

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

Florence, New Jersey
August 2, 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: Nicholas Haas, Kristan Marter, Paul Ostrander, Bruce Garganio

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Closed Session of July 12, 2023
- Regular Session Minutes of July 5, 2023

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas 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 Budget Reports and Cash Reports for June 2023
- Tax Collector’s Monthly Tax Report for June 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

REGULAR CORRSPONDENCE

- A. Letter from NJ Department of Agriculture dated July 14, 2023 stating that Municipal Regulation of Beekeeping Activities is Prohibited

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to receive and file the correspondence. Voice vote – All ayes.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

APPLICATIONS

- A. Social Affair Permit for American Legion Post 194 for a Food Truck Event on September 16, 2023 from 1:00pm-9:00pm.

Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to approve the application.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Garganio opened the meeting to the public at this time. Seeing no one 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. 2023-156

Approve Current Estimate No. 17 – Final for Water Treatment Plant, Phase 2 Chemical Building Expansion to Eagle Construction Services, Inc.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-157

Approve Payment Estimate No. 1 for Public Works Station to T. Slack Environmental Services, Inc.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-158

Approve Request for Release of Maintenance Bond for Pulte/Estate of Oak Mill

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-159

Approve Final Change Order No. 1 and Final Payment No. 3 for Wilbur Henry Drive Resurfacing and Paving

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-160

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B160.01, L6.03

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-161

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B165.06, L1

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-162

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B147.11, L20

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-163

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B124, L15

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-164

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B43, L6

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-165

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B40, L3.03

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-166

Cancel Taxes on Property Owned by a Totally Disabled Veteran, B17, L3

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-167

Extension of Time for Payment of Tax Bills

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Marter to approve Resolution Nos. 2023-156 through 2023-167.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCES

- A. Amend Chapter 36, Section 4 Alcoholic Beverages, Hours of Sale
(2nd Reading, Public Hearing & Adoption)

Council President Garganio opened the Public Hearing. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to close the Public Hearing. Voice vote – All ayes

Motion of Marter, seconded by Haas to approve to Amend Chapter 36, Section 4, Alcoholic Beverages, Hours of Sale.

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 Ostrander stated that National Night Out was excellent. There was a tremendous attendance and he thinks that everyone who attended had a great night. Council Representative Marter stated that she had a great time as well.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie echoed the comments regarding National Night Out. He stated that 99% of that is funded by the budget which Council allows for so he thanked Council for their commitment to the community. It had gone away for a while but the Police Department reinstated it and it was a great event.

He stated that he reached out to Council via email with a recommendation of the appointment of Michael J. Muchowski as Administrator and he asked Council to confirm that appointment by resolution. Motion of Haas, seconded by Garganio to approve Resolution No. 2023-168 to Appoint Michael J. Muchowski as Township Administrator. Council Representative Marter confirmed that this appointment is at the pleasure of the mayor stating we obviously need to have this position filled.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Haas, Marter, Garganio
 - ABSTAIN: Ostrander
 - NOES: None
 - ABSENT: Baldorossi
- Majority Vote– Motion carried

Mayor Wilkie recognized the hard work that Acting Administrator Nancy Erlston and Administrative Assistant Ted Lovenduski have put in. During the time that Nancy has been Acting Administrator she had completed many main projects to include the hiring of numerous employees in the Public Works Department, Personnel, Construction Code Office, Administration Office, Land Use and, at this point in time every position has been filled. One of the reasons we are moving forward with the appointment of the Administrator now is, come September, Nancy has new staff that are going to have to get trained and a lot of people are moving and getting trained in new roles so this will provide for that.

There have been many frustrations with the website and Nancy shared with him tonight that notice had been given to the current carrier and we are ending that service in 30 days per our contract. They had a meeting with Networks Plus a few weeks ago and the monthly fee will be less and they have more support services and this is just one of the many projects that Nancy has gotten done and he thanked her for that.

Mayor Wilkie congratulated Michelle Chiemiego on passing her CMFO exam. When she was hired in October of 2020, she had her QPA but she did not have her CMFO. She has now completed that and at some point, once she receives her certificate, Council will be appointing her to the CMFO position.

Administrator

Acting Administrator Erlston thanked Mayor and Council for giving her the opportunity to serve as Acting Administrator. She stated that it has been an eye-opening experience and it will make her a better Clerk in the long run because now she sees how the pieces fit which is an experience that she is really happy she was able to enjoy. She also thanked Ted Lovenduski, stating that without his assistance things would not have gone so smoothly .

Council Representative Marter also thanked Nancy for everything that she did and stated that the website has been something that they have been working on for quite some time and it has been a big frustration and it makes a big difference.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Burlington County Joint Insurance Fund (BURLCO/JIF) Renewal

Steve Walsh of Barclay Insurance Agency explained that his job is to make sure the municipalities have the proper coverage at a reasonably competitive price. He handles 28 towns in the Burlco JIF and he is the RMC for 11 or 12 of them. Every municipality has a 3-year commitment in the program. There are 28 members and about 9 or 10 renew every year so they don't all renew at the same time. The Township's 3-year membership is up for renewal on January 1, 2024 and the bylaws of the JIF say that the municipality must pass a resolution by October 1st of the previous year to renew the membership. If you don't, you will be out of the program for 3 years. He stated that though we would love to see exact pricing premiums, we are five months out and there are too many moving factors possible for the JIF to file exact pricing. He stated that, based on our history and with the service they provide to the town,

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

Florence Township should be confident and comfortable with the program. This will be the eleventh time the Township will renew the membership. He stated that as our insurance agent he can place our insurance coverage anywhere and part of his job is to advise the Township what he thinks is the right program and what the alternatives are. He explained that, out of 40 Burlington County towns 28 are in the JIF. His recommendation is to continue with this program.

Council President Garganio asked, with the numbers that we have with accidents and insurance claims and such, if he foresees us holding onto the rate and how long would the projection be? Steve Walsh explained that the claim experience is better than average and the Burlington County JIF's loss ratio is 80% and the Township is ahead of the class in the last 6 years. Unfortunately, the problems that Florence faces is that insurance rates are creeping up a little bit and the property insurance, natural disasters, vehicles damaged in an auto accident or a building damaged, these expenses have increased in the last few years. Those increases in costs affect the insurance rates. It is every insurance company, it is not just the Burlco JIF and, if our rates go up, all rates go up because of these factors.

Council President Garganio asked if we could do better in the private market? Steve Walsh stated that his recommendation is that this is the best for Florence Township.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to approve Resolution No. 2023-151.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

B. Cedar Lane/Bustleton Road Path Lighting

Mayor Wilkie explained that we can either leave the lights on until the agreement expires or we have a \$20,000 obligation to Public Service and then they will remove the lights. We recently signed another contract with them to put the temporary substation on what was formerly known as the Locker property and Nancy and Ted shared that we have already received \$28,000 which is what they had agreed to provide to us for doing this. It is up to Council how to handle this situation.

Council Representative Marter asked how we had them turned off before and Mayor Wilkie explained that we had brought in an electrician but that is not allowed due to a liability issue. We are altering a Public Service light and if someone were to get hurt, they would like to know who turned them off. Council Representative Haas asked how much longer we have left? Ted Lovenduski stated that he believes it is roughly two years. Council Representative Marter asked what happens after two years? Ted stated that we are no longer under the tariff and his guess is that they remove the lights for free. There would be no penalty but they are still Public Service lights.

Council President Garganio mentioned that we may be able to install 4-foot path lighting that would probably give enough light to walk through there that wouldn't bother anyone and, if the power is there those smaller lights should still light it up and keep it reasonably safe. Ted Lovenduski stated that there are a lot of options but Public Service does not give us those options.

Council President Garganio asked if they are going to charge us \$20,000 to take them out or turn them off? Ted Lovenduski explained that the \$20,000 is to take them out, they won't turn them off, that was never offered as an option. President Garganio stated that he is leaning more toward trying to get rid of

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

them but he is also surprised that PSE&G is drawing a line like this and he is willing to have the lights pulled. Council Representative Marter stated that it will end up being a wash with the money that they are paying us and Ted Lovenduski mentioned that we will also lose the initial \$70,000 that they gave us as well and it winds up being a \$100,000 loss if you look at the whole piece.

At the time they were installed, the cost was cheaper for LED lighting but no one envisioned the brightness of that light at that time. Council Representative Marter mentioned that on Seventh Avenue Public Service actually came out and increased the wattage of those lights there, they are the same fixture but different wiring so they are not as bright. Council President Garganio asked if there is any way that those lights are in violation of our lighting codes. Ted Lovenduski stated that the new lighting code ordinance has not passed yet and it will be tough to go back.

Council President Garganio asked if there is anyone higher up at PSE&G that we can reach out to before we decide what to do about these lights. He doesn't believe this is a big ask and if we are willing to pay for the lights for a few years and just have the lights turned off it would be less costly in the long run. It would be worth a phone call.

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.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked what the new hours are for alcoholic beverage sales on Sunday. Mayor Wilkie explained that it is Sunday mornings from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. only if you are eating. The bars can not be open just for alcohol sales, you must be seated and eating.

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 2023-155 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

Litigation - NFI

It was a Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Haas to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:39 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 8:05 p.m. on a Motion by Haas, seconded by Marter. Voice Vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Ostrander seconded by Marter to adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Florence Township Council Regular Session 8/2/23

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js