

## **Florence Township Council Regular Session 4/5/23**

Florence, New Jersey  
April 5, 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: 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; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk

Absent: Frank Baldorossi

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Regular Session of March 15, 2023

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter 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 Monthly Cash Reports and Budget Reports for February 2023
- Township Clerk's Monthly Report for March 2023
- Court Administrator's Monthly Report for March 2023
- Treasurer's Bill List

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

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### REGULAR CORRSPONDENCE

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

- A. Letter from Judy King requesting permission to use the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Firehouse for the Florence Historical Society Open House on Sunday, April 23, 2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- B. Letter from Margaret Manser, Roebling Historical Society, requesting permission to use the Nyikita Field paved parking area off Main Street for a Crafts and Arts Fair on Saturday, May 13, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (rain date May 20, 2023).

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

### APPLICATIONS

- A. On-Premise Merchandise Raffle for Riverbank Charter School, 1300 Hornberger Avenue, Roebling, NJ 08554 on June 13, 2023 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

EMS Chief Chris Parks spoke about how the Fire District is expanding in 2023 and they are going to be doing a lot for the community this year. He stated that, for the first time ever they will be hosting free CPR classes to any Florence Township resident. A class will be held once a month and the first class will be on Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Firehouse at 401 Firehouse Lane. Starting in May, it will be held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. The website is currently down, but it will be posted as soon as possible. Council agreed to place the information on the Township website as well.

Chief Parks also mentioned that they will be hosting other classes for the community to include a child babysitting safety class for teens where they will be provided with a certification at the end of the class which could help build their resume, basic life support (BLS) CPR classes for those in healthcare industry at a heavily discounted rate, an adult first aid class, and stop the bleed classes. All classes will be on a first come, first served basis. May 21<sup>st</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup> is EMS week and they are going to try to get into all the schools and teach classes and have some hands-on activities. The high school is their main audience because they are oftentimes in crowds and most likely to encounter situations that would require these skills. There will be different events each night for the entire week and a schedule will be put out. May 25<sup>th</sup> is “Stop the Bleed Day” and they are thinking of hosting a blood drive at the Firehouse that day in conjunction with the American Red Cross.

Chief Parks stated that the State of New Jersey started a pilot program for the county and state to help with active stages of addiction. This is a state grant program which will provide residents with

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opportunities to help by coming out to residences and handing out pamphlets on addiction and providing them with Narcan. They are planning on doing a free community service for Narcan administration and things along those lines. It will also provide some assistance for first responders' and mental health opportunities. They did a little presentation for the EMTs and he was highly impressed. He stated that he is excited for all of the big things they have going on for the community this year to make it a better, safer community for everyone.

Council thanked Chief Parks and offered to help in any way necessary.

Shanker Nair, 540 Spruce Street, said that he and fellow neighbors are seeking clarification regarding the plot of land on the corner of East 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Spruce Street. There has been activity there over the past few weeks and, as residents whose homes either abut to that piece of property or are within reasonable vicinity of that property, they are concerned about what the plan is in terms of developing the property and would like some clarification.

Mayor Wilkie brought up an aerial view of that area and explained that the property was formerly owned by Griffin Pipe but was now owned by the township. The railroad tracks were all removed up to that location and the bike path was put in up to Walnut Street. Now we have the final piece of the bike path from Walnut to Spruce with the long-term goal to extend the bike path from Spruce to Railroad Avenue but that spur is still under the control of Conrail. So, to finish up for the time being, this one block has to be designed. As part of this project for 2023, the park planner and township engineer will be designing the next section of the bike path. The path will stop at this lot on the corner of East 5<sup>th</sup> and Spruce Street. The design has not been finalized yet. The question has been raised whether or not to straighten 5<sup>th</sup> Street. This is part of the 2023 road program so a design will be put together soon and we can put the bonding in place. There will be plan drawn up and residents will be able to review and comment on.

Council Representative Marter stated that she was told it was going to be a pocket park and that there could be a jungle gym with swings and things along that nature in that space. Mayor Wilkie stated that it was never a vision to have anything like that in that area and explained that only a few blocks away is a full park at the school.

Council discussed at length the ways in which the bike path and the roadway could come together in that area.

Cathy Hutchinson, 337 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, voiced her concerns about the area stating that if there is any type of public property there, she is worried that it will end up being a dumping ground for syringes and liquor bottles like in other areas of the town. She has young grandchildren and she is concerned that these things will be thrown over her fence into her yard.

John Dmitruck, 398 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, stated that he is concerned for the school kids at the intersection of Spruce and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, there is currently no cross hatch. Mayor Wilkie explained that the paving is going to happen this year.

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Amanda Buckshaw, 347 East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, stated that she noticed someone surveying in her yard and she would appreciate transparency from the town. She put money into her property and when the sidewalk project took place a retention wall was built in front of her home which has turned into a hangout spot so she is concerned about loitering. She thanked Council for keeping her and her neighbors up to date. She also stated that she is glad that there is some type of maintenance project in the works for that area because it has become overgrown over the years. Council agreed to have public works look into cleaning that up.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked if the Township has any kind of warning system in place to warn residents of impending weather or tornadoes. Administrator Fazekas explained that the warning system is through the County Emergency Management or the National Weather Service but Florence Township does not have a warning system in place.

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. 2023-70**  
**Approve Public Display of Fireworks for**  
**Patriotic Celebration Day on July 8, 2023**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-71**  
**Deny Release of Bonds, IPT Railroad Logistics Center, LLC, 839 Railroad Avenue**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-72**  
**Emergency Temporary Appropriation**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-73**  
**Renew Participation in the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-74**  
**Authorize Refund of Building Permit Fee for 1 Fountain Boulevard**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-75**  
**Cancel Water & Sewer Payment Plans**

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Resolution Nos. 2023-70 through 2023-75.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

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**ORDINANCES**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-08**

**Amending and Supplementing Chapter 64, Section 3  
(fees – Report of Construction Code Official) of the Township Code  
of the Township of Florence to clarify the Applicable Construction Fee  
for Residential Construction on Farm Properties  
(Intro. & 1<sup>st</sup> Read) (2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt on April 19, 2023)**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-09**

**Amending & Supplementing Chapter 134, Section 38 (Schedule VI: Public Parking)  
of the Township Code of the Township of Florence to Remove Application Process  
for Personalized Handicapped Parking Spaces  
and to Grandfather Existing Personalized Handicapped Parking Spaces  
(Intro. & 1<sup>st</sup> Read) (2<sup>nd</sup> Read, Public Hearing & Adopt on April 19, 2023)**

Motion of Haas, seconded by Ostrander to approve Ordinance Nos. 2023-08 and 2023-09.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS**

Council Representative Haas explained that the Economic Committee is hosting a local business networking breakfast on May 15<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Community Center for small businesses in town to attend. The Regional Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Centers, local banks and business are just a few that will be in attendance. Everyone is welcome.

Council Representative Marter had some residents reach out regarding a few things. There is a water box on West Front Street that is right in line with the tires on the trucks that go by and every time they hit it rattles a resident's pipes. Administrator Fazekas explained that it is on the list, they have to speak to the County about that. She asked again about the speed of the cars traveling on Front Street but more specifically the NJ Transit bus. She asked if we have a contact there or if we can slow them down somehow? Council Representative Garganio stated that we could possibly have an officer out there.

Council Representative Marter said that she spoke to Ted Lovenduski about the speedbumps on West Fifth Street and having some additional speedbumps installed to help with speeding. She wanted to make Council aware that the people on Fifth Street are still trying to get the traffic slowed on that road.

Council Representative Marter stated that she has a contact at the state for some funding for the pipes and agreed to pass that along to Administrator Fazekas.

**REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION**

**Mayor**

Mayor Wilkie acknowledged the passing of former Township resident Bill Bott. He had been a resident of Florence for well over 30 years, had been on the Shade Tree Commission, the Environmental Commission, the Zoning Board and most recently on the Housing Authority. He was a very involved volunteer and his life was about giving and participating. He made Florence Township his home.

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Mayor Wilkie asked for Council's approval for two Recreation Committee appointments, Fred Dunphy and Cindy Golway, each with terms expiring 12/31/2025. Motion by Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve the appointments.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

Mayor Wilkie asked Council for participation in the Arbor Day Proclamation. There are some plans around Arbor Day and Marty Eckert has some activities going on with some clean ups. An email was sent by Tom Supey from the Scouts that the Blue & Gold Banquet will be on Saturday April 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Community Center. And after, they will be doing an Eagle Scout court of honor.

Mayor Wilkie acknowledged that notice was received from the school district that they now have approval for the acquisition of the property next to the school, behind the Charter School. We will be working forward to make that transition. We are also working to assist the museum with a grant they received to put signs in the scrapyard display. We directed them back to the EPA and they are going to review the locations. This will have to be a contracted service and we will explore costs and decide what to do at that point in time.

### **Administrator**

Administrator Fazekas stated that a third School Resource Officer has been added and there will be an updated Shared Service Agreement with the school at the April 19th meeting for approval. The 5-year Shared Services Agreement for the school to continue to use our fuel system will also be included. He asked Council to approve an ordinance for 2 new police vehicles so the funds are available when the vehicles are ready. There will be another ordinance for approval for a utility bond for the sewer line from the new pump station to Mallard Creek and also the water and sewer line that is going to be run down Route 130 from Potts Mill Road to Florence-Columbus Road.

### **Division of Law**

Township Solicitor Tom Hastie stated that Burlington Township has retained attorneys and filed a suit against numerous companies including Dupont for PFOAs in the water system. Florence Township shares aquifers with Burlington Township and the town has a history of some PFOA presence in the water and, at the request of the Administrator and the Mayor he reached out to the attorneys who are representing Burlington Township. They are a national firm that represents public entities and sues big polluters and they sent him some promotional material and made an offer that they would be happy to come in for some additional discussions with Florence Township and make a presentation and if it were decided to retain them. They stated they would be happy to do work on behalf of the township. The litigation that they have set up right now is national in scope, being run out of South Carolina and multiple companies are being sued under a theory of product liability.

Council Representative Marter asked if it is a class action suit and Solicitor Hastie stated that it is a multi-jurisdictional litigation. Council President Garganio asked if they are the only firm or are there multiple firms throughout the country doing the same? Solicitor Hastie explained that there are other firms and, if Council is interested, he will continue to pursue this. There would be no cost to participate, the firm would just take a percentage. Council President Garganio asked Council if anyone had any objections to have them come in with a presentation. Council agreed to have Solicitor Hastie look into this.

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### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

#### A. 2023 Budget

Administrator Fazekas explained that Council approved the First Reading of the Budget in March. The introduced budget included a 1 ½ cent Local Purpose Tax increase. Council had asked if there was any way to lower the tax increase. When the Governor gave his budget address, we picked up some more money and in working with the Municipal Auditor and the CFO we were able to reduce the increase to ¾ cent. He asked Council for approval so we can continue to Public Hearing and Adoption on April 19<sup>th</sup>. We basically took what we were proposing and cut it in half without affecting any of the programs or the projects that we have proposed.

Council Representative Marter asked if there is anything we can do to not have an increase? Administrator Fazekas explained for the average homeowner the assessment is \$221,516 which will be an increase of only \$21 for the year in the municipal tax. Over 4 tax payments a year that will be an increase of only \$4.75 for each tax payment. Council agreed to the ¾ cent increase.

#### B. Roebling Fishing Pier Update

Mayor Wilkie presented a few plans for the fishing pier. Administrator Fazekas stated that he has to speak to the engineer to make sure we don't start to get too far out into the river and, in Council Representative Baldorossi's absence and his involvement with this, he wants to be sure he discusses this with him first as well.

Council President Garganio suggested pressed concrete sections to prevent kids from carving their names and such, especially if we are going to be driving piles. It will last a lot longer and give a better product when it's all said and done and it will be a lot less maintenance.

Mayor Wilkie confirmed with Council, that they would prefer the 80' fishing pier to the 60' pier. Council confirmed that 80' was preferred.

Mayor Wilkie explained that there will be a dedication for a little library at the front of the municipal building on Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

### NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

### 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.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked about the fishing pier and the ice floe which can cause damage. Council President Garganio stated that we are paying our engineers to design something that will be able to withstand that and, if it can't be done, then we would have to go in a different direction.

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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.

**ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION**

Resolution 2023-76 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 Negotiation – Roebling Steel Plant

It was a Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to adjourn to Closed Session at 8:18 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:36 p.m. on a Motion by Ostrander, seconded by Haas. Voice Vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Marter seconded by Haas to Adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC  
Township Clerk  
/js