

## Florence Township Council Executive Session 2/14/24

Florence, New Jersey  
February 14, 2024

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 Fratinardo at 7:00 p.m. Council Vice President Fratinardo 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 7, 2024; published in the Burlington County Times on January 7, 2024, placed on the Township website and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 7, 2024.

### ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: John Fratinardo, Nicholas Haas, Talaya Loftin

Also Present: Mayor Kristan I. Marter (via Zoom); Thomas A. Sahol, Township Administrator; Robert Wright, Esq., Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Jenise Silinsky, Deputy Township Clerk

Absent: Joseph Frappolli, Frank Baldorossi

### FIFTEEN (15) MINUTES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Council Vice President Fratinardo opened the meeting to the public on a Motion by Haas, seconded by Loftin. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a Motion was made by Loftin, seconded by Haas to close the public comment portion. Voice Vote – All Ayes.

### BUSINESS

#### A. Water & Sewer Rates

Council discussed the water and sewer rates and which scenarios would work best. Mayor Marter asked when the rates would go into effect and Administrator Sahol explained that, if the ordinance was adopted in March, it would be effective for the April, May, June period which means people would see this in the bill that is mailed in July and due in August. In the budget, it can be anticipated if you have legislation that allows for this new known rate. It can't be done if you don't have the legislation because you can only anticipate what your prior known revenue was. That revenue has shrunk so much and, if we are forced to anticipate that, we are going to have to make drastic moves to the utility to cut operationally because we won't have enough money. You will only have enough money with your fund balance to be able to offset. If we were to do this ordinance and have it in place by the middle to end of March, then lawfully they can anticipate the revenues knowing the new rate and it will be sufficient to keep the utility moving in the right direction and increase the fund balance to where it should be and not in the red.

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Mayor Marter mentioned that Council was given a lot more scenarios to look over since the last meeting to try and come up with something different than what they had discussed last week but it looks like none of the scenarios offer a better alternative. Council Representative Haas suggested a few alternatives to raising the rates to include looking into the PFOAs building and the costs associated with that.

Council Representative Fratinardo asked about a Cannabis grower to use a large quantity of water and if there has been any further discussion about that? Administrator Sahol stated that he and the Solicitor had a conversation about getting some language from a nearby community that was successfully implemented but he doesn't know if they grow as much as they do retail and/or other licenses. Solicitor Wright stated that it won't be realized until 2025 at the earliest with the different steps that need to be taken to change the ordinance. It is a zoning ordinance so it has to go to the Land Use Board and then back to Council so it will be a lengthy process and an operational business may not be seen until 2025 or 2026. And any applicant that is seeking any one of the categories of licensing would need approval from the state prior to moving forward with anything.

Administrator Sahol explained that there were other alleged high water users that have not come to fruition. If ReadyPac was truly interested, they would have to sublet the building out instead of holding and paying the lease that they have to pay or would have landed them here for us so they didn't have to keep paying for an empty building. Council Representative Haas asked if their lease is only the building, and if there is something written in the utility lease agreement regarding a minimum. Since they still own the building is there a penalty for them not using it? How is that language written, is there something above and beyond the penalty that they can be hit with if they are not using the minimum? Solicitor Wright agreed to look into that.

Solicitor Wright also explained that if the ordinance is drafted with the 41% amendments can be made prior to introduction. So if there is information that is gathered between now and the introduction, a Council member could offer an amendment to change what that increase is during the meeting where it is introduced. Council agreed to move forward with an ordinance on February 21<sup>st</sup> revising the township code such that it is going to increase 41% with the understanding that until introduction a change could be made, with the potential to adopt on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

### B. Virtual Meetings

Mayor Marter explained that virtual meetings have become a challenge lately due to interruptions and things that prevent us from posting the meetings online. She asked Council what they would like to do with the meetings and whether or not they want to make them listen only meetings and residents will have to come in if they have something to share, submitting questions to be discussed in advance or even after the meeting to be addressed at the next meeting, etc. Council Representative Loftin stated that the consensus at the newly elected officials meeting was that they should just be record only and shut down the microphones and if they had any questions they could email or leave a comment to the website, an inbox or wherever it is decided after the video is published. Administrator Sahol explained that it is a policy call of the governing body and it is not something that needs to be reduced to writing.

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**ACTION**

**Resolutions**

- A. 2024-60, Appoint Claims Coordinator for Burl. Co. Municipal Joint Insurance Fund
- B. 2024-61, Appoint Employment Practices Liability Contract for Burl. Co. JIF
- C. 2024-62, Appoint Privacy Officers for Medical Billing
- D. 2024-63, Appoint Kent Jones as Water and Sewer Superintendent
- E. 2024-64, Award Administrative Services Contract, Tax Office to J.H. Services, Inc.

Council Representative Haas asked for clarification on Resolution No. 2024-64. Administrator Sahol explained that J.H. Services is a company that we have utilized for a number of years as a support service for Tom Colavecchio in the Assessor’s office. Tom is in for a limited number of days in the township and this provides another person the opportunity to help to fill some of the voids. A lot of this is fieldwork so while Tom is in the office doing office work, this person does a lot of the fieldwork and inspection verifications.

It was a Motion of Haas, seconded by Loftin to approve Resolution Nos. 2024-60 through 2024-64.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

- YEAS: Fratinaro, Haas, Loftin
  - NOES: None
  - ABSENT: Frappolli, Baldorossi
- Unanimous vote – Motion carried

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Council Vice President Fratinaro opened the meeting to the public at this time on a Motion by Haas, seconded by Loftin. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a Motion was made by Loftin, seconded by Haas to close the public comment portion. Voice Vote – All Ayes.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion of Loftin seconded by Haas to Adjourn. Voice Vote – All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC  
Township Clerk  
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