following correspondence. Voice vote – All ayes.

- A. Memo from Tax Collector regarding the 2023 Tax Sale scheduled for August 31, 2023 at 9 a.m.
- B. Letter from Willitts-Hogan-Tonne American Legion Auxiliary regarding 2023 New Jersey Girl’s State
- C. Police Chief’s Monthly Report for February 2023

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**APPLICATIONS**

None at this time.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, mentioned that he has already noticed mosquitoes in and around his neighborhood and asked if there are any plans to spray for mosquitos. He noticed that the basin behind his home never fully drains. Administrator Fazekas explained that he had just signed off with the Burlington County Mosquito Commission asking them to spray in our area and he will send a separate email asking them to make sure they spray in that specific area. Mayor Wilkie also mentioned that the basin is supposed to be dry basin and that is something that will have to be taken care of. Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, it was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

**RESOLUTIONS**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-64  
Introduce 2023 Municipal Budget**

Mayor Wilkie highlighted a few key points in the budget for the public. He explained that there was a one & one-half cents (.015) increase to the Municipal Tax Rate being proposed, while Water and Sewer rates remained the same. Our Water and Sewer rate is still the lowest in the area and we don’t charge for disposal whereas others do. Funding in the budget includes everything that had been previously included in addition to a third School Resource Officer (SRO). We also anticipate an increase in the trash collection fees as the current 5 year contract expires in November of 2023. Neighboring municipalities have seen a marked increase in fees in their trash collection contracts.

Council Representative Ostrander asked if we can come up with a list of items that we can reduce so that we can get to a zero cent increase and what we would need to take out of the budget in order to achieve this? Administrator Fazekas explained that we would need to cut or find revenue for about roughly \$200,000.

Council Representative Marter asked why there was such a big jump in the 2023 preliminary valuation? The anticipated total 2023 increase in property values is \$41,653,200 and in 2022 it was only \$19,549,100.

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Administrator Fazekas explained that the expansion of 270 Daniels Way went from a 700,000 square foot warehouse up to a 1 million square foot warehouse and there are no PILOTs for that. There is also the new building that went up at 290 Daniels Way. He agreed to meet with Council Representative Marter to discuss this in more detail.

Council President Garganio asked about surplus. Administrator Fazekas explained that the surplus from last year in the general budget at the end of 2022 was \$2,277,451, which was less than the year before, but we used \$1,875,000 for our revenue and that is the amount used this year. Council President Garganio then asked about the increase in ratables or what did our ratables do this year, what is our overall from last year's budget to what we are projecting? Administrator Fazekas said the projection is just over \$21 million. Council President Garganio asked what the total dollar amount of our ratable base is? Township Auditor Matt Holman said it is \$1,366,000,000 at this point and last year was \$1,294,000,000. He explained that, because the percent of the assessed value did not rise at the same level, the jump is clearly because of the new ratables that are in town.

Administrator Fazekas explained that last year the assessed value of the average home was \$220,488 and this year the average home assessment is \$221,516 so it went up by a little over \$1,100. Mr. Holman added that a small percent of that jump is because of that jump in assessed value. Council President Garganio asked with the additional ratables that we have assessed at current values, what is the additional income compared to last year from what we would have collected? How many new dollars are we seeing because of the increase in ratables? Mr. Holman explained the amount last year was \$129,302.01 and this year it is \$133,000 so roughly the increase is about \$4,000 per penny just in the change of ratables. Council President Garganio asked Mr. Holman to get him a number of what new dollars we have coming in plus what our increase is and what they are overall. Mr. Holman agreed to get that information to Council.

Council Representative Marter asked how the anticipated improvements for the police department are incorporated into the 2023 budget. Administrator Fazekas explained that back at the end of last year we cancelled out a line of open ordinances and we were able to bring that money back in to that account. Now we don't need as much into the tax base this year because we will use that money to help offset any of the percentages we have to put toward bonding ordinances.

Council President Garganio congratulated the staff on the tax collection number 99.02% in collections. He said it is an incredible number and guarantees the money that is owed to the community and the residents is all coming in. Monies would always have to be added in to pay the schools and now with that number it is much different and is definitely a better way to run a budget.

Adoption of the Budget will be on April 19, 2023.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution No. 2023-64.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

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**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-65  
Authorize Refunds of Certain Tax Overpayments**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-66  
Approve Final Change Order No. 1 and Final Payment No. 6 Potts Mill Road Phase II**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-67  
Approve Final Change Order No. 1 and Final Payment No. 4 Potts Mill Road Phase III**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-68  
Authorize Electronic Tax Sale**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-69  
Authorize Fee for Mailing Tax Sale Notices**

In reference to Resolution 2023-69, Council Representative Marter asked about the \$10 mailing fee for residents that are behind on their taxes. She asked if there was a way to collect that fee if they don't pay it so we don't end up with a negative line item in our budget. Council President Garganio stated that it gets tacked on to their overall bill and will be included in the sale.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Resolution Nos. 2023-65 through 2023-69.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**ORDINANCES**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-04  
Amending & Supplementing Chapter 2 of the Township Code to Add Additional Fees  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt)**

Council President Garganio opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to comment, a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2023-04.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-05  
Amending & Supplementing Chapter 126 of the Township Code to  
Increase Security Deposits  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt)**

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Council President Garganio opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to comment, a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2023-05.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-06**  
**Amending & Supplementing Chapter 116 of the Township Code to**  
**Add Article IV Entitled “Lead Based Paint Inspections”**  
**(2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt)**

Council President Garganio opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to comment, a Motion of Haas, seconded by Baldorossi to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Ordinance No. 2023-06.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-07**  
**Amending & Supplementing Chapter 116 of the Township Code to**  
**Add Article V Entitled “Vacant Property Registration Process”**  
**(2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt)**

Council President Garganio opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to comment, a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to close the public comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2023-07.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS**

Council Representative Marter stated that she attended the senior meeting and one of the residents requested information on the old railroad station that sits on Railroad Avenue and voiced concerns about

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it being knocked down and asked if it will be restored because of the history. Mayor Wilkie explained that it is privately owned.

Council Representative Marter also stated that she spoke with Ben Giovanni with Andy Kim's team and they discussed the community grants and she asked him about getting some sort of grant to help with water filtration systems and he said that there may be monies available for that. He also said that the state may have monies for the lead pipe situation we may be facing and that he will forward the name of a contact at the state that she will pass along so that we can reach out to see what is available to help when all of that comes to fruition.

Council Representative Haas stated that the Economic Committee meeting was held on March 7<sup>th</sup> and they spoke about the business highlighted in December and that they have 4 or 5 more coming out over the next month. The numbers for the 2022 PILOTs are in the process of being updated. They also reviewed the Main Street bank and parking options and the committee was all for it. He thanked the Police Department and the School District, they held an antibullying seminar for the parents at Riverfront on March 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Mayor**

Mayor Wilkie stated that the contract with the carnival company has been signed and the carnival is scheduled for Wednesday May 31<sup>st</sup> through Saturday June 3<sup>rd</sup> at Nyikita field. An Easter Egg Hunt will be hosted by Boyd's Pharmacy and the Fire company on April 1<sup>st</sup> at Wilkie Park at 10am.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### A. Waterworks Playground Design

Mayor Wilkie explained that the plans for the playground were sent out for comments. He wanted Council to take a look at the plans and give feedback and ask questions of the planners.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### A. No Left Turn Signage – Front and Union Streets

Council Representative Haas stated that it was brought up that when people try to make a left turn at the intersection of Union and Front Streets it is a blind turn because of the cars parked there. He asked about getting a no left turn sign there. Administrator Fazekas explained that he spoke to the township engineer regarding that but that is access off of a county road so that will have to be addressed.

#### B. Parking in Roebing

In regards to the bank and the parking lot in Roebing where the post office is, Council Representative Haas said the question was brought up regarding adding parking to the islands again. At the time Council discussed this previously, we were only talking about the center piece on Fifth Avenue but was Second to Fourth Avenue considered along with Sixth to Seventh Avenues and is this something Council would like to entertain again?

Council Representative Marter mentioned that when it was originally discussed, it was mentioned that parking there would take away from the aesthetic. Mayor Wilkie stated that when Fourth and Fifth Avenues were discussed he mentioned that would be something to look into the next time paving was being done. The paving was only occurring on Main Street from Fifth to Second. He stated that he believes the best option is relocating the post office, get an investor that will redevelop the bank and as

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part of that project they install a parking lot where the post office is currently located. Garganio stated that he agrees with the aesthetic of the village and he would rather see if we can find a way to swing a deal with the post office and open that up as a parking lot. If you change the character of that part of town you will never get it back.

C. Bike Share Program

Council Representative Haas stated that this was brought up at the Recreation Committee. They have this program in the cities where you pay to get the bike out and then drop it off at another location. He is asking if that could be considered at/for the train station.

**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, asked if anyone was familiar with what the lease terms are with the post office and are they leasing it or do they own it? Mayor Wilkie stated that it is owned and that there are no deliveries coming out of there so they don't need such a large building. Council President Garganio asked to have the Tax Assessor look into the value of the building.

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion of Ostrander seconded by Marter to Adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC  
Township Clerk  
/js