

COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
430 WESTFIELD AVE., CLARK, NJ
September 8, 2020
7:30 pm

ROLL CALL:

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

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

Dispensed

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 and the proper filing of said notice.

RESOLUTIONS:

- 1. Council as the ABC Board:** Authorizing the annual renewal of Alcoholic Beverage Licenses for the 2020-2021 Term

Discussion:

Township Clerk: I am happy to say that all of the licenses complied and will be renewing. The state delayed the process because of the virus, everybody is good.

Councilman Smith: I saw Molly's down on here but then there is no sign up at Molly's and it hasn't opened. Do we know what is going on? Have you heard anything?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Some say the sign broke during the storm, others are saying they are not coming back, so who knows. But either way they still have to renew their license to make it transferable.

Councilman Smith: So, the license is theirs or their landlords?

Mr. Laezza: It is theirs.

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

Mover: Mazzaella Second: Smith

- 2. Ratifying Police Department promotions effective September 1, 2020; Det. Sgt. Lott to Lieutenant, Sgt. Miguel Acabou to Lieutenant and Lt. Pitts to Captain**

Mayor Bonaccorso: I will talk about it at my comments.

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

Township Clerk: I sent you all, late in the day, a resolution that we received after the meeting was all put together for the purchase of the furniture for the police department. So, we will be adding that as a separate vote, so that will not be on the consent agenda.

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second on this Resolution
Mover: Hund Second: Mazzarella

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

3. Authorizing the Tax Collector to participate in an Electronic Tax Sale
4. Authorizing and Directing the Tax Collector to charge a fee of \$25.00 for each Notice of Tax Sale sent in conjunction with the 2020 Electronic Tax Sale
5. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 taxes in the amount of \$10,382.41
6. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to apply sewer account balance adjustments as credit in the amount of \$27,577.50
7. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 sewer fees in the amount of \$1,256.83

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

Delia Collins, 32 Georgia Street: I was just wondering I haven't been following much of what's been happening regarding the revaluation. Was that brought up at any prior meeting as to when that is going to happen?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Next year.

Delia Collins: 2021?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes.

Delia Collins: Do you know when it will start.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Covid-19 came.

Delia Collins: I realize that, I am just asking.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, no problem.

Delia Collins: Okay, thank you.

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

Council President O'Connor directed roll call: All Ayes

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

MAYOR, COUNCIL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMENTS:

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, Mr. President, thank you very much. Edie the voters box outside of Ralph's office, what's the story, did we get it?

Township Clerk: No, well, I shouldn't say no. I asked today because I thought it might come up. We've been getting numerous phone calls about elections already, as you can imagine. The answer that I received was, "I will be told in advance, they are not making any announcements until the box has been installed. If an announcement is made voters are going to drive around looking for a box which is not there and it will frustrate them, breeding mistrust of the system. You can certainly redirect those questions to our office."

Mayor Bonaccorso: I don't know if they think that the people in Clark are stupid but I can attest that they are not. Why would we drive around looking for a mail in ballot (box) when nothing has been mailed out yet? But, okay, that answers my question. Hopefully our great president will win in court, which will be impossible in a Democratic Court of New Jersey and to make people vote the way they should be able to vote. Hopefully, he will beat the.... he may be heard in court but I doubt it because then they can't fix the elections. Let 70 dead bodies get to vote this year.

Township Clerk: You know unofficially, I cannot imagine them saying no to a box for us because the situation is ideal. We followed every single thing that they asked for, we gave them every picture from the surveillance camera, we have the concrete that they can bolt it right into, it is perfect. It is handicap assessable, the handicap spots are right there, the ramp is right there.

Mayor Bonaccorso: I think that we will get it.

Township Clerk: I think that we are going to get it but they have not told me so far.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Moving on Council, just to warn you about last Thursday nights Planning Board meeting. There were some inquiries made about putting some taller buildings up in Clark in certain zoned areas. Basically, this applied to around the (Clark) Common's area, this wasn't just any old lot around. More of a longer plan, than a short-term plan, to try to find and keep ratables coming into the community. Maybe an area like the Clark Commons to bring some residential (housing) there, and try to make sure that it stays as viable as it was. So, we brought it up before the Planning Board and there was no great flavor for it. Just more of what do you guys think...and then if they were to approving it, it would have to come to you folks for your thoughts and conversation. It was declined, and I believe it made a lot of sense because we have some very talented people on the Planning Board. So, that's kind of just a trial balloon that went up there and it really went nowhere. So, if you read about it, or hear about it, at least you will know that's where it is at, and it's a dead issue as far as we are concerned at this point. Some good points were made... until we see what some of the other buildings look like... get a few years down the road then maybe we will look at it again. God only knows, I mean things change every day. But, as of now it is a complete dead issue which was good, and again I thank our talented people on the Planning Board. See it's a very good democracy in Clark, as you know we let people have their opinions and we vote. That was a good discussion for everybody and I enjoyed the meeting.

New gym floors are being installed. The back gym is about complete and then they will be starting on the front gym. Today they painted the white lines on the floor, the fighting Crusader logo and it is really going to be nice down there. We have all the backboards primed and painted so they all look very nice and I think when we reopen the Recreation Center and there will be a lot of people that are very happy with our gyms. Which is, as you know, used for the children to seniors, male, female for all different kinds of activities.

The police department building is coming along very well. We believe that we have a very good contractor that is staying up on it. Our company, our construction manager that we hired on our behalf is doing a tremendous job, and is on top of everything and very happy to report back. The inside is basically sheet rocked as they are finishing up the outside. We are putting bullet proof glass windows in, things of that nature, the roofing went on. So, we are doing really well and it is very exciting right now to see the things taken place there.

This Friday is our 911 Memorial Annual Ceremony, it's our 19th after the tragic loss on 911. The place has been taken care of and cleanup up as always. I would say for you to get there at about 8:45 am and we will start about 9:00 am. This will comply with our Governor's social distancing phobia. We usually get about 50-60 people who attend, well it is an election year so we might have 3 or 4 more, every other year they come. I look forward to seeing everybody there remembering Jim Nelson especially and all of those who passed during the 911 tragedy. We must never, ever forget and we wont in Clark.

The Senior Fitness Center and The Teen Center, I am considering reopening them sooner rather than later. And what I mean by that is I want to see what happens. I don't want to open and close; I think that is counterproductive for everybody. But I would like to see in a few weeks or so what is the new COVID reports with the 25% indoor dining and the school opening up. Clark, our numbers are rock bottom and I am very happy and impressed about that. If the numbers are down, and once the gym floor in the front goes in, they are working on that, I think that is going to be another 10 days or so, then I will take a look with Ralph on opening up and you know again with all the social distancing rules and cleanliness, etc. and so on.

Ralph has asked me permission to open up the outdoor activities and I have given him the go ahead to do that. Some of the things that he does outside because at this point there is no reason not to when everybody else is.

Governor Murphy took another shattering tonight. He ordered the Turnpike Authority to let the American Flag fly over the overpasses on the Parkway and Turnpike. And now, he is trying to say, "Hey, look at what I did", No Governor I have to tell you if that was me a week ago, I would have blacked out on the Director of the Turnpike Authority which governs the Parkway and the Turnpike and would have ordered those things up the next morning. So, it is another thing that he is trying to pull over with his liberalism matters that he is trying to run our government under. There were a lot of banners going up on the overpasses, and I do agree that it is not a billboard and if you allow one with freedom of speech, civil rights, you have to allow everyone. There were some great banners up with the "Support the Blue Line", Support Our First Responders", and I am glad that they were up for as long as they had been. But I was in a position to make that call, and other people would have started asking, "can I, can I, can we, can we?", I would have said, "look, take everything down but leave the American Flag." No one is going to argue with that, I hope, well, maybe today they might, but the majority won't. That would have been smart, intelligent, seasoned and the professional way to handle that. I already ordered DPW to put up two flags tomorrow on Westfield Avenue and Madison Hill Road, immediately, first thing in the morning. I believe that they should be there. I know some patriots put one up on Westfield Avenue and the

Turnpike came by yesterday, or today and took it off. So, the Turnpike Authority, if you can hear me, can you return our flag, we keep it and put it back up, but if not, we have other flags. So, like I said I am very happy to see that the consistency of our Governor like when he got caught with the November snow, and he was brining in the middle of July, it seemed like to me. You know it is tough when you are in politics and you are in government and you can't take a hit because for sure he will get enough of them. So that is great, I am happy about that, God bless our great nation, so we are going to see that happening.

The police department were due to vacancies in those jobs and we are glad to appoint Danny Pitts as Captain, Mike Acabou and Chris Lott as lieutenants, they are seasoned, they are veterans and they are going to do a great job.

The other thing that is going to be very exciting for the town and I hope Council will be out that night is on November 6th, we are going to call it "Patriots honoring our Patriots and our Veterans Night" at the Johnson Crusader football game. The other night I was on Facebook and they showed a high school in Texas that came out with the American Flag on poles that we have on Westfield Avenue, we're Proud to be an American playing, and it was heartwarming, if you are a patriot and you love this country, like we all do, it was heartwarming. And some of the moms started saying that we should do that, we should do that, we'll raise money, we'll do this, we'll do that. So, I went on and said to relax and let me see what I could do and that I would let them know tomorrow. And we ordered flags, which we are going to use next year anyway for the poles because they get tattered every year, so it is not costing any extra money. Scott McCabe is going to make up some poles and they will be on November 6th against Bishop Ahr High School, the home game. There are only two this year because of COVID, things have been cancelled. The theme of that night is going to be honoring our veterans and our patriots in this town and country, and the boys will be coming out to that, each one will be carrying the American Flag. And there's going to be a little special treat as they walk on the field for them, kind of like I did when I opened up the other field, if you get my drift.

Councilman O'Connor: And that's a Friday night game?

Mayor Bonaccorso: That's a Friday night game, I will let Council be there, if you can, if you can't no problem, I understand some of you have very extensive social lives, and God-for-bid, I don't want you to stop from socializing. But it would be nice to see as many as possible out that night, at least for that part of the game. So, I am excited that we can do that. November 6th, the other game was October 30th, and the reason that we shied away from that was because it is "Senior Night" and we didn't want this to take away any of our hoopla from supporting our veterans and patriots. And there is going to be a very brief fireworks show when the boys run out on the field like I did like when I opened the field in 2007, we had a good night that night, nothing crazy, like you have seen before a football game. So, we had a little money in the budget that we didn't use for our major fireworks, again I apologize about September 6th, I really wish we could have done it, but the Governor won't allow us to do that. It's okay if you are standing in a Motor Vehicle line for 8 hours, 6 hours, 5 hours hip to hip with people and something like seeing a firework display is still not allowed.

I am happy to see that our restaurants are at 25% open, it is better than zero. I disagree again with our governor; I think that it should be around 50%. People have a right to make a living in this country, I am embarrassed of this State Republican Party, that they are allowing a one-person rule in New Jersey. There are people out there, it is so hysterical when I start to watch the political ads on tv, and they are blaming, in my opinion our President for economic fall when he is coming back strong, it is going to be strong and it was stronger than ever. And these are the same cities that are the ones shutting down a lot of these business and not allowing them to open. Is there a safety

concern? To a degree, this pandemic is gone, it has been gone for a long time now Are you going to always have a flair up here and there? Absolutely, it is only science, it going to make sense if you think about it and read enough about it. But we need to get our economy going, people need to work. Joe Bidon should not tell me on TV about the unemployment rate when he is willing to shut down the country again next year. You know I guess some of these politicians just think that the voters are stupid and that is why we have been very successful in Clark; we've never treated the voter that way. You know to think people are stupid and will believe that, you have to have a brain about the size of a peanut in your head. So, that is my report for tonight. Any questions on anything I have given you?

Councilman Barr: Let me ask you one thing Sal. With the opening up of the recreation (center), and all of that, I can't see them opening up the once-a-month senior meeting in the cafeteria.

Mayor Bonaccorso: We probably can't yet AI because of the virus.

Councilman Barr: I know that we can't because....

Mayor Bonaccorso: Look folks, it is a very simple scenario to me...senior (citizens) are vulnerable, I believe more than the young. If seniors want to come and follow the safety guidelines and work out in the fitness center, not tomorrow, it is not open tomorrow, but maybe the beginning of October or something, I don't know yet. We are going to have the machines cleaned, they are going to be cleaned. We have a sprayer that L'Oréal donated to police, fire and DPW, they are \$4,400.00 a piece, and we have been spraying those buildings since the pandemic hit with a chemical that is not hazardous to your health obviously, and so far, in God's will, we haven't had one cop, one fireman, or one DPW guy with the pandemic, the COVID-19. So, what we are going to do is if we have the Senior Fitness Center open, if and when we are ready, we are going to open it with a certain amount of people, when people get off of the machine, the girl that works there has to clean the machine and then when it closes at 12:30, have the room fully sprayed to make sure it is okay. And you know slowly look at how we can open things up, slowly, I am not going to wave a magic wand. The Teen Center is open two nights a week, it doesn't get a real good crowd of kids but it gets some kids and we'll do the same thing down there to get that going, to give people again, opportunity. People are tired of living in a shell, it has been since March, you could see what happens. He opened the casinos, he opened the shore, which I am glad that he did on both counts. People went down there and there was no social distancing on boardwalks, some bars, beaches, everyone seems pretty good about it. Outdoors is definitely safer. Now, there is not a debate here, it is not an argument here, if people choose not to participate then they don't participate, no hard feelings, we will catch you down the road. It is kind of like what the school district did, and what I agree with, opening schools. We are going to have you in the classroom and if you don't want come then you can learn online, virtual. If there are parents who chose not to send their children, I respect their feelings... that is their child, that's their opinion. It is the same thing with certain activities that we are going to slowly reopen in Clark. Again, you don't want to participate and you think I am wrong, no hard feelings, come when you feel when you are comfortable. Because I know these people have been coming to me and say, "hey mayor, we would love to get back, what do you think, what do you think, what do you think?" I really want to see what happens now with schools and with the 25% of restaurants opening, if there is a significant balance. The other thing that I am looking for more than saying, "oh, there are 10 positive tests", how many are in the hospital and how many really past. You know when you take the nursing home numbers out of New Jersey, it is not as bad as you would think. There was a very bad thought process by, again, our Governor, to put those people in nursing homes that were sick, they were the most vulnerable, it happened in New Jersey and it happened in New York. And if you look, I think that they said 47% don't quote me exactly, of the deaths that were caused in nursing homes, that is a big number, that is a big number. And everybody already knows that they cheated on

COVID, you can have COVID-19 and get a heart attack behind the wheel of your car and they are blaming it on COVID-19, not that you were eating 16 cheeseburgers a week and you had a heart attack. So, I mean let's be honest, it was \$39,000.00 every time a hospital got to report it. They think that the American public is stupid, some may be but most aren't. If you listen and have an open mind you will see what has been going on. So, that really concludes that part of it. Any other questions?

Councilman Mazzearella: When you do decide to open up, when that time period comes, is there any possibility of considering opening up part of the cafeteria, or something like that for seniors, police, dpw, and municipal workers for flu shots?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, we can look at that too. I will talk to Nancy Raymond on that. They should be done in the gym where there is more space and everything. So yes, I will talk with Nancy and when she is comfortable to do that. We will be glad to do that as we always do every year.

Councilwoman Albanese: No comment.

Councilman Barr: No comment.

Councilman Hund: No comment.

Councilman Mazzearella: No comment.

Councilman Smith: No comment.

Councilman Toal: People are just coming off of Labor Day, now it is gone, now we will get back into the swing of things. Typically, I haven't spoken to anybody. I hit the ward a couple of times but most people are away and are not coming back in. I just hope everyone stays focused on Clark, nice quiet Clark.

Mr. Laezza: No comment.

Township Clerk: No comment.

Mr. Dugan: No comment.

Councilman O'Connor: The only comment that I have is directed to the mayor, and to the clerk... and I am sure that Mr. Laezza is involved in it somehow. Thank you very much for trying to get an (election) Drop Box for Clark. I know our residents would really appreciate it. I know that we have a lot of seniors, and I know that we have a lot of people in town are very, very sort of passionate about this election and having a box in Clark would really, really help them out. So, thank you very much for that.

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, Hund, Mazzearella, Smith, Toal, O'Connor

ADJOURNMENT

