

Florence Township Council Regular Session 12/4/19

Florence, New Jersey
December 4, 2019

The Florence Township Council held a regular meeting on the above date at 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.

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, Bruce Garganio, Paul Ostrander, Dave Woolston, Jerry Sandusky

Also Present: Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator, Thomas J. Hastie, Jr., Township Solicitor;
Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk

Absent: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Thomas A. Sahol, Assistant Administrator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session of November 6, 2019
- Closed Session of November 13, 2019

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

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Ostrander seconded by Garganio to receive and file the following reports. Voice vote – all ayes.

- CFO's Certificate of Sale of General Obligation Bonds Series 2019
- CFO's Cash Reports and Budget Reports for October 2019
- Tax Collector's Monthly Tax Report for October 2019
- Tax Collector's Monthly Water & Sewer Report for October 2019

Motion of Baldorossi seconded by Woolston to approve the **Treasurer's Bill List**.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Unanimous vote – Motion carried

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APPLICATIONS

- A. Transient Merchant License Renewal – Jarhead Johnny’s & Sons Hot Dogs.
- B. Social Affair Permit to Florence Township Civic Association for Night at the Races to benefit Boy Scout Troop 3. January 25, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at the Florence Township Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling.
- C. Night at the Races License for Florence Township Civic Association to benefit Boy Scout Troop 3, January 25, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at the Florence Township Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling.
- D. On-Site 50/50 Raffle for Florence Township Civic Association to benefit Boy Scout Troop 3, January 25, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. at the Florence Township Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling.

Motion by Ostrander seconded by Baldorossi to approve the applications.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous vote – Motion carried

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

John Gladwell, Jr. of Jarhead Johnny’s and Sons Hot Dogs, 240 Fifth Avenue, Roebling, thanked Council for working with him and allowing him to give back to the town.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, a motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close Public Comment. Voice vote – all ayes.

RESOLUTIONS

**RESOLUTION 2019-200
Police Auction, Abandoned Vehicles**

**RESOLUTION 2019-201
Approving Redevelopment Agreement with IPT Florence West Urban Renewal, LLC**

**RESOLUTION 2019-202
Award Contract for Florence Columbus Road Elevated Tank Painting**

**RESOLUTION 2019-203
Transferring Certain 2019 Budget Appropriations**

Motion of Garganio, seconded by Baldorossi to approve Resolutions 2019-200 through 2019-203.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

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ORDINANCES

**ORDINANCE 2019-24
Amend Ch. 140 of the Florence Township Code
(2nd Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption)**

Administrator Brook explained that our code used to read that if you were having a final meter reading when selling your home, the fee would \$25 per meter. Some properties have more than one meter and would be charged for \$25 for each meter at the time of a final reading for the sale of a property. Assistant Administrator Sahol and Director of Water & Sewer, David Lebak, thought it would be fair to modify this to read \$25 per property. The main focus of this ordinance is to reduce fees and makes it easier for homeowners.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close Public Hearing on Ordinance 2019-24. Voice vote – all ayes.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Woolston to approve Ordinance No. 2019-24.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

**ORDINANCE 2019-25
Authorize Five-Year Exemption and Abatement Law
(2nd Reading, Public Hearing and Adoption)**

Administrator Brook explained that under the statutes in New Jersey you can only adopt this ordinance for a 10-year period of time. We are coming up on that closing time within the next year or so, so it seems more prudent at this time to terminate the current five-year exemption abatement law and to redo it for another 10 years. This doesn't exempt anything related to the property taxes only the building values. The building values and the taxes related to them are phased in over a five-year period.

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting up to the public.

Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to close Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2019-25. Voice vote – all ayes.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

Motion of Woolston, seconded by Garganio to approve Ordinance No. 2019-25.

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Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

**ORDINANCE 2019-26
Bond Ordinance, Property Purchase, Block 130, Lot 35
(2nd Reading, Public Hearing & Adoption)**

Administrator Brook explained that Ordinance No. 26 and Ordinance No. 27 go together. When a municipality purchases property, there needs to be one ordinance that authorizes the actual property purchase and oftentimes an additional ordinance accompanies it that authorizes the funding. This involves the old bank in Roebing on Main Street. Over the years, the township has taken a look at properties that may have some significant value to the community, not always a financial value but they have an importance to the town. Two great examples are the Roebing Inn, which as you may recall many years ago there was a push to have it demolished to make a parking lot. Ultimately, Mayor Wilkie and Council at that time had the vision to see that it could become affordable housing for seniors. And it became part of Florence Township’s affordable housing plan. The other property was the Duffy School on West 2nd Street. That property was converted into a quality senior living facility and became part of the township’s affordable housing plan as well. We are not sure exactly at this time what will occur with this property but its condition was continuing to deteriorate. It was getting worse and the municipality thought it best to step in, acquire the property for a very reasonable price, and in the near future determine what would be the best use for it.

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting up to the public.

Alisa Paykos Theurer, 117 Fifth Avenue, Roebing, stated that she is excited that there is some thought being put into Main Street in Roebing. She said it is depressing to look at it these days but she has hope that it will be coming back. She attended the Andy Kim meeting on Monday and she has three young children and she expressed how she would love to raise them in this town and she thanked Council.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, a motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2019-26. Voice vote – all ayes.

Motion of Baldorossi, seconded by Ostrander to approve Ordinance No. 2019-26.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

**ORDINANCE 2019-27
Authorizing Acquisition of Block 130, Lot 35
(2nd Reading, Public Hearing & Adoption)**

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting up to the public. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, a motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close public comment on Ordinance No. 2019-27. Voice vote – all ayes.

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Motion of Woolston, seconded by Ostrander to approve Ordinance No. 2019-27.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

**ORDINANCE 2019-28
Authorizing Acquisition of Block 18, Lot 7
(Introduction & 1st Reading) (Public Hearing 12/18/2019)**

Administrator Brook explained that this is the property located at 629 West Third Street. It is in very poor condition and is in need of attention. The municipality is acquiring the money on a cash basis from the Affordable Housing account. The ultimate goal is to either renovate the building or demolish the structure and rebuild housing in that area and on some of the other properties to help fulfill the township’s affordable housing requests under the state requirements.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to approve Ordinance No. 2019-28.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky
NOES: None
ABSENT: None Unanimous approval – Motion carried

**ORDINANCE 2019-29
Financial Agreement with IPT Florence West Urban Renewal, LLC
(Introduction & 1st Reading) (Public Hearing 12/18/2019)**

Administrator Brook explained that this is the old Griffin Pipe property. The west side, which is the river side, had much more contamination than the east side, the land side. The old property owner, Amstead Industries, was making no significant movement to remediate and bring the property back to life. We are fortunate that IPT, or Black Creek, out of Denver, acquired the properties and worked with the municipality to make the best possible design for the town and there is a significant amount of money that goes in to both properties with respect to remediation in making them safe under the DEP rules. Because of the location along the river they have even more funds to expend with respect to bringing the property out. One of the ways you encourage economic development in the municipality is to create these financial agreements, in accordance with state law, where the property owner continues to pay full land taxes but over a period of time the amount of payment the municipality collects with respect to the building values are incrementally increased, in this case over twenty-five years. It is not what is sometimes referred to as a giveaway, it is a way to develop a property that in all likelihood would never have been developed in Florence Township, just like in many other municipalities. They pay a significant amount of money over that period of time. They pay land taxes, which get placed as a credit or a deduction on the other payments that are made to the municipality. Over a period of 25 years, just for the record, in all likelihood the full payment will be more than \$13 million. When we work with a developer, we talk to them about economic incentive programs they can participate in within the community and this developer has taken a keen interest in the municipality. This particular developer on the east side participated with working with the town so that the rails and the ties from Front Street all the way to Spruce are going to be removed over time and it will ultimately become a walkway and bikeway path through the municipality. As you know, Mayor Wilkie

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and Council acquired a grant from the federal government that is in exceedance of \$500,000 so between what the developer is doing and the grant, we will likely be able to do the entire project by 2021.

With the west side, the developer sat down with us and talked about things that would really benefit the community. One is to work with the township to improve the security at the Roebing School. It is a beautiful old structure which goes back many years, but it has its challenges with respect making sure the students are well protected. The school does a very good job with what they have but they can improve upon that. So, the funds that they are going to contribute to the municipality as redevelopment fees are going to help the school fully accomplish that renovation so the school will be a much more secure building when renovated. The funds are also going to help replace the handicap ramp at the middle school. This contribution is significant and generous on their part as it is in the range of \$430,000. The developer, Jim Murray, really took an interest in understanding what the township is trying to do to benefit the community. And in the end, it is assisting the school. The children are so very important to all of us and it will help improve the security of that building and also improve the handicap access for people at the middle school.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to approve Ordinance No. 2019-29.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Baldorossi, Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

Unanimous approval – Motion carried

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

Councilman Woolston spoke regarding a visit to the Heart House on November 21, 2019. In September of 2018, he and Martin Eckert learned of an opportunity for municipalities to acquire Automatic External Defibrillators (AED's) at no charge. He showed Council one of the AED's they had received. He said that they received a letter of eligibility for the devices along with an invitation for the festivities. We were awarded four AED's for outside sports and the Community Center, etc. He stated that it was a heartwarming experience to see Dr. Gibbs, who initiated the program, because his best friend at 17 years old was a baseball player and he had a heart issue on the field and passed away. His father was a cardiologist and also had two other brothers. One of the brothers also passed from a heart issue and that is what inspired Dr. Gibbs to become a cardiologist. He believes that if they had more ideas like this back then, his best friend may still be here. The four AED's were donated and made available by the joint efforts of the Heart House and Virtua Health.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

Absent.

Administrator

Administrator Brook stated that the contract for the repainting of the water tower on Florence-Columbus Road was authorized. The most important thing about the utility is the maintenance of the infrastructure and never allowing it to fall too far behind. This water tower is almost twenty years old. In the very early spring, it is going to be taken out of service for, what we hope is only 60 days depending on the type of winter we have. We will have to rely on only one water tower to service the entire community so the timing is critical. Assistant Administrator Sahol will post information for the public as we approach March 1st. The tower will come out of service and it will be completely repainted and any repairs will be done to it.

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We are ahead of schedule, there are no serious problems as of now but you can begin to see the wear and tear after 17 to 18 years. This is a preemptive move and the municipality will be good at this particular location for another 20 years.

He also mentioned that Mayor Wilkie and Council were able to obtain a grant in the amount of \$231,500 to do the third phase of Potts Mill Road. Assistant Administrator Sahol will be coming back in the near future with a phasing plan for Section 2. It is anticipated to be done in the spring. And with phase 3, there is no reason to think it wouldn't be done by the fall or early spring 2021, which is a very critical and necessary road that needs repaving.

Lastly, he mentioned a letter from Alaimo Associates, the Township's Water and Sewer Engineer, regarding Turnpike Crossings East. No resolution is needed, but we will be having Mayor Wilkie sign the forms for DEP so the developer can extend the water mains from near the municipal building all the way down to the section of West Front Street near the sewer plant. Initially the developer was going to put a water tower for their water service. When the Water and Sewer Director looked at it, he had conversations with the developer and they realized there was a better way to do this to benefit the community. Because that is one of the oldest parts of the town, the lines are old and not necessarily as large as the lines that get put in today so therefore the developer needs to install a new 12" water main. What that will do, is to increase water pressure, improve fire protection efforts and it has a benefit over the long term for the community in that part of the town. Mayor Wilkie will be signing the application and it will be sent to the DEP for the appropriate permit.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no Old Business at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business at this time.

BOARD OF HEALTH

There was no Board of Health at this time.

MISCELLANEOUS

There was no Miscellaneous at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked if the leaf vacuum is repaired and back on the street? Administrator Brook said that he thinks it is in service. He said he would double-check with Public Works Superintendent, Rich Pendle, but it is his understanding that it is in service and they have been working overtime. He mentioned he received a letter from Helen Marian of Sixth Avenue in Roebing commending the job that Public Works is doing picking up tree limbs and collecting leaves.

Melanie Miecowski, 1000 West Fourth Street, said that the Public Works Department came by and manually picked up her leaves today. She wanted to thank them for doing a really nice job.

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Alisa Paykos Thuerer, 117 5th Avenue, asked if she were interested in leasing the bank property for a business like an eatery or community arts center, what are the codes that would have to be enacted? What department would she have to reach out to and if there are a list of the codes that she would have to look out for? And what type of ordinances are there for historical buildings like that? Are there any breaks for businesses that would want to go in there?

Administrator Brook explained the tax/economic incentives which are used in New Jersey. The municipalities can only allow what the state law allows and it is very strict. There is no program that he is aware of where you can take an existing building as a municipality and provide a tax incentive. You can take a building, under the 5-year exemption law and if they expand 30% or more, you can work to give that exemption on the additional structure that they are building. If you are building a new building, you can offer a financial incentive. He is unaware of anything that would allow a municipality to grant an economic incentive to do what she is talking about. The town has done it in working with some property owners, for example, the Duffy School. But that is an affordable housing project so they were able to come in and expend millions of dollars and go to the state and get a tax credit award. This is when they get the credits, they go out on the market, they sell them for a certain amount of money on the dollar and then they take it and they restore a building like this. BCCAP may have done the same thing with the old Roebling Inn and when it came to the Roebling Firehouse it was the municipality that stepped in and working with the Fire District. Mayor and Council authorized to pay off the balance of their mortgage to preserve that building because it is such a central part of the village of Roebling. He stated that he is not personally aware of anything that a municipality could do for an existing building that is renovated.

Ms. Theurer asked if there are any additional codes? Administrator Brook explained, that with respect to the codes, it would come down to the ultimate use of the building, which will determine what would have to be done under the Uniform Construction Code in the state of New Jersey. He recommended she come in and talk about the potential use, which would then tell the town if the rehabilitation code kicks in and there are certain provisions that then take effect, which you would then incur significant costs.

John Gladwell, 240 Fifth Avenue, asked with the township purchasing that property, would the township engineer be able to go in and identify what had to be brought up to code. Then the township could be reimbursed quicker by having other investors come in. as a starting off point.

Administrator Brook explained that it would still depend on the use and we would just need a general idea.

Mr. Gladwell also asked if there was any program for the start of a marina in the Roebling Park by the river, possibly for a small boat dock and fishing area for kids. And he also asked if there is anything in town such as other warehouses, or anyone coming and investing in the town, are they paying toward the program that is going to be affecting a solar light program, so as not to disrupt the driving and/or inside homes. He is thinking it would make people feel safer to move about after dark.

Councilman Bruce Garganio spoke about discussions about a marina along the waterway in Roebling park. It is not too far along but there are definitely discussions about turning that area into a marina/restaurant area, a location where people can go and enjoy the water. There is a small committee within the planning board that is working on the initial phases and as it moves forward, the community may be brought into it for ideas, etc.

Brian Hewitt, 41 Amboy Avenue, asked, in regards to the marina area, what would the town need to start a marina and how investors that might be interested can get involved. Councilman Garganio explained that the land is owned by the town so negotiations would have to be made through the town. He recommended that any investors come in to talk to Administrator Brook and he could help lead them through the process.

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Council President Jerry Sandusky said it is good to hear that the public has interest in local business. Mayor and Council are interested in improving the town.

John Gladwell, 240 Fifth Avenue, asked again about the solar light program. Administrator Brook explained that we used to put it out in the paper and there would be a bid that would come in. What Florence Township has done, is it joined with municipalities throughout the state of New Jersey and it takes all of your electricity needs with street lights and it goes out through this organization called the Sustainable Energy Meeting. Essentially, you take all of your electricity needs and you do an auction and the deregulated portion of the electricity bill and you seek a percentage/savings. That is how the town tries to minimize its cost to the residents. As you may or may not know, the township's municipal tax rate has not increased in 7 years so the township will save anywhere from 10-20% on its electricity bills for street lighting. With respect to solar, he does not know enough about it. He said that we have been approached by multiple entities to take the Roebing property and convert it to a solar farm or, one developer wanted to put a 2 million square foot warehouse there. Mayor and Council have held firm every time, they do not see that as a positive use for that property. There are many other uses that will benefit the community in a greater way. He is going to have Assistant Administrator Sahol call Mr. Gladwell regarding the solar.

A motion was made by Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to close Public Comment. Voice vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Baldorossi to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/jns