

Florence Township Council Executive Session 4/12/2023

Florence, New Jersey
April 12, 2023

The Florence Township Council held an executive session 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. followed by 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, 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

FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

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

BUSINESS

A. Water and Sewer Rate Comparison

Mayor Wilkie explained water and sewer rate comparisons stating that Florence has been the lowest consistently over the last number of years compared to rates in other municipalities in the area. This information will be included with the bills that go out in the future and will be posted on the website. Council President Garganio stated that it is nice to see the savings for the community.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 4/12/2023

B. Review of PILOTS

Mayor Wilkie explained that in January of 2020 he did a PILOT presentation and he wanted to update that information. He explained the two types of programs, the Five-Year Tax Abatement Law and the Long-Term Tax Exemption Law (or PILOT) and how Florence Township benefits from each. Included in the presentation was information on who can get a PILOT, PILOT payments received in the past 2 years, where the PILOT money goes and how the funds are distributed, payments received since inception for each business, what these businesses have done that was not part of a PILOT, specifically what Florence Township has done with the money, how they have impacted the property taxes in the Township and how they have helped to keep the taxes low compared to other communities and, specifically, how Florence Township has benefited from PILOTS.

He explained some of the benefits for Florence Township. This year we anticipate over \$2.5 million which is 18.7 cents on the municipal tax rate and it is the reason we have been able to keep our taxes stable for the last 11 years and now going into our twelfth year. Florence was able to provide funding for various school, fire and township programs and projects. Included in the budget is money for the fire district in order to upgrade their emergency generator and we continue to work together to fund things with projects in the school.

C. NJDCA 2022 Property Taxes

Mayor Wilkie explained that the Department of Community Affairs had posted the tax rates from 2022 and Florence is the 8th lowest in Burlington County. Looking back at the 2019 numbers Florence was #9 and looking at the towns above ours, only Pemberton Township has a full school district pre-K through 12th grade. The rest are all regional school districts and most of them do not have police forces, some do not have trash collection and most do not have a recreation department like Florence. As far as dollar for dollar we are definitely way above in these other comparisons.

Mayor Wilkie showed a comparison to various municipalities in the County and explained that all of the information he shared can be found on the Department of Community Affairs website and will be added to the Township website as well.

D. Complete and Green Streets Policy

Township Planner Mark Remsa spoke about the Sustainable New Jersey certification. He stated that we are getting close to being able to submit our sustainable New Jersey bronze level application which is the entry level. We need 150 points and at a minimum it looks like we will have 155.

He prepared a Resolution about Complete Streets and Green Streets. Complete Streets and Green Streets essentially are two different types of approaches that have been developed by the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection. Complete Streets completes the streets for all users of the streets, not just automobiles and trucks, it is for the pedestrian as well as the bicyclists. The idea is to design the improvements according to the setting and it fixes the setting as well as addressing the users of the street. Complete in the more urban or suburban setting are those areas where there are missing sidewalks or gaps and when we did a vision statement for the Master Plan and we did the survey with the residents and we found that there are areas in town that have missing or gaps in the sidewalks. By having this policy in place, it also helps direct how the town would like to go forward in completing those streets.

Florence Township Council Executive Session 4/12/2023

Mr. Remsa went on to explain that Green Streets deals with the environment, principally stormwater management, and the NJDEP wants you to deal with stormwater runoff and water quality. In instances where you have a street and water is being dumped directly into a stream, in the future they want developers to have the kind of water quality basins that filter out the stormwater that comes off of the street before it gets discharged into a stream. Those are the kinds of policies that they want to make sure municipalities and developers are aware of. When you are going for grants in the future, you are probably going to have to have a green street component if you are pursuing some new roads or the reconstruction of roads or things of that nature.

A lot of the Resolution is a template from the Sustainable New Jersey and the policy statement is essentially a combination prepared by the Department of Transportation that we combined together. Mayor Wilkie explained that the Township Engineer had no concerns when he shared this with him. He said in the policy it calls for an audit and he and Mr. Remsa can work on what that should be. If Council is in agreement, we can put this resolution on next week's agenda and move forward.

Mayor Wilkie stated that the Arbor Day Foundation recognized Florence Township as a 2022 Tree City USA and that we have been receiving this recognition for over 20 years.

ACTION

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

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

ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION

Resolution 2023-77 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:

Personnel – Administration

It was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:40 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 7:52 p.m. on a Motion by Ostrander, seconded by Haas. Voice Vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Haas seconded by Baldorossi to Adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js