

Florence Township Council Regular Session 5/8/19

Florence, New Jersey
May 8, 2019

The Florence Township Council held a regular meeting on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Sandusky at 8:00 p.m. followed by the salute to the flag led by Dylan Wiese and Brandon Wiese of Boy Scout Troop 13.

The opening statement was read by the Township Clerk: This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was posted on the municipal bulletin board on January 3, 2019; published in the Burlington County Times on January 6, 2019; placed on the Township website, and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 3, 2019.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Frank Baldorossi, Ted Lovenduski, Paul Ostrander, Jerry Sandusky

Absent: David Woolston

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie; Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator; Thomas A. Sahol, Assistant Administrator; Kelly Grant, Township Solicitor; Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Sandusky opened up the meeting to public comment at this time.

Trevor Casliano, 23 Marjorie Way, Hamilton, New Jersey, is from Matakas Jui Jitsu on Route 130. He introduced himself and asked if there were any modifications being made with the new construction that will be taking place on the other side of the highway that will enable traffic leaving the parking lot where his business is located to go north on the highway instead of having to go south to make the U-turn.

The Mayor explained that the turn at John Galt way is closer than previously, when you had to drive to Dulty's Lane to turn around. When the owner of the facility where his building is located went before the board, they offered to the Department of Transportation to try to get a U-turn. DOT has regulations that requires a certain amount of space between openings and he's not sure it can be done.

The Mayor also explained that the developments that will be taking place are on the opposite side of Route 130, one behind the Burger King and the other in the farm field across from Wawa. It will not affect the side of the highway where his business is located. The Mayor thanked him for his support within the community.

Mr. Casliano stated that he and Matakas Jui Jitsu are looking forward to continuing to serve the community. They have worked with the Parish of Saints Francis and Clare to help with their food drive, a few months ago they built a well in Africa with all of their members and they are more than willing to help out in any way.

Margaret Linico, 13 Third Avenue, asked about 311 Front Street regarding the alley that goes between Front Street and Riverview Avenue. She said she doesn't believe it has been abandoned and that people are using the alley for various uses to include a tomato garden, trees, kiddie pools and there are several

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boats and trailers parked there. She said that she does not believe it is fair that some people are utilizing the alley and she is not able to park or drive down the alley. And the alley is not being very well taken care of. She believes if people were permitted to drive through the alley, it would be better maintained.

The Mayor explained that the alley is not abandoned. He said from the east side you could go only so far and then it would stop. But the west side has been closed as long as he could remember. He explained that if there were structures in the alley then it would be a problem. The understanding is that the residents on the east side of the alley utilize it to get to the back of their properties, and on the other end, they have never had a use for it.

Assistant Administrator Tom Sahol said the Boyd's had a home there and the alley never went fully through. It is a 10-foot alley with water and sewer utility in it and the residents have been allowed to maintain it. We do not allow sheds, fences, etc., unless Council authorizes, which has been done in the past. He does not believe this would be a good idea in this area. He doesn't ever remember it going all the way through.

Administrator Richard Brook stated that this is seen throughout the town, where people have taken over the alleys that are no longer used. He said it happens a lot in the village. Some may feel we should open all of the alleys up but we need to be prepared for what is going to occur.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Lovenduski to close public comment. Voice vote – all ayes.

BUSINESS

Administrator

- Modifications to Housing Inspection Criteria

Administrator Richard Brook explained that he met with the Code Enforcement Officer Michael Perna, who is also the Housing Inspector, and they spoke at length about a question that had arisen from a resident. Michael explained that more and more nowadays people have private housing inspectors. FHA requires inspections as well as a lot of mortgage companies. Those inspections are very rigid and Michael mentioned that he thinks we may be overburdening our residents with respect to resales and duplicating some of our efforts. He asked if the township would consider modifying its inspection process for resales. He was adamant that rentals still need a very thorough inspection because of the alarming rate that properties flip sometimes. They are investment properties; they need the type of inspection that the township does for the rentals. However, for resales, he said he finds so much duplication that he thinks the township could reduce the fee and cut the time in the home, but more importantly focus on life safety items.

For example, the inspection that is done now is rather quite involved. The inspection that private inspectors do is generally extremely detailed. After looking into other townships and speaking with realtors, Michael put together a master list of items he would consider life safety and property maintenance. Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, heater certifications, chimney certifications, fire extinguishers of a certain size and location, hot water heaters and the proper pressure relief valve, hot water boilers and sink temperatures are all important things to consider. Other items would include going to a roofer to ask for certification that the roof is not leaking if you notice what looks to be a leak in the roof. You make sure all of the stove burners are operating, especially gas. You make sure it has an anti-tilt bracket which ensures it won't fall on top of anyone, including children. With electrical he looks to make sure there is a visual inspection of the service cable that comes into the home which oftentimes he finds it is frayed. If there is work done without permits, then this is the time to make sure the permits are received and the inspections are done. The goal is to make sure the house is safe for the people who are living in the home.

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Any visible signs of a life safety hazard would have to be addressed before the issuance of a CCO. In Michael's opinion, and in the opinion of Jim Hoey, the Construction Code Official, this gets to the heart of what life safety is when you go in to do an inspection of the home. It avoids some of the duplicative efforts that we have been seeing, especially because of all of the property maintenance resales and the fact that 99% have their own housing inspectors. The FHA is extremely rigid with their house inspections. If this is considered a good idea for us to work on, Michael can work with our township solicitor to prepare an ordinance for June or July at the latest. Essentially it reduces the fee, but more importantly, it gets the whole inspection back to focusing primarily on life safety.

Council President Sandusky asked if the FHA or the outside inspectors give the township a copy of what they want or is that something we would not be interested in receiving.

Administrator Brook said that a lot of towns are doing what Florence Township is proposing is to get back more to life safety. That is what the focus is on. He thinks from a standpoint of property maintenance, it's a good idea to look in the backyard to see what they have. If there are junk cars, rodents or an excessive amount of trash, there is no reason why that should not be removed. That is part of trying to maintain the quality of life for people who live in the community. We had an issue in one of the alleys in Roebing a few years ago. When Mike went down, he worked with the residents and actually helped to clear the debris and he explained to them what types of debris and what types of material draw rodents to a property. He literally helped clean up their properties and the township brought in an exterminator to deal with the alleys, it was truly a self-created problem, but he helped them to resolve it. It's a good thing when you can help keep property values up, have properties maintained in a reasonable manner, and more importantly, focus on what are life safety items.

Council agreed to proceed forward.

Bids were received through the Clerk's Office for the Mallard Creek Pump Station which will be on the agenda next week for award. Funds were included in the 2019 Budget to replace some of the trucks that are in public works and water and sewer. We are not looking to replace the dump trucks yet; Tom is still doing some research. The two dump trucks the town is using in public works go back to 1990. They are getting to the point where it is difficult to get replacement parts, they are on the verge of being unsafe and we really should look to begin to consider purchasing a mid-sized type of dump truck. The other trucks we are replacing, some go back to 2000-2001, which is 18 to 19 years which is pretty good for a useful life out of trucks. As long as we continue to maintain and we are not incurring any new debt service for this particular purchase that's a good thing. We are also going to auction off the 1993 backhoe.

The museum reached out and it has been our standard practice that they tend to sell a few patterns every year. They asked for authorization to sell eight patterns this year. The museum will take pictures of the patterns and send them to us for documentation, then we authorize them to proceed.

Lastly, Mr. Brook said that 1470 Hornberger Avenue, next to the municipal parking lot, has been a problem property for several years now. The township has been trying to have the owner repair or demolish the building to no avail. Yesterday, representatives of the township spent the majority of the day in Superior Court before Judge Bookbinder. The township has been trying to work with the owner of the property for years. The township was able to get the Uniform Construction Board to rule that this was an unsafe structure, but the owner refuses to remediate the problems on the site. The court set a new deadline of June 15, 2019 to provide interior plans for the inside of the building and fully finish the repairs on all 3 roofs. If the owner does not meet the deadline then Solicitor Grant will move before the judge to have the building demolished. The township is doing everything they can to get that building brought up to code so that it is no longer a detriment to that part of the community.

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Assistant Administrator

- 2019 Road Program and Park Improvement Bids

Assistant Administrator Sahol stated that bids had been received for the 2019 Road Program and the Park Improvement Projects for paving at Wilkie Park as well as expanding the parking lot at Marter Park. Engineer Biegen indicated, in a memo to the Council, that the bids were in order and he is recommending that Council move forward with a resolution authorizing Barrett Paving for both projects, as they were the lowest responsible bidder. The resolutions awarding both projects will be on the agenda of the May 15, 2019 meeting. He stated that the pre-construction meeting will be scheduled within the next two weeks so that we can talk about his mobilization timeline and how Barrett will prioritize his works. Preliminary work can start before school lets out for summer, but the majority of the work is done during summer vacation so as to not interfere with the school buses or the children walking to and from school.

- Electronic Pet Containment Fence

Assistant Administrator Sahol stated that this type of fencing is impossible to see and is not something that would be subject to an inspection by the Code Office. He stated that he would like Council's approval to add legislation requiring registration of electronic pet containment fencing. He said that he thought it would be the right thing to do to accept these with no fee. This would basically be an authorization of the homeowner's indication as to where the fence was installed based on the survey.

Following a discussion on how electronic fences would be installed, how they work and the hazards involved with them. Councilman Ostrander asked what would happen to existing installations. Assistant Administrator Sahol said that he didn't think that anything could be done to existing installations, but we could probably require that the placards identifying the location of the electronic fences be installed. Council agreed that Assistant Administrator Sahol should proceed with drawing up some regulations for electronic pet containment fences.

Mayor

Mayor Wilkie said that we have a busy week coming up in Florence Township. Andrew Ferdetta would be receiving his Eagle Scout on Saturday. Mayor Wilkie said that he would be attending and asked Council if they were going to attend to please RSVP.

There is a Council meeting on May 15, 2019. On Thursday, May 16, 2019 there is the rededication of Roebling Park in memory of Paul and Loretta Varga. On Friday, May 17th at 12:00 noon there is the Cox memorial at the municipal building. Friday night is also the High School Prom.

On Saturday, May 18th there is a dinner, honoring our hometown author Lou Borbi, at the Main Street Community Center. Councilman Sandusky was instrumental in the planning of this event.

Mayor Wilkie wished all the mother's a Happy Mother Day.

Mayor Wilkie said that the river towns had recently had a meeting regarding flooding from the Rancocas Creek. There will be another meeting and Florence has been invited to join. Mayor Wilkie said that he is investigating whether or not it would be beneficial to join. We don't experience flooding from the creek but we did have the erosion problem along the Delaware River bank. He said that Pierre LaCombe a former member of the Environmental Commission, is very knowledgeable about the soils and he has provided a lot of information regarding the river.

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Mayor Wilkie stated that Ritchard Woolston has been on the Housing Authority since 1999. His term is up the end of July and Council would need to act to reappoint him if desired.

Motion of Lovenduski, seconded by Ostrander to reappoint Ritchard Woolston to another 5 year appointment to the Housing Authority.

Roll call vote – all ayes. Unanimous approval. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Lovenduski to close the public portion of the meeting. Voice vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/jns