

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

Florence, New Jersey
May 3, 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; Thomas J. Hastie, Jr., Esq., Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Acting Administrator/Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk, Ted Lovenduski, Administrative Assistant

Absent: Bruce Garganio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Closed Session from April 5, 2023 and April 12, 2023
- Regular Session from April 5, 2023 and April 19, 2023
- Executive Session from April 12, 2023

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

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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

- Treasurer’s Bill List

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

Unanimous vote – Motion carried

REGULAR CORRSPONDENCE

None at this time.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

APPLICATIONS

- A. Renew Transient Merchant License, Mister Softee

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

PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION OF 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Acting Administrator Nancy Erlston explained that the budget is still under State review and has not yet been approved so adoption will not be going through at this time. The budget and two resolutions will be held and added to the May 10th agenda if approval is received.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting 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 comment portion. Voice vote – All ayes.

RESOLUTIONS

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-90
Adopt Municipal Budget
(HOLD UNTIL 5/10/23)**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-91
Read Budget by Title Only
(HOLD UNTIL 5/10/23)**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-92
Emergency Temporary Budget**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-93
Refund Housing Re-Inspection Fee**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-94
Approve Request of 3 Performance Bonds, 1400 W. Front Street**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-95
Approve Request of Release of 1 Performance Bond 839 Railroad Avenue**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-96
Deny Release and Approve Reduction of 2 Performance Bonds 839 Railroad Avenue**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2023-97
Refund Housing Inspection Fee**

There will be no action taken on Resolution Nos. 2023-90 and 2023-91. Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter approve Resolution Nos. 2023-92 through 2023-97.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-10

**Providing for Acquisition of Police Vehicles for Township, Appropriating \$190,000 Therefor, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$180,500 in General Improvement Bonds or Notes of the Township to Finance Same
(2nd Read, Public Hearing and Adoption)**

Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to close the Public Hearing.

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Ostrander to approve Ordinance No. 2023-10.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-11

**Providing for Improvements to the Township’s Water and Sewer Systems in and for the Township, Appropriating \$2,300,000 Therefor, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$2,185,000 in Water and Sewer Utility Bonds or Notes of the Township to Finance the Same
(2nd Read, Public Hearing and Adoption)**

Council Vice President Haas opened the meeting up to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to close the Public Hearing.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance No. 2023-11.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-12

**Providing for Improvements to Township Roads, Streets and Bike Paths in and for the Township, Appropriating \$2,100,000 Therefor, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$1,995,000 in General Improvement Bonds or Notes of the Township to Finance the Same
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing and Adopt. May 17, 2023)**

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-13

**Authorizing the Acquisition of Real Property Known as Block 126.02, Lot 1.01 for Future Affordable Housing Project
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing and Adopt. 5/17/2023)**

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

ORDINANCE NO. 2023-14

**Providing for the Acquisition of 100 Main Street in and for the Township, Appropriating \$500,000
Therefor, and Authorizing the Issuance of \$475,000 in General Improvement Bonds
or Notes of the Township to Finance the Same
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Read, Public Hearing and Adopt. 5/17/2023)**

Regarding Ordinance #2023-12, Council Representative Marter asked if, when doing Fifth Street between Walnut and Spruce Streets, the possibility of speedbumps in that area can be added to the funding. There have been a lot of complaints about the speed on Fifth Street. Ted Lovenduski stated that there is enough in this ordinance that if we want to add a speedbump we can do so. Mayor Wilkie explained that it may be a raised crosswalk because of the trail and the curbing at each of the ends and he wants to make sure it does not conflict with those on the bike path.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve Ordinance Nos. 2023-12 through 2023-14.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Council Representative Ostrander stated that the Recreation Committee met on Monday and discussed an event at Wilkie Park on May 18th called Tennis and Tunes which will be music along with tennis lessons for children. Mayor Wilkie explained that Concerts in the Park as well as more activities are being planned for the summer and a schedule will be coming out for more of these family events.

Council Representative Marter and Council Representative Ostrander attended a Grand Opening for the new Mitsubishi Electric Trane facility on West Front Street on April 26th. This is a large training facility for teaching different contractors how to utilize their equipment commercially and residentially. Council Representative Marter met with the warehouse manager and he was completely unaware that trucks come in on Front and Delaware, he was under the impression that all of their trucks come in and go out on Dulty's Lane. He said he is going to look into it. She stated that it was a productive conversation, they met a lot of employees and they spoke about employee participation in the town, to welcome them and have them be a part of Florence Township.

Council Representative Marter also asked about the splash park that was brought up at previous meetings and what has come of it. Mayor Wilkie explained that the survey that was sent out to the residents had gotten some mixed responses and, unfortunately the splash park was not a high priority in the results. Those results were published and it was discussed with the Council but the splash park did not move forward because there was not a desire for it or a consensus that this was something that should be happening at this time. When the park planner was brought on, his professional recommendation was that it is not ordinarily something that is in a residential neighborhood, it is more of a destination location.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

Mayor Wilkie then explained that the planner will be going through Roebing this year to examine that park because we started at the most used park, Water Works Park and the Municipal Complex and the next largest facility is the Roebing Park. The park planner will give us a budget in order to go through and do those examinations and if he identifies something that is broken it may immediately get put on a list to be taken care of and Council may not see those things. While other things will get filtered into a system to be done in 2-5 years or some other timeframe along those lines. It is the idea of having a professional reviewing the parks and coming up with plans so you are budgeting in a proactive design plan.

Council Representative Marter stated that, at a prior meeting, residents from Spruce and Fifth Streets shared concerns about the possibility of a park at that intersection and, in the last Council meeting, Mayor Wilkie had shared a design for that area. She asked the mayor if, at some point, there will be an open meeting again for the residents to come in and see that design? Mayor Wilkie stated that when the engineers and planners were putting those drawings together, he wasn't planning on actually having a meeting, he was just planning on getting it out to the residents that are involved to let them know what is being proposed.

Council Representative Marter stated that she noticed the new crossing at Broad and Fifth Streets. She also mentioned that there are some really loose bricks on Fourth and Main in Roebing that are in the walkway and they have been that way for a really long time and asked if there is anything that can be done? Mayor Wilkie asked her to give Ted Lovenduski a specific area so he can take a look at it.

Council Representative Marter read a Facebook post into the record from Michelle LaRocha Jones, a resident of Delaware Avenue, regarding the truck traffic on Delaware Avenue and Front Street. In her post she stated that the trucks are tying up intersections, travelling way too fast and going through the town with almost no respect for signage. She asked why Front and Delaware is not yet weight restricted? Council Representative Marter asked if there are any updates and if there have been any meetings or has anything changed at all so that we as a town can somehow advocate or try to make something happen? She requested to at least have some more of these trucks pulled over.

Mayor Wilkie explained that there is progress being made. A traffic memo is being formulated to go over to the County for their review and approval. Once the County accepts the redistribution we will continue with our analysis and designs. For 30 years Florence was told we had to have a bypass in our community. Mayor Carlin had approached him sometime way before then and said that he thought that we can do a bypass at Daniel's Way. He was carrying the lead on that. In May of 2021 his comment was that he couldn't make it happen because the money was not there. At that point in time, Florence had to go on its own so that is the reason Council passed the resolution in July of 2021 outlining the history of what we have been going through. Council passed that on a Wednesday and the next day Mayor Wilkie met with the county engineer at a prearranged meeting to talk about some other things and his comment was that we have to get Burlington Township to sign off on it. So, from August of 2021 until February or March of 2022, nothing was done because Mayor Carlin was running for surrogate, a new Mayor came into place. We had a meeting with Burlington Township and they said they would consider talking about it and then we got the county engineer involved and then the county had taken the lead. Mayor Wilkie stated that he understands the pain and frustration but government moves slow and you have to spend money in order to figure out a plan. At least for the first time in 30+ years that he has been around in this process the county is moving forward with the plan for a bypass with the understanding of once that bypass is through, we can weight restrict Delaware and Front Streets. The response from the County and the NJDOT is they won't agree to weight restrict Delaware and Front Street until Burlington Township and Burlington County and the state all agree to it. It doesn't matter what Florence Township wants.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

Those meetings are still going on, the Administrator was attending those meetings and now Chief Boldizar will be covering those meetings.

There are also separate meetings going on with the leaders within Burlington Township and the County concerning truck routes and the bleeding of trucks onto other roads. Burlington-Columbus Road is restricted in Florence because of the landfill. As part of the agreement with host benefits, there are not supposed to be any trucks on Burlington-Columbus Road but it is not weight restricted. They also did not want trucks on Neck Road which is in Burlington Township and which now has 6 speed bumps. In 2020 or so, Dulty's Lane, which was under the local control, became a County Road. In 2021 we asked the County to make Dulty's Lane the truck route and that can be our bypass so we didn't need to wait for another bypass. And the reason Neck Road can have those speedbumps is because Neck Road is a local road, whereas Delaware Avenue and Front Street are not.

Mayor Wilkie stated that it is his understanding that the engineer rejected the idea of some of the speed regulations being put in place. We had asked for curbing and, if that doesn't work, we can put in a raised crosswalk which would, in theory, slow the trucks as well as cars coming into town from River Road. That is one of the reasons we asked for a review of the speeds on Delaware Avenue and Front Street. The County did their survey and it may not have been exactly what we wanted but now from the bend at Oak Street to Hornberger Avenue the speed limit has been lowered from 35mph to 30 mph. It does not happen overnight and it is a matter of constant enforcement.

Council Representative Marter thanked Mayor Wilkie for the update of what has been happening behind the scenes.

Council Vice President Haas again mentioned that on Thursday, May 18th there will be a small business venture at the Community Center in Roebing from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. for businesses in town to meet with banks and other entities to help grow their businesses.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie stated that the museum moved the car show to Saturday, May 6th because of rain last week.

Administrator

Acting Administrator Erlston explained that the County Fire Police help us with services on Patriotic Day and previously we have supplied vests and some other kind of supplies for them. This year they are requesting a monetary donation of \$300 instead of providing those supplies. With Council's approval, she will have a monetary donation sent over to the County Fire Police for their help on Patriotic Day. Mayor Wilkie explained that is a volunteer organization that is not funded through fire taxes or anything of that nature and they have been very supportive. Council agreed to the donation.

Division of Law

- Police Chief's Monthly Report for March 2023

Township Solicitor Tom Hastie explained that personnel matters involving the police department were appealed or initially litigated or contested at the Civil Service Commission and the town's position was upheld by the Civil Service Commission. Similarly, about a year and a half ago, the town had received an appraisal for a farmer's land as open space. The farmer had requested to see that appraisal and we denied his request through OPRA. He took it to the Government Records Council where it sat and we finally received word that we were successful in our position on the OPRA and a private appraisal of a property is not allowed to be disclosed through OPRA.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

Mayor Wilkie asked Solicitor Hastie to reach out to the attorneys regarding the PFOAs and update Council at a future workshop meeting. He also asked him about the project labor agreement with regards to the steel plant and if he will be prepared to update Council on that at the workshop next week. Solicitor Hastie said that he needs to seek guidance on one policy item first.

Division of Engineering

- Township Engineer's Project Updates dated 4/18/2023

Mayor Wilkie explained that the engineer will be in next week's meeting and he will touch base on some of the topics we have been talking about.

Division of W & S Utilities

- W & S Engineer's Status report dated 4/24/2023

Council Representative Marter referenced the latest letter she received and stated that our numbers are really low so it is slowly dropping off. We have had three quarters now with low numbers. Mayor Wilkie explained that Water & Sewer Superintendent Dave Lebak shared that the state is not going to let us stop sending those letters out until we put in the PFOA filter system. So for the next 3+ years those letters will still go out.

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

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

Michelle Rosenblum, 19 Buttonwood Drive, stated that pending ordinances used to be on the website and she asked Council if that has been moved to a new spot or if it just does not exist anymore. Mayor Wilkie explained that all of the ordinances are posted on our website after first reading and before they are adopted at the second reading.

Doug Phillips, 38-7 Florence Tollgate, asked if there are any updates on the B-Unos liquor license status? Municipal Clerk Erlston explained that the only thing we are waiting for is the background check from the police department that is required before we can do the license transfer. When she checked with the Chief earlier in the week, there was one item they were still waiting to get and they have not gotten it yet. Once that is received and she receives the letter approving the background check, she will get that transfer on the very next Council agenda.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/3/23

Bryan Hewitt, 1080 Grove Street, asked Council for a show of hands on who supports Mark Remsa working with the township. Mayor Wilkie explained that Council passed a Resolution unanimously appointing him in January as our Township Planner. Mr. Hewitt stated that he was reading into the case recently with NFI regarding particular farm properties and, if you read their most recent files, Mr. Remsa had advocated previously for their development. In his opinion, it is embarrassing that this is the person that we are using to discuss this project and advocate against it when there is documentation of his advocating for it. It is directly reflected in the lawsuit and he thinks we should think twice about working with him and him being involved with the township at this point. As an active litigation, Mayor Wilkie stated that Solicitor Hastie advised him not to speak on that.

Mr. Hewitt then voiced a complaint about an employee of Florence Township. Solicitor Hastie reminded Mr. Hewitt that it was not proper to bring up personnel matters in a public meeting without noticing the employee and giving him the opportunity to be present. Mr. Hewitt made his complaint regarding the employee and asked that the employee's behavior be reviewed. Council Vice President stated that the matter would be looked into and thanked Mr. Hewitt for his comments.

Seeing no one else 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 2023-89 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 Marter to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:49 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:04 p.m. on a Motion by Ostrander, seconded by Marter. Voice Vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Marter seconded by Baldorossi to adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js