

Florence Township Council Regular Session 6/21/23

Florence, New Jersey
June 21, 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: Nicholas Haas, Kristin Marter, Paul Ostrander

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie; Thomas J. Hastie, Jr., Esq., Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Acting Administrator/Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Clerk; Ted Lovenduski, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Frank Baldorossi, Bruce Garganio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session of May 17, 2023
- Closed Session of June 7, 2023
- Regular Session of June 7, 2023

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

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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

- Tax Collector's Monthly Report May 2023
- Water & Sewer Monthly Report May 2023
- Court Administrator's Monthly Report May 2023
- Treasurer's Bill List

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Haas, Marter, Ostrander
- NOES: None
- ABSENT: Baldorossi, Garganio

Unanimous vote – Motion carried

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REGULAR CORRSPONDENCE

- A. 2023 Tax Sale Rescheduled
- B. Request to Extend Sunday Alcoholic Beverage Sales Hours

Council Representative Ostrander stated that he would like to table the request to extend alcoholic beverage sales hours to a later meeting so that Council could have a discussion about a more reasonable start time. Council Representative Marter explained that the reason they want to extend the hours is so they can start serving brunch. She stated that she would not be opposed to allow a 10:00 a.m. start time. Council Vice President Haas agreed to table this to next meeting to get a full vote of Council. Mayor Wilkie asked if we would like to survey surrounding towns to see what their current guidelines are. Council agreed it would be worth getting some feedback before making a decision.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to receive and file Correspondence A and to table Correspondence B until the July 5th meeting. Voice vote – All ayes.

APPLICATIONS

- A. Renew Transient Merchant License for Big Sid's Southern Cuisine

Motion of Marter, seconded by Ostrander to approve the application. Voice vote – All ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Patti DiMassa, 1039 Cedar Lane, voiced concern about the path lighting next to her property. They thought this was resolved back in 2020 and she was surprised when all of the lights were back on. Her husband planted the trees to help shield the light because they didn't know if this was ever going to get shut off or modified. She stated that they love the lights, the aesthetics are beautiful but the light bulbs are too bright and, in the back of their home it is intrusive. They have an open concept home and there is a big window in the back to the side where the path is and that parcel is elevated about 10 feet because of the slope so the light comes right in their home. She uses that path in the mornings and evenings and she stated that it is rarely used by any residents.

Ms. DiMassa stated that they were originally told that those lights were going to be ground lighting. She said that the lights on 5th Avenue are not as bright, they are high pressure sodium lights vs. the LEDs. Ms. DiMassa stated that they just want a compromise, they do not care that the lights are there but they are affecting the quality of their lives and she is asking for a resolution. She stated that it had been previously resolved by leaving the lights on each end on and turning off the lights in the center and even then it is bright and intrusive. She invited Council to come and see how bright it is at her house.

Mayor Wilkie stated that the lights were turned back on to see how they are now that the trees have grown, Council wanted to see what that looked like. At some point Council has to make a final decision. It is something that, whether they are on or not, we still have to pay. When the presentation was made in 2018/2019 we were all in agreement and now there is nothing we can do about it or it will cost taxpayers more money to try and correct the problem.

Council Vice President Haas asked if we could get the original construction drawings. Ted Lovenduski said that Public Service would not give us that information but he would try again.

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Council Representative Ostrander stated that there are lighting consultants that are experts in lights and they will come out and look at what is there and probably look at exactly what the model is and if we explained that we need something with a lot less lumens, they could specify a new head for the light so we can be proactive, find the solution and go to Public Service with that.

Ms. DiMassa thanked Council for their time and efforts. Council Representative Marter asked if there is anything that can be done in the meantime. Mr. Lovenduski stated that we can have the lights turned back off.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, thanked Mayor Wilkie for the email that the Columbus Road project is still awaiting funding despite the fact that we sent a letter to the NJ Transportation Department in February with no response. Further, he stated that he appreciates the mayor's efforts to add a section titled "Columbus Road Project" to the Florence website which would give the residents of Florence a periodic update about the project status. Mayor Wilkie explained that Mr. Kamienski emailed him last week and asked about the status on what was going on with Florence-Columbus Road and Route 130. He shared the letter that Council Representative Ostrander hand delivered in February and explained that we had gotten no response. Mr. Kamienski suggested we put it on the website.

Scott Carge, 501 West Second Street, Pastor of Riverside Chapel, stated that Marty Eckert has been his contact for the past few years and he had advised him to come to the meeting tonight regarding this year's events in the Wilkie Park that they have been planning. Mayor Wilkie asked Pastor Carge to come into the township offices and meet with the township clerk to go over the requirements for using the parks for events and fill out the application for the use of a park.

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

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-127
Authorize Filing a Municipal Alliance Grant

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-128
Requesting Permission for the Dedication by Rider for Shade Tree Trust

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-129
Authorize Refund FAAD Park Permit Fee-Event Cancelled

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-130
Support Resolution of Dimension Renewable Energy Community Solar Projects

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-131
Municipal Aid Railroad Avenue Improvements

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-132
Municipal Aid Broad Street Improvements

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-133
ABC Renewal – JJC Restaurant Group dba B'Unos

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**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-134
Cancel Water & Sewer Payment Plan**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-135
Authorize Purchase of 2023 Chevrolet Tahoe 9C1 Patrol with K9 Package**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-136
Partial Payment No. 4 2022 Local Road Program, Earle Asphalt**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-137
Authorize Filing a Municipal Alliance Grant**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-138
Chapter 159, DMHAS Youth Leadership Grant**

Mayor Wilkie asked Council to consider pulling Resolution No. 2023-131 for Railroad Avenue. Broad Street needs to be the priority. The tenant on Railroad Avenue is leaving and some other changes are going on and improvements to that should be postponed until there is a commitment from the developer or the property owner. It has been over 30 years since Broad Street was done and it will take a few phases to get through. Council agreed to pull Resolution 2023-131 and not act on it.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Resolution Nos. 2023-127 through 2023-130 and Nos. 2023-132 through 2023-138.

Council Representative Marter asked for a further explanation of the Shade Tree Trust. Clerk Erlston explained that we are accepting donations for the Shade Tree Commission to plant trees in memory of loved ones and we have to establish a trust fund to put those donations into, which will be used for this purpose.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCES

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-15
Authorizing a Short-Term Lease Agreement with PSEG to Allow Installation of a Mobile
Substation on Township Owned Property at 2063 Bustleton Road (Block 160.01, Lot 19)
(2nd Read, Public Hearing & Adoption)**

Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to close the public hearing.

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Motion of Marter, seconded by Ostrander to approve Ordinance No. 2023-15.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Council Representative Marter mentioned that she had a resident call regarding the scoreboards at the old Burlington County Community College that are not being used and asked if we had a use for them and who we could contact to find out if that is something that might want to be donated. Mayor Wilkie stated that the only field that he can think that does not have a scoreboard is field hockey. It has been at least 10+ years since that scoreboard has probably been used and technology has changed so it may not even be a possibility for us. There may be a need at the high school and then that should be passed on to the Board of Education but the first step would be to find out if it is even available.

Council Representative Marter also mentioned that Congressman Kim wants to have a round table concerning warehouses and truck traffic and they reached out to her to see if we can have it here. It is scheduled for Monday, June 26th at 3:00 p.m. and it is including mayors from five different municipalities and also the members of the NJ League and Environmental Voters.

Council Representative Marter had someone call her about political signs and in the code it states that political signs need to be removed within 7 days of the election and then they can't be posted prior to 30 days of an upcoming election. She saw 4 signs just out riding her bike and we are 15 days out now. She asked to have the signs removed.

Solicitor Hastie explained that the code section she was referring to was at the state level and is not applicable to Florence Township. It is a Land Use element for the state regulatory body that has control over what was formerly Fort Monmouth. And within that zoning code they put in a section on signage that includes standalone signs, retail signs, etc. and within that section they have this code on political signs, but again, it is only applicable to Fort Monmouth.

Council Representative Marter asked what can be done in Florence Township because in 2015 when Council Representative Baldorossi was running for Mayor, he was told that he had to take his signs down in 3 days. Now we are 2 weeks out from the Primary election and we are not starting another election for months so do we need to put an ordinance in place? It is her understanding that the state was pushing it back to the town to make their own ordinance. She stated that maybe we should look at other towns to see what their ordinances reflect. Solicitor Hastie said there were towns in Burlington County until 2002 or so that prohibited signs because they thought they were tacky and the ACLU said they could not prohibit them because it is freedom of speech. About a year or two ago there were signs regarding our current President that people were choosing to display on their houses using offensive language and people were rightfully complaining and towns tried to enforce and have them taken down but the ACLU said no. So, most towns have abandoned trying to enforce these things. The township can adopt an ordinance but the question is whether or not it will be upheld. It violates the First Amendment rights and, if it is on private property, it is up to the resident. If Council decided to do so we can draft an ordinance and regulate certain things. Council Vice President Haas asked to have a draft ordinance put together and take a look at it at the next meeting and that it can't hurt to take a look at it.

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REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie stated that the Concert in the Park will be in the Roebling Park on Thursday June 29th. Patriotic Day is being planning for July 8th. Our high school band is the only band participating this year and if anyone knows of any other marching bands please reach out because we are having difficulty finding bands. He stated that Cherry Hill cancelled their July 4th celebration because of lack of local participation and even though we have a good semblance of participation, we only have the one band at this point.

Administrator

Acting Administrator Erlston stated that Mark Remsa sent an email regarding the Sustainable Jersey comments and said that Council will need to approve a current resolution creating the Green Team. We had appointed a Green Team back in 2012, but we need to do a current resolution and with Council's approval that resolution will be ready for the July 5th meeting. Mayor Wilkie explained that the Environmental Commission has been trying to make this happen for a number of years. Mr. Remsa was brought on and he and Environmental Commissioner Deepah Patel submitted everything. Sustainable Jersey requested that some additional items be submitted. This is the one thing that Council can take care of and there are some other things that Mr. Remsa is going to be working through so we can get the Sustainable Jersey Certification. It is something that Paul Ordog, one of the senior members of the Environmental Commission has been trying to get for years.

Mayor Wilkie stated that when he first took office there had been a Green Team but it really wasn't doing anything. In 2012 there was a special committee for the FLR Superfund, there was one for the County Landfill, something for the Steel Plant and all of these different subcommittees so we consolidated all the subcommittees and incorporated them to the Environmental Commission. Then we created the Green Team within the Environmental Commission. With more bodies, if they decide to add new people that aren't members of the Environmental Commission but become part of the Green Team, then they don't have to add the Environmental Commission meeting every month, they can just have a Green Team meeting. These meetings can include more people because it is supposed to have representations of all of the different agencies and different activities within the community. We should hopefully receive the certification in July and, as part of Reorganization, one of our resolutions should just reiterate the Green Team is part of the Environmental Commission.

Council Representative Marter explained that by being certified as a Sustainable Jersey town we have the opportunity to get grants which will allow us to provide more services to the community.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

BOARD OF HEALTH

None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting to the public. Seeing no one 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 2023-139 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:
Litigation – NFI & Turnpike Crossing VII

It was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:55 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:09 p.m. on a Motion by Ostrander, seconded by Marter. Voice Vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Haas seconded by Marter to adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js