

COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
430 WESTFIELD AVE., CLARK, NJ
August 3, 2020
7:30 pm

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Albanese, Barr, Hund, Mazzarella, 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

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.

RESOLUTION:

1. Award of Contract for the Collection and Disposal of Leaves (Bid opening August 5)

Discussion: none

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

2. Appointing Thomas Sweeney as a member of the Clark Volunteer Fire Department

Discussion: none

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

3. Authorizing the Health Officer to enter into an Agreement with the Visiting Nurse and Health Service for the year 2021 in the amount of \$7,986.00

Discussion: none

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

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

4. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 taxes in the amount of \$1,605.35
5. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to apply sewer account balance adjustments as credit in the amount of \$5,100.00

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

Mover: Toal Second: Albanese

Additional Discussion:

Mr. Laezza: We are going to have an ordinance introduction for seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This is using the New Jersey Department of Transportation funds. This is for Wilson Drive, Waterson Drive, the signalization on Westfield Avenue at the corner of Wilson and Westfield, the Clark Library parking lot will be repaved, Emerald Drive and Emerald Court. The amount of seven hundred and fifty thousand will be introducing on August 17th and adopted on September 8th.

No further discussion

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second

Mover: Albanese Second: Smith

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.

Council President O'Connor opened the public portion of the meeting

Seeing no one coming forward Councilwoman Albanese made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, seconded by Councilman Hund

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: Thank you Mr. President. Preparing tonight for tomorrow storm, I spoke with Scott McCabe, and the Department of Public Works is ready to go, everything is set and in motion. They are out today cleaning some catch basins in low line flood areas. If people call you tomorrow and say their street is flooding, tell them no kidding there is three to six inches of rain, that's what they are predicting, streets will flood. And when it stops, they will go down like they do every storm flashflood we have in Clark. In the meantime, if there's power outages and such we'll deal with it, we will be read to go. So, the department is ready to go so I'm glad to report that.

With a sad part I'm going to have to cancel this year's Senior Citizen BBQ because again the Governor has put a lid on the outside gatherings on how many people it could be. And I don't know how many seniors would really want to come God forbid even though the Deutscher Club has plenty of room for social distancing. But you know what they still have to get food and all that, I think it's safer. And for the Labor Day weekend we are going to have to cancel the fireworks because we do not have the amount of...again the outside gatherings, there's going to be thousands of people. So that's a sad thing we have to do, I'm not happy this year. None of the extra services we provide for the residents are being achieved because of Covid-19.

As of last week, I talked to Nancy, I think there's three cases in Clark. Niche put out a ranking of all the towns in the State today, A plus to B minus, and Clark got an A minus, which I think is okay, we're in the A's so I'm happy. This is a ranking that took several factors into consideration such as the quality of local schools, crime rates, housing, (tape inaudible) statistics and access to

amenities. We are the amenities, so (tape inaudible) for here in Clark, so it's good to see. Again, guys you know for twenty years I've always said, when it's something good you advertise it, I don't know how they come up with this, I have no idea. Like one year you can be rated twelve and the next year you are rated sixty, like everything is the same, like what happened, but whatever. I liked it for you know in today's computer world when people are shopping from home is in their google and stuff like that pops up, it's nice for the community, they feel they are coming into which they are a better community. So, I'm very happy to see that, I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

And Ralph was going to send out the book for fall and for winter activities in the Rec Department, and we are going to play it by ear. The minute we can start opening some things up, we are going to. You know then it's up to the people if they want to come or not, or etc. and so on. Just like we did with the town pool. The pool I think I was there one night this year, it's fantastic, beautiful and gorgeous. And from what I hear the people who are using it are really, really enjoying it. But it's not running to its capacity.

Regarding the schools, they are having a Board of Education meeting tonight on what they are going to do. I think they have this half day plan. You know everybody has an emotional attachment to what's going on with the Covid-19 with their kid. Look, my kid is a Junior, to me the horse has ran out of the barn already. You have these kids in the elementary, if they don't get in class and start... you know listening to the teacher, discipline in sitting in a chair, paying attention, having conversations and comradery with the fellow students, these kids are going to be backwards. I'm sorry, that is just my opinion, what do I know? I don't know, but that is my opinion. I think that the school district is going to make every effort to try to keep it safe for everybody, that is all you can do.

We are still in lockdown here (Municipal Building) as you know, locked down here. People are doing business; they call a number and our people come out and take care of it. Until this alleviates a little bit, we are just going to have to keep doing what we are doing. It is not what we are used to any of us. That's it for me, any questions?

Council President O'Connor: I know that in the past the cafeteria was always open to people if they needed a place to go if there is a storm.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, we will do that.

Council President O'Connor: They will still be able to go in there?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Yes, Pat we can absolutely do that. The gyms are in construction right now so we can't do that. But you know between here and the First Aid Squad, we have got room for people. If something gets knocked out, we have to have a cooling center we can do that, we will just have to do the best we can.

Council President O'Connor: Great thank you.

Mayor Bonaccorso: With the gyms we are usually okay but what are we going to do?

Councilman Toal: Mayor, the fireworks were set and were allocated the funding, we had the date then the rain date, and we moved everything. Do we get our money back?

Mr. Laezza: No, we still get charged half of it.

Councilman Toal: That is what I needed to know. Maybe next year they can make it up and lessen the bill?

Mr. Laezza: No.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Either we blow them all off or we get penalized for half because they are not coming to do half of a show at the end of summer. This is part of the Covid-19, it is contractional, there is nothing that you can do about it.

Mark Dugan: How much are we talking about?

Mr. Laezza: 15,000 dollars.

Councilwoman Albanese: No seventy-five hundred.

Mark Dugan: I have been successful in challenging those. So, if you want me to look at it, the problem here is the amount may not warrant that (tape inaudible) even if it's (tape inaudible) you don't go to court, it might not warrant. But I will look at it if you want me too.

Councilman Toal: It saves money.

Mayor Bonaccorso: It saves money but we've been dealing with...

Councilwoman Albanese: We said that we are going to be doing 50% of capacity which I think the State allows at the pool. Are we hitting that?

Mayor Bonaccorso: No.

Mr. Laezza: We are losing our shirt.

Council President O'Connor: If the council doesn't mind, I would like to have Mr. Laezza go next, as he has an update for us. Is that okay with council?

Mr. Laezza: Councilman Hund called me today and obviously he has a citizen that complains about everything and he wanted to know why he had a \$200.00 increase in his taxes. The County went up 2/10's of 1% of County Open Space. The municipality went up 4/10's of 1%, and the municipal library went up 4/10's of 1% that is like 44 cents. Our tax rate was 230 last year, it is 230.4, but our school went up 7.8%, so, they are about 88.64% of our increase in property taxes.

Mayor Bonaccorso: That is for the 19/20 budget for the school, correct? June to June?

Mr. Laezza: January 1st to December 31st. When the school put their budget together, they used July 1 to June 30th, knowing full well that they had to first pick up July 1st to December 31st.

Council President O'Connor: So, there is a mathematical error as well, on top of it?

Council President O'Connor: They don't have John Laezza as their Business Administrator, I guess. Thank you, John, for keeping Clark the way it is.

Mr. Laezza: The second thing I have is that I got a letter today, an email from a citizen today indicating that President Trump pass an executive order that says that there will be no affordable housing built in the suburbs. So, they asked if that eliminates our need to build affordable housing.

I am having it investigated by our administrative agent, because that is what he does for a living. So, I will let you know when we know.

Council President O'Connor: So, I am assuming it isn't true and that everything that is already in process will continue but there will just be no new. If that is correct.

Mayor Bonaccorso: If Governor Murphy really cares about the State of New Jersey like he says he does, and you look at where the Covid-19 hit the hardest, they hit in poor neighborhoods with higher density, up in Bergen County with higher density, and if you continue doing what you are doing in Union County this is going to become a higher density then it far already is and someday, God forbid, it could be two years from now or it could be 200 years from now, who knows? But, when that pandemic hits again we are going to be wrapped up into the same predicament that Bergen County was and the higher density areas of this State. Just look at the cities that were hit, look everywhere nationwide it is the higher density areas that are hit the hardest.

Council President O'Connor: Thank you. Mr. Laezza, are you finished? Thank you very much for the updates we appreciate it.

Councilwoman Albanese: Just a quick update on the library. So, they started to take reservations for curbside pickup and now they are open with limited access, and a special hour for people who are compromised, or elderly, they can go in initially and they will have a limited amount of time. They will keep increasing as things go on and improve. I will give an update at the next meeting unless someone has questions otherwise.

Councilman Barr: No comment.

Councilman Hund: No comment.

Councilman Mazarella: No comment.

Councilman Toal: I want to say to the Administration thank you for paving Rainbow and also Post Road. I was out before the meeting tonight and talking to the residents and they are very happy except they are very concerned about the drainage issues on Post Circle, I spoke to four vocal residents that were very nice but they don't want to see the water accumulate because then it becomes a hazard for their homes and the neighborhood.

Mr. Laezza: I think that Post Circle was supposed to be redone also.

Councilman Toal: It wasn't, it wasn't. When I was there one of their sump pumps were pumping out the water and they saw it draining. If you can tell the engineer check it again. Everything else is fine but the company said that they were going to be checking it again themselves.

Mayor Bonaccorso: Well Brian the one thing is that you have been on council for twenty something years. The problem with sump pumps is that they don't have the push of the water amount to get them down to the sewers. That is why we have so much icing in the wintertime. It discharges, for example, the sewer is down there in the corner and lays here in front of John and Angel and it never gets to there because there's not enough push of it. So, even with any kind of grading that you do, you are always going to have that problem.

Councilman Toal: The residents are very happy and I just wanted to say to the Administration, thank you.

Township Clerk: No comment.

Council President O'Connor: Just again, the DPW is doing a great job. They are doing the leaves and they are getting everything done. They really are doing a nice job keeping the town nice.

Councilman Mazzarella: They are, they are doing fantastic.

Councilwoman Albanese: With the bulk pick-up, even though we haven't had the other events, people have been obviously cleaning.

Councilman Mazzarella: Just recently they have been working with PSE&G, and they removed a tree and they cleaned up and the person is very happy.

Council President O'Connor asked for a motion to adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Albanese, seconded by Councilman Barr.

ROLL CALL: All Ayes

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

ADJOURNMENT