

COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
430 WESTFIELD AVE., CLARK, NJ
December 7, 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

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, as well as the Official Website of the Township, and the proper filing of said Notice.

RESOLUTIONS:

1. Award of Professional Services contracts through a fair and open process for 2021:
Proposals will be publicly opened December 9th
 - A. Auditor
 - B. Engineering Services
 - C. Professional Planner
 - D. Labor Attorney
 - E. Bond Counsel
 - F. Special Counsel

Discussion:

Mr. Laezza: What about the (Clark) Planning Board and the (Clark) Zoning Board?

Township Clerk: We just make a recommendation for them. So, we are going to be accepting the proposals.

Councilman Mazzarella: That probably answers my question. Because in the body of the "Notice to Request" you have ten....

Township Clerk: Right. What we do is we'll receive the proposals on Wednesday for all of those positions. Because those two attorneys work for separate bodies, the Business Administrator and Council make a recommendation to those bodies of who they think would be the best choice, but those bodies actually select the attorney.

Councilman Mazzarella: So, ultimately there will be ten, or will there be just six?

Township Clerk: For us here it is just what you see. Then there will be two memos that go from my office to those two Boards (Planning and Zoning) that say which attorneys.... currently, no

one has submitted, so we don't know if those boards are going to have an attorney right at this moment but I don't have any proposals for them yet.

Councilwoman Albanese: (tape inaudible)

Township Clerk: Yes, so what we do is just stamp them in. We ask that they do not send them (the proposals) by regular mail because it is unreliable. So, we have gotten FedEx, UPS and hand delivery. The only one on this list that we have not received anything for is the auditor, all of our other professionals, that are currently our professionals, have given us proposals.

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

2. Cancelling unexpended budget appropriations in the Municipal Pool Utility

Discussion:

John Laezza: This is the first time we've done this in the 20 odd years that I've been here.

Council President O'Connor: There's money left over?

John Laezza: No there's not money left over. Basically, the swimming pool has been over spent, so in order to diminish the deficit that's on our books, now we want to cancel the appropriations so that appropriation goes to our benefit.

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

3. Authorizing the Mayor and/or Business Administrator to execute the Risk Management Consultant's Agreement with World Insurance Associates for 2021

Discussion: None

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

4. Appointing Michael Nenortas as the Emergency Management Coordinator for a three-year term

Township Clerk: Before we move onto the consent agenda resolutions, we have the draft that I handed you appointing a new Emergency Management Coordinator which will go on as #4, in the regular resolutions. So, if we could get a mover and a second on that.

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

5. Demanding that The New Jersey State Legislature accept its responsibility to administer the provisions of the Affordable Housing Act

Discussion:

John Laezza: Before you move on, I think I have another resolution that should be discussed.

We got a resolution from Long Hill Township. The man who does the New Jersey State Legislature accepts its responsibility to administer the provisions of the Affordable Housing Act and states further action as such time as it promulgated rules governing its implementations. This is the start of a process of putting in a new COAH operation in Trenton.

Mr. Laezza continues further discussion.

Mayor Bonaccorso: This affordable housing is going to be very, very interesting. There was going to be a piece that I was going to put out in January and it was going to be about this. Now put everything else aside, everything else aside, and let's talk about the COVID-19 pandemic. Where was the pandemic hardest hit? In high density communities, towns that have a lot of people, a lot of growth, a lot of buildings, Bergen County, Essex County, Hudson County, counties like that. And what we are doing here in Union County is he's taking towns that were basically 98-99% built and we are now building high density apartments, as you all know. So, I agree with this resolution wholeheartedly, but I also agree that some of the farmland communities out in the state shouldn't have "the building one house on five acres", they must add some affordable housing, we had to do it and they should do it. You can easily achieve affordable housing in this state without building. Let's take the apartments that we have in Clark, my feelings, my thoughts would be... I don't know how many buildings are over in Lexington or Gibson, or on Lake Avenue, I don't know that number. Let's say each building had 10 apartments, maybe it is more, maybe it is less, I am not quite sure. Let's say that we need to put 20 into Lexington Village, I would say listen, "you are renting them for like \$1,300.00 a month, affordable let's say is \$800.00. We have to come up with \$500.00 a month for each (tape inaudible) ... such as the marijuana bill and put that money there if you really care about funding affordable housing. This way you get your numbers (tape inaudible) there are two ways to negotiate that because the landlord can't be shy \$500.00 a month from you because that wouldn't be fair to him because he did nothing wrong. But there is a way that you can make up that money in perpetuity for him for as long as he has those units, we can do things like that. If you go back five years ago to the conversation... it was the Fair Share Housing Group Lobby, the Builders Association Lobby, campaign donations down in Trenton. For Trenton to... as I said back on the record five years ago, it is an absolute disgrace, both parties should be held accountable, Governor Christie, now Governor Murphy.... I was at a Mayor's meeting two years ago, and Murphy was there and all of the Republicans and Democrats from Union County, we have some talented people on both sides of the aisle, I will say. And everybody had a chance to speak (tape inaudible). But would you think something is wrong guys if you were heading the state or government, you are the mayor of a town and you have a 5/4 split on the council, or a 4/3 split on council, when your people and their people are both saying, "we don't agree with this", "why are you doing this?" Don't you think maybe we should stop and say, "wait a minute, my own people are going to tell me there's a problem with it". Basically, every mayor, except for the big city mayors, because it does not matter to them, and that is fine, I don't have any problem with it. But these suburban, Union County towns care because we are stock piling people, we are warehousing people, then the pandemic came along and proved that. Look at the numbers throughout New Jersey, go look at the numbers, your highest areas are your highest populated areas. Maybe there won't be another pandemic, God willing, for another 100 years, but you know what? Highly not. So, if the legislature would do their job, government will do its job and sit down and have bare discussions, it could work. They took away the regional contribution rule, which is, if the builder didn't want to build it, (tape inaudible), as you all know. Then when you got a bulk of money you would go with your towns who are looking to do something with it and you say, "give back our money and tell us what you are going to do" and you can award it to different towns. Mayor Armstead from Linden sat right in this room, I believe it was, saying that helped my city tremendously. We were able to rehab some houses for people who affordable housing people who needed their homes fixed up. Now, some towns might think this is a reason to escape the affordable housing, I don't know. We here in Clark...if you remember back when we were

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building Woodcrest Senior Citizen Housing, we had the opportunity to say yes or no for sixty affordable units. So, I think towns that were sincere were trying to help themselves along. (tape inaudible) Mayor Bonaccorso continued his discussion.

Councilman O'Connor: To your point, I know the (Parkway) circle was re-done years ago, so, we (tape inaudible) and now the traffic already is backing up on the Parkway again. If this is your plan, or your thought, I should say (inaudible) would give the opportunity for the towns to not increase and have no (tape inaudible) from the infrastructure.

Mayor Bonaccorso: (tape inaudible) responses in detail to Councilman O'Connor

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second on this Resolution
Motion: Entire Council Second: Entire Council

CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS:

4. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 taxes in the amount of \$ 37,726.52
5. Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to refund overpayment of 2020 sewer fees in the amount of \$1,755.29

Council President O'Connor asked for a mover and second on this Consent Agenda
Motion: 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.

Council President O'Connor opens 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: Saturday we had our annual overtime day for the DPW. We cleaned every street in Clark on Saturday except for the streets that we cleaned on Friday. I was very pleased with the DPW performance.

I was actually driving through a lot of the town yesterday and I have to say there was not a pile (of leaves) on the street, it was so nice to see. Today I drove around and saw people who put the leaves out, that's ok, we're still picking up but most of the leaves are down.

The Tree Lighting, Ralph put that together, unfortunately it was quick because of Covid.

Nancy is working hard on Covid details every day, doing the best that she can. Again, there are a lot of numbers but they are lesser, I think. From my understanding (the numbers are less) from back in April and May, so that's a good sign. We tested the employees here on Monday and I am happy to say that everyone came back negative. DPW had it, but they were not back to work until they were retested. It all worked out, it worked out very well.

Councilwoman Albanese: Since the Mayor mentioned Covid, compared to some other counties, Union County has done a good job with the pretesting. They just sent out a notice today about all of the free testing for the month of December. It is something for people to take advantage of whether it's through insurance or co-pays.

Councilman Barr: No comment.

Councilman Hund: Just a question to the Mayor. Are we having Santa drive around?

Mayor Bonaccorso: Santa drives around, yes, we are.

The Tree Lighting... Ralph and I were talking about it literally for the last week, and we were going to have it. I was going to go with it... it is outside, wear a mask, social distance, you know, not having a lot of the goodies, and then Murphy decided to limit the number to 35 people, and that ended that.

My wife and I were coming back and we saw a heck of a parade that Woodbridge put on. There was Santa, the fire truck, and they have five towns there, so each town had a fire truck, police cars, first aid squad, Woodbridge DPW had some trucks in there. That might be a good idea, decorate a few things, drive around, it would be really fun, it was long too.

Councilman Hund: No comment.

Mayor Bonaccorso: It is usually the weekend before Christmas, that Sunday. People complain if the fire truck does not go down their street.

Did you guys see the Facebook page on a Saturday... when the recycling (truck) hasn't gotten there? People can just leave it out and they will come and get it, sometimes they fall behind, they have truck problems. I said to one lady, "look, if they don't come by Monday, pick up the phone and call them, the phone number is on the pail. (She replied) "Why do I have to call?" PMUA tells the residents to call.

Councilman O'Connor: Those guys (workers) are probably the nicest and polite guys that you will ever see. They wave, they say hello, very, very nice.

Mayor Bonaccorso: They are doing a great job. I think that the recycling program is better than it's ever been. Everything is in one container; it seems like everyone is getting along. If you have extra boxes, you could put them next to the container and they pick them up. I do that all of the time. Between Amazon and everything else today you have more cardboard than you know what to do with it.

Councilman Mazzarella: I just want to reiterate what Sal was saying about the DPW. They are doing a phenomenal job throughout the community.

Councilman Smith: No comment.

Councilman Toal: I am piggybacking on the recycling. I had a lot of “verbal” Friday, Black Friday, with regards to Kathryn Street. I had five people call me... I thank the Clerk for her assistance on this. I went over and sat behind the truck, the second truck, on Sunday, then I knocked on every door who complained to make sure that (they know) we are there for them, we hear them, (we) listen to them to make sure everything is taken care of properly.

Mayor Bonaccorso: People question... Why do they come on Saturday? We save about \$300,000.00, right John? So, give us credit for saving you guys’ tax points and give us credit for putting together a better plan.

Mr. Laezza: No comment.

Township Clerk: No comment.

Mark Dugan: No comment.

Council President Pat O’Connor: I am going to piggy back off of Angels comments. I actually took advantage of the Union County Pre-Covid testing today, my appointment was at 2pm, I got there at 1:40pm, and I was done by 2:10pm. The first stop was, “let me see your.....the window was closed, “let me see your phone”, “let me see your email confirmation”, the second stop you show them your phone, they have your name, they go get a piece of paper and they come back and ask if this was all of the information that you filled out, your name, your address, your date of birth, they fold it and put it in your windshield, you drive around and go into a Covid tent, roll your window down, look forward and it is the one that they do around your nostrils, they don’t go back and do your skull anymore. They just do your nostril; they hand you an envelope which explains that you are going to get an email with a registration number and when you get that you log on and you will get your results. And then there is a piece of paper that tells you what to do if you have it and what to do if you don’t (have Covid).

Mayor Bonaccorso: Where did you go?

Councilman O’Connor: Right here at Kean.

Councilwoman Albanese: If you don’t register in advance then you can just go there.

Councilman O’Connor: I didn’t know that. It was very smooth, no insurance, nothing about insurance, they want to know if you are a resident are you this or that, that was it. They did a great job putting that out on Facebook, that is how I found it, on Facebook. I forward it out to my constituents and I just think that it was a good program. I just got tested, not that I thought that I needed it, but you know what, it was free and it was there, why not?

Councilwoman Albanese: If you sign up with the county, they’ll just send the information to you automatically. I received a text today that the December calendar is out.

Councilman Toal: The question that I have is how many tests has everyone taken so far?

Councilman O’Connor: I received the one here (at townhall) and this one was my second one.

Councilman Toal: I have gotten five tests.

Mayor Bonaccorso: I have gotten four or five myself.

Councilwoman Albanese: If you go to the doctors you have to be tested before you get a procedure.

Mayor Bonaccorso: I just want to share this with you also. Union County Board of Elections found 190 ballots in Berkley Heights. One person beat the other person by 190 votes, I am not implying cheating. It would be interesting to see with the Presidential Election on how a hundred thousand votes came in for Biden and nobody else on the ballot is voted on, and Trump doesn't get any (votes). I want to see what happens up there. That would be funny to follow up on.

Councilman Mazzearella: Pat, the test that you got was that a rapid test?

Council President O'Connor: No, it was not the rapid test. I will find out (the results) in a few days. From what I heard there is a high risk of false positives with the rapid test.

Mayor Bonaccorso: There's a lot of false positives. Somebody in town told me that someone in town, that we know, had a COVID test five times. It (the tests) came back like three times positive, two times negative, and they never had it.

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