

**COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
430 WESTFIELD AVE., CLARK, NJ**

October 5, 2020

7:30 pm

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Albanese, Barr, Mazzarella, Smith, Toal, O'Connor

Absent: Hund

Also, Present: Sal Bonaccorso, Mayor; John Laezza, Business Administrator; Mark Dugan, Township Attorney; Edith Merkel, Township Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: MOMENT OF SILENCE

This meeting is in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 231, P.L.1975) as adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by mailing the Annual Schedule of meetings to the Star Ledger, Union County Local Source, and TAP into Clark, by posting such Annual Meeting Schedule on the bulletin board in Town Hall reserved for such announcements, as well as the Official Website of the Township, and the proper filing of said Notice.

RESOLUTIONS:

1. Award of Contract for Phase II of the Capital Road Improvement program
(Bid opening Oct 7th)

Township Clerk: We are opening those bids this Wednesday, October 7th.

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second on this Resolution

Mover: Smith Second: Mazzarella

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

2. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 taxes in the amount of \$30,464.83
3. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to apply sewer account balance adjustments as credit in the amount of \$7,450.00
4. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 sewer fees in the amount of \$1,750.34
5. Approving the Council Meeting Calendar for 2021
6. Approving the 2021 Holiday Schedule

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second on the Consent Agenda

Mover: Toal Second: Albanese

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Each person addressing the Council shall first give his/her name and address to the Clerk. All remarks shall be addressed to the Council as a body and shall not exceed 10 minutes in duration.

Seeing no one coming forward Councilman Smith made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, seconded by Councilman Barr

Council President O'Connor directed roll call: All Ayes

Aye: Albanese, Barr, Mazzarella, Smith, Toal, O'Connor

MAYOR, COUNCIL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMENTS:

Mr. Laezza: The Best Practices Inventory that was sent to us by the States Treasures Office for 2020, has been reviewed and prepared by the CFO, myself and the Municipal Clerk. We came up with a score of 23.5, so, that there will be no state aid for health from our (inaudible) at the time. By and large we (you have a copy of it, right?) (Council responded yes) Something that you should be interested in is item #44, and they asked us if we were in approval of the stormwater operation, the rain tax, and we said no. The current state mandates it without funding...the state should pay for it. So, we responded to this exactly as we felt, especially since they were looking for something to do down there for the unscored survey. We let them know how we really thought in most cases. We faired pretty well- and there were things that we said no to, that we would still say no, when and if they come to it. I think that we did a good job. Basically, we are in very good shape in the municipality as it relates to Best Practices. We told them exactly how we felt.

Councilwoman Albanese: So, you are talking about those unscored sections.

Mr. Laezza: Yes, the unscored sessions.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Thank you Mr. President. We are having Trunk or Treat; it is going to happen. Murphy has put out an array of Halloween restrictions with social distancing, masks, this, that and the other thing. Even candy, my daughter was telling me, I don't know where she saw it but I didn't see it, about like if you were going to put three little pieces to put them in a baggie, they are not allowed to touch the candy, the people at home have to give them the candy. You have to wear a mask...did you ever wear those Halloween masks? Like it's almost impossible to see or breath, so now we are going to put another mask on top of that, doesn't make sense. Look, whatever it is for the kids, it is about the kids and I am happy that we are getting to have something, it is very, very important.

The gym floors are basically done, everything is in shape down there, they look dynamite. We are looking forward to reopening up the Recreation Center. I am closely watching the COVID numbers, that is what my whole thing is here right now, because we don't want to open and then there is a spike and then we have to close and the whole bit. We had a sanitizing machine coming that is like a mist sprayer that we could put disinfectant in and spray all of the rooms and hallways that we use daily to help and try to cut down on this Coronavirus. I think that it has helped because we have used those three machines for the police, fire and DPW, and none of our people have come down with Coronavirus, and I am happy to see that. We have been doing that since about April in those buildings.

Numbers in Clark are basically relatively low. We had a few but anything would look like a jump from zero, you if you add four or five in it seems like a jump but those are very low numbers. Clark has been very diligent in trying to fight off this virus and I give all of the citizens all credit for that. Even though out the pandemic, I think that we had 295 cases, I believe from Friday's report, and that is not very much considering some of the other towns around us. I will dovetail into my speech about...if you look at the towns that were hit the hardest and the cities, they were towns and cities that have high density housing. As you all know one of my pet peeves on the high-density affordable housing that was jammed down our throats by the courts, and the lack of effort from the Governor and the State Legislature, these are the problems when you have pandemics like this. Clark has a lot of people but we are not overly populated and towns like Clark and Westfield and Cranford and Fanwood and Scotch Plains to name a few, these are the towns that someday are going to be at risk God forbid something like that ever happens again. Because when you move

the higher density into the community as well as that happening you will also have infrastructure problems, school crowding, police problems, more fire apparatus to worry about for even bigger buildings, so this is why I would really wish the State (of New Jersey) to take a look at this and think about what they are doing and come up with a decent affordable housing plan like we had here for the last I would say 15 or 16 years, I guess. Look at Bergen County, highly in density, highly populated that area (tape inaudible) they are cities, they got killed. So, even the cities around us here in Union County got hit very hard. So, that's why with all of that and all of the other reasons that I listed I think that for health issues it should be reexamined. We will try to do that but I know that the Governor's staunchly against it and I don't think it is going to happen unless there is another Governor that comes in with a brain that can figure it out.

November 6th the high school football team.... it's "Patriot's Night", sponsored by yours truly. We are going to have every football player come on the field with the American Flag, like we hang out on Westfield Avenue. We are going to be honoring our Veterans of the American Legion and the VFW's and that will be at the 50-yard line to get their congratulations and thanks from our student athletes. It is going to be a great night; it is going to be a very patriotic night in Clark. I am very proud of it and I thank Gus Kalikas our Athletic Director, Ed Grande and the Board of Education for going along with this - your support Council, like always. It is going to be a great night and a true patriots night honoring and thanking our veterans. It dovetails right into five days later on Veterans Day, November 11th, I think it is very imperative right now that this country looks at our Veterans and makes sure that we honor them properly with the respect they deserve keeping this nation so safe and great. And I certainly thank them and I know that all of you do, so we are looking forward to that. The only caveat is there's going to be 500 people allowed into the game. We are trying to get a live feed by TV36, we have some issues that we are trying to work through because of the new building going up it's now not time to spend money, but we are checking out the feed to the football field, if that can go live then we will go live. John has spoken to Ed Davenport and Phil Scardilli about it, it will probably be taped and shown throughout the week, so, even when people can't get in. Right now, the student athletes and their parents are getting tickets to the game or for any game in Clark for that matter. The Roselle game got cancelled due to COVID, we had a person test positive, no I'm sorry we didn't, Scotch Plains just played us and two of the players were temperature taken before the game, they tested positive a couple of days later, they let us know, so we had to cancel out. So, hopefully there will be some kind of season left for these kids, it is something that has been really tough since last March on all of our young athletes and our young students in town. So, we will see what has to happen there and we will go from there.

Breakfast with Santa, as of right now, doesn't look good. I haven't made a complete decision on that but if these numbers keep going... we are going to cancel that again this year like we did everything else unfortunately. That (day) is always a great morning with the kids and it is a lot of fun.

Ralph and I talked about the tree lighting; we will be having that. But it looks like it is going to be a scaled down model of mostly all outside activities. It's not going to be done indoors like we used the cafeteria and the gyms in the past for different entertainment. The tree lighting is important and we all like to do it, but it will be done outside and on a smaller scale at this point, so that's what it looks like right not. Any questions? John, thanks again for the Best Practices.

Mr. Laezza: It is interesting to listen to the mayor about opening the building. My Finance Office asked, "what did you learn from the pandemic about the municipal building and the like?" They said that we should keep it that way "closed" all the time, we have never been more efficient.

Mayor Bonaccorso: I have to say to you in that matter that our staff here is doing a great job running up to the front door, taking the different permits and applications and helping our citizens out. I really can't see any citizen being upset with the service they are getting.

Mr. Laezza: No.

Mayor Bonaccorso: So, I thank the girls here in the building and the department heads for seeing that through.

The voting box is doing pretty good according to Ralph. He is seeing a very good flow in activity. As you guys know we are going out campaigning right now, still a lot of people don't understand that they cannot come here and vote.

How about the Town-wide Garage Sale?

Township Clerk: We had on Friday, 317 (applications), and we received about 20 more today.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Okay, 327 people. You know, there was a situation again where some citizens asked for us to do something on Facebook. Edie and I talked about doing this next year because of the silly garage sale permit and charging people, I guess it is like \$3.00 for it. But the reason for it is so people don't have a garage sale every weekend and make a business out of it, that is what it is all about, it is not the \$3.00, it is not going to make a hill of beans of difference in our treasury. We talked about it with covid, and we just kind of waved that (the fee) because nobody was doing it anyway, it was a very few.

Township Clerk: It is like every corner of the whole town, and there are about four streets that are new today that are not on there (the map). It is not going in the paper because it just would not be readable, but if anybody wants it, it is highlighted... literally.

Council President O'Connor: I think that it is a great idea. The only thing that I heard from citizens is that they are just concerned about traffic.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Well, do you know what? It is a Saturday and a Sunday. Traffic in Clark is always lower on the weekends. But what are you going to do?

Council President O'Connor: I understand.

Mayor Bonaccorso: There are a lot of positives and a little bit of negatives. Edie and I talked about speaking to you guys next year about maybe doing this twice, once in the spring and once in the fall, two times and having no garage sales throughout the year, that might be the way to go. You know, get them all (garage sales) done in two weekends in the year. The township is spending a little bit of money to advertise it for them. We are going to ask Liz from the Tap if she could do the final one maybe the Friday before the actual garage sale, which is the 17th and 18th. People are very thankful; they are very excited and they are very happy. So, the police will be out patrolling the areas like we always do and I think it is going to be a nice day to indulge in selling and buying.

Council President O'Connor: I know that Edie has worked hard along with Scott McCabe with regard to picking up after the events.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, yes. Well, it's going to be for those who participated in the garage sale, they can leave their stuff out and we will pick it up the following week. It is not a reopening of the Bulky Clean-up. So, the citizens should know from March through October we were there for each

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week picking up their bulky. You have to try and follow the rules a little bit, you have to kind of follow the rules a little bit because it wouldn't be fair now for other people who didn't participate to start throwing stuff out at the curb. You had all year until you had Coronavirus and no one was able to really leave their home. Our Bulky Clean-up number was very big this year, people were sitting home, bored and cleaning things out. So, to me, I think you know we've been more than fair and ample.

The last Monday in October we will start our "Leaf Clean-up", as we have traditionally done and we will then again be the envy of Union County on how efficient and how many times we are in front of people's houses picking up leaves. It usually averages 14 to 16 times a year, there is no other town in Union County that can do that. We are proud of that and we got the tools through your recommendation, and your funding, over the last 20 years to provide them with the best equipment to get it done efficiently and quickly, and I am very proud of the DPW for that. We have a good crew and the guys do a good job I have to say. Hats off to Scott and Pat who run it, and all of the men that work down there, we are very lucky.

Council President O'Connor: Can I make a suggestion? I just thought about this. So, I have a new neighbor right around the block from me. I was talking to him today and he had some question about all the great services that we have. I asked him if he received the Report to the People and he said that he didn't have one. So, I told him that I would go home and get you one. So, I brought him one. When people are new to our town, or are actually just buying a house in town, and they come to townhall for various permits, maybe we can put one of those Report to the People in a packet for them. Although they know the services sometimes, they are a little bit confused.

Mayor Bonaccorso: We have them in my office, and in the Clerk's Office, maybe what we should do is put some in the Construction Office. Pat, I had a lady yesterday at the door, very nice lady and she said I'm new to the town, and I told her about ourclark.com, we made it simple "our", for people like me to remember it because I am not going to say [http/Clark-backspace.org](http://Clark-backspace.org), I mean forget about it. So, I told her to go on there and you have all of our services right at your fingers, Recreation, DPW, etc. and so on. And then next year we will send out the book again in January like we do. So, the thing that disappoints me Pat, and I have to be honest, I talked to John early this year that maybe we should stop it. When Rich Kazanowski was a Councilman, this was the big thing. Everybody wanted the Report to the People, well, everything is online (Council President O'Connor: right), everything is online, so we are servicing a small group of people who do not go online, which is fine, and they usually are elderly people. But the problem I find that between the book and online is that people still don't know what is going on, and especially with DPW services, more so than anything else. When to put stuff out and when not to...People call here throughout the year and Donna says, "sir, we sent you a book and it is online" The information is available. Now, to the new people that move in, Pat there is no way of us really keeping track of that. So, I mean, like I tell everybody that I meet that is new in town, go onto ourclark.com. The other thing I'm really stressing to people, if you don't know...

Township Clerk: A lot of the new people do call and we ask them if they need the Report to the people. This is our website...do you need voter registration? Do you need a brochure for recreation? So, we kind of put our own little packet together when they call and we send it out.

Council President O'Connor: Okay, great, thank you.

Mayor Bonaccorso: So, that's the whole thing with that, I get disappointed some times with the same people doing the same thing each and every year. After that little storm that we had the other night some of the westside got hit with some winds and there were some branches down. Scott has been around picking them up and they should have probably completed it today. So, even that we

do, unlike Westfield, we do it, we give the best services and we are happy to provide it. Any other questions?

Council President O'Connor: No, thank you.

Councilwoman Albanese: Regarding the library, the hours are continually being dispended to make it more accessible to people.

Councilman Barr: No comment.

Councilman Mazzarella: Just wanted to say that Trump is a Rockstar.

Mayor Bonaccorso: We had a nice peaceful protest on Saturday, people behaved themselves and they were very happy to be here, they loved our community, and I really think it was a nice show of people supporting the President. I was happy to be a part of it, it was a lot of fun.

Councilman Smith: Nothing this evening.

Councilman Toal: No comment.

Mr. Laezza: Clark has exceeded the census (tape inaudible) 2010. We are 3.2% more than we did in 2010, so far. We have 6 communities in Union County that are below 2010, Elizabeth, Fanwood, Hillside, Plainfield....

Councilwoman Albanese: Those towns went down and we went up.

Mr. Laezza: Clark has exceeded the Census (tape audible) in 2010. So, we paid two percent more than we paid in 2010 so far. You have six communities in Union County that are below in 2010.

Mayor Bonaccorso: We saw on savenewjersey.com, Governor Murphy scores an F for graded (tape inaudible) and ranked one of New Jerseys' worst governors on taxes and spending and I will lay anyone a \$10 bet that would like to take it that he will be reelected.

Township Clerk: You know that we sent out postcards. I should have brought one here... everybody should have gotten one but I still have a stack, I guess Jennifer ordered extras, if anyone wants them.

Council President O'Connor: It is a picture of where the machine is.

Township Clerk: It is about voting and it shows where the drop box is. Also, different websites, you can go onto, such as, unioncountyvotes.com and all these different websites to get information.

Councilwoman Albanese: I did get a message from the County.

Council President: I just saw her video she (County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi) put on Facebook.

Township Clerk: That's the other thing, please tell people if anybody calls you with election questions, tell them to watch the video at www.unioncountyvotes.com. I mean they can always call us; we're getting steady calls all day.

Councilwoman Albanese: I did meet someone who accidently threw away their ballots and they were very easily able to get a replacement.

Council President O'Connor: Do people understand that if they fill out a ballot that isn't theirs, or for someone who is deceased, that it is a crime.

Township Clerk: Most people understand that. I did have one election and it was probably four years ago, where somebody came into my office and insisted that she should be able to vote for her dead father because he was always so proud to vote. I told her to go see the judge in Elizabeth.

Mayor Bonaccorso: You know what guys I have to tell you the calls that I have gotten from Clark people who have received ballots, illegit ballots, people whose son hasn't lived in town for 10 years because he lives in Woodbridge, ballots thrown away, is that okay? Don't get me wrong guys I have not spoken to 100's of people, but I have spoken to people. The thing is that I hope in the inner cities, and in other areas, they are doing the same thing. Governor Murphy signed a pledge, I think eighteen other State's, promising to count every vote. I don't disagree with that; I am sure that they will. I am absolutely sure that they will count every vote, I really pray to God that's the way it is. What I am worried about is how many of those votes are doubles and triples. What happens to the person that passed away in the last month or two, or three or four, and they get a ballot? Does that family sit down and decide to send it in because they are not looking at signatures? You know, my kid has not lived here for 10 years. I mean conventional wisdom should have made you say if somebody hasn't voted in the last four elections, they are either dead or not interested. If you haven't voted in the last four elections and you want to vote you have to request a ballot because we are only going to go back the last four years of who voted, that is what I think. I mean if you haven't been out in the last four Presidential, Gubernatorial and you know Senate and Congress elections, what make them think that you are coming out this year? So, who knows? Again, will they count them? I am sure that they will. I hear that Union County things are secured and they have a Republican and a Democrat in the van, they pick up the ballots, they bring them down to a room, there is a 24-hour guard standing on guard, they have a Sheriff's Officer there, I believe all that. Mayor continues about ballot concerns....

Council President O'Connor: Madam Clerk are you finished?

Township Clerk: That's it. Just follow me to my office if any of you want those postcards.

Mark Dugan: No comment.

Council President O'Connor: My only comment is, once again, directed towards John and his team, phenomenal job every year. You know we never get money taken away from us because we do things right. So, John thank you very much, appreciate it.

Mr. Laezza: We have a good team.

Council President O'Connor asked for a motion to adjourn
A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilwoman Albanese

ROLL CALL: All Ayes

Aye: Albanese, Barr, Mazarella, Smith, Toal, O'Connor

ADJOURNMENT

