

Florence Township Council Regular Session 10/4/23

Florence, New Jersey
October 4, 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: Frank Baldorossi, Nicholas Haas, Kristan Marter, Paul Ostrander, Bruce Garganio

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

Absent: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Meeting of September 6, 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.

- Chief Financial Officer's Cash Reports and Budget Reports for August 2023
- Treasurer's Bill List

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Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Florence Township Police Department Monthly Report for August 2023
- B. Letter from Roebling Historical Society requesting approval for the Christmas in Roebling Event on December 9, 2023 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. and requesting a waiver of General Liability Insurance

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Ostrander to receive and file the correspondence.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

APPLICATIONS

- A. Off-Premise Merchandise Raffle on November 23, 2023 at 12 p.m. at 1050 Cedar Lane, Florence Township for the Florence Township Memorial High School Parent Organization

Motion of Haas, seconded by Baldorossi to approve the applications.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Brad Higgenbottom, 528 Carleton Street, Bound Brook, NJ, of Solar Landscape, spoke about a community solar project they are going to be having. He explained about community solar, where a large solar array is installed on a rooftop or in a brown field or landfill, it goes directly to the grid and those credits are then given to residential households, of which 51% have to be low to moderate income and the other 40% can be anywhere. But it could all end up in the town if marketed correctly. In years past it would be if there was a project in Florence Township it would have to be in Florence Township or adjacent communities. This time around, it can be anywhere within the electric company. He explained that Florence Township residents can be serviced first before they market to any other persons and they also have an option to opt in or designate apartment complexes or residential areas. He stated that if Council was interested in the project, he would need a letter from the Mayor of acknowledgement and support of the project.

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Council Representative Marter asked how many community solar projects can be in one town and he said as many as get accepted. She asked if all of the contractual relationships are the same in that you have to provide 51% to the community and the town and the rates are pretty much the same across the board? He stated that this is the first year of what is called a “permanent program.” All projects are online, no projects can be on green fields, farms or preserved farms, and all projects given in the first ten days are going to be given equal rate as long as they qualify and the tiebreaker will be the level of discount. Discounts are expected to be higher than they were.

Mayor and Council asked Mr. Higgenbottom to come back at the next meeting to give a formal presentation and he agreed.

Ken Norcross, 567 Delaware Avenue, stated that cars are traveling at excessive speeds on Station Road behind the old firehouse. He asked Council if something can be done there like a change of speed or put the speed sign out there. He also stated that the trees on that street need to be managed. There is only one storm drain and it floods due to the leaves and debris from the trees hanging over the street. Council President Garganio stated that we can get the Chief to look into that and possibly put the speed board out there.

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. 2023-197
Authorize Refund FAAD Park Permit Fee, Event Cancelled**

Motion of Marter, seconded by Baldorossi to approve Resolution No. 2023-197.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

ORDINANCES

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-17
Amending and Supplementing Chapter 2 of the Township Code to Add Additional Fees
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption 10/18/23)**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-18
Bond Ordinance for Improvements to Hornberger Ave., Roebling Ave.,
Peace St., Amboy Ave. and Pond St.
(Intro. & 1st Read) (2nd Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption 10/18/23)**

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Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Haas to approve Ordinance Nos. 2023-17 and 2023-18.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Council Representative Marter stated that she and Chief Boldizar attended an event called Become A Film Ready Community. New Jersey is pushing to become the next California/Hollywood and there is a website where you can upload pictures of your town if you are interested in being involved. They had a fire chief from Camden speak about the experience they had in Camden and having to make sure specific ordinances were in order to be able to accommodate the film industry. The state has already brought in \$70 Million since they started really trying to promote the film industry. She thinks it would be a nice opportunity since we have such a unique town in Roebling. She is going to schedule a meeting and follow up with whatever additional things we may need in order to participate.

Council Representative Haas mentioned some highlights from the Economic Committee meeting including a scarecrow event in Roebling, the 2023 Fall Festival on October 14th and local businesses March 4th Technical Services and B Unos have been recently published. The vacant properties are being done toward the middle to the end of fall.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie recognized David Lebak of the Water and Sewer Department for decorating the Florence Township sign on Florence Columbus Road where you come off of 295. The Wainwrights used to take care of that and Mr. Lebak has been voluntarily doing that for a number of years since they are no longer there.

Mayor Wilkie also stated that next week is Fire Prevention Week and October 13th is the Fire Prevention Show. We also have a centenarian and Council will have a Resolution to sign and there will be a program on the 15th. The Roebling Museum is doing a Touch a Truck program on the 21st and earlier that day they are going to be having a ribbon cutting ceremony for the signs that they put along the mill yard.

Administrator

Administrator Muchowski explained that he has been working on some of the requests that have come through Council. Information is being gathered on the Bennett Street and Maple Avenue area and he has been in touch with the engineering firm as well as with the Chief to see if we can streamline that process. He also gathered information on the other ordinances that pertain to those two roads. We will be compiling all of that information and putting that together.

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Administrator Muchowski explained that he and Ted Lovenduski have reached out to a few contractors regarding some of the roadways in the Tall Pines development. A few of the worst areas need to be addressed and will be mapped out with Water and Sewer but then there is a much larger discussion to have regarding that entire development in the future.

Council Representative Marter stated that the signs on Spruce and Fourth Streets are up and now the lines just need to be painted. Administrator Muchowski stated that we are working on getting better paint for those, the spray paint they have will just come off. He also stated that Council Representative Haas reached out regarding the crosswalk indicators at Firehouse and Cedar Lane, that were recently vandalized. They replaced the meter and we are waiting for PSE&G. He will follow up again with our contacts to see if we can get any kind of push to get that in place.

Council President Garganio asked the Administrator to take a look at the items on Station Road and get back to Council at the next meeting on the trees and speed. He agreed to follow up with the Chief.

Division of W & S Utilities

- **Water & Sewer Engineer's Monthly Status Report dated September 22, 2023**

Council Representative Marter asked for clarification on the report where it states that the PFAS project has been put on hold. President Garganio explained that it is out as a RFP/RFQ. Instead of just dealing with one engineer the administration thought it was a better idea to see what is out there, bring it back and then make a decision.

Administrator Muchowski explained that what was put on hold was the full-blown design by the Township's Water & Sewer Engineer as we were looking at the other options and that is what created the proposal that went out.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review of Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program – Acquisition Targeting List

Mayor Wilkie explained the Master Plan and the targeted preservation list from the County. He pointed out the properties in Florence Township and explained what the County has approved for preservation and what Florence Township has in the Master Plan with the intention to ask the County to include as well. Council President Garganio suggested that we match up what we have in our Master Plan and submit that to the County. Mayor Wilkie is going to have our planner Mark Remsa handle this and move forward from there.

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BOARD OF HEALTH

None at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Garganio opened the meeting to the public.

Cristin Mustillo, 132 6th Avenue, made a general comment about the presentation from the DVRPC from last week, stating that one thing that she would have been interested in seeing in the report is more of an evaluation about recreational uses. The study mentioned and noted that people had said that passive recreation was one of the things that they wanted to see on the site and there were a lot of interesting analytics in there about what the town could expect if they use it for things like housing or retail or restaurants but she didn't see any analytics about parking for recreational uses.

She stated that when she filled out the survey, she chose a mixed-use development because she thinks there is a lot of interesting confluents of resources with the light rail station and the museum so close and access to all of the potential open space. She thinks it also has to be evaluated from what would bring more usership and what would appeal to a larger number of user groups as opposed to one subset of user groups. She asked about an update on the RFP and where that process stands.

Mayor Wilkie explained that the DVRPC was to provide more of a resource. The RFP/RFQ went out last year and we didn't get any responses and some people are looking for more information and this will put a lot of information at their fingertips. It does still have to be capped at some point because it is still hazardous and is not safe the way it is.

The Mayor explained that no RFP's were submitted and he is preparing an update for the public. We are not in any negotiations with anyone at this time and, unless something comes in, he is leaving that to the next administration. He asked our Planner to reach out to the EPA to get an update. They got millions of dollars for cleanup and he is waiting for a bullet point as to where the EPA is on this. We want to see what is getting cleaned up and he is hoping to have something out sooner rather than later to report.

Ken Norcross, 567 Delaware Avenue, asked about the intersection at the end of Delaware and Route 130 stating that it slows the traffic coming in to town and only 2 cars get through the lights.

Mayor Wilkie explained that we were going to reach out to NJDOT to temporarily redo the lines because it hasn't been done for many years and we have not gotten any direction from the county or the state for anything long-term. There is a lot of federal money coming in to the state. That project was a \$20+ million project and it is something that is still in the forefront.

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Council Representative Marter stated that she also followed up with Senator Kim's office because we asked them to send a letter to the NJDOT because there was \$17 million that was slated for that project when the bipartisan infrastructure bill came through and we were earmarked for that money. When it came in to the state all of the earmarks were pulled off of it. It was either put aside or reallocated. Andy Kim's office reached out on our behalf in order to try and get those monies and she followed up today to find out if they would follow up with NJDOT.

Mr. Norcross also asked about pickleball courts and Mayor Wilkie explained that there is a bid due on October 11th which includes redoing the tennis courts which will include pickleball courts.

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 2023-196 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

Developer Negotiations – Weiss

It was a Motion of Haas, seconded by Marter to adjourn to Closed Session at 7:41 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – All ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular Meeting at 8:15 p.m. on a Motion by Marter, seconded by Haas. Voice vote – All ayes. No action was taken. Motion of Haas seconded by Ostrander to adjourn. Voice vote – All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/js