

September 3, 2014
Brigantine, New Jersey

A council meeting was held this date in Council Chambers at 6:00 P.M. with Mayor Guenther presiding.

Present: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Kern, Pullella, Guenther
Absent: None

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Mayor Guenther led the flag salute after which Deputy Mayor Kern offered a brief prayer.

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Mayor Guenther read the statement pertaining to the Open Public Meetings Act.

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Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman Kern to approve the requisition list, operating expenses and payroll.

Councilman Simpson questioned why some of the bills date back to 2013. C.F.O. Margaret Gorman explained that if the vendor does not submit a signed voucher, the bill can't be paid. Councilman Simpson also mentioned that he had heard that the golf course is on "credit hold" with three of the companies that they do business with. Ms. Gorman said she was not aware of that, but would look into it.

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All "Yes".

Motion carried.

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Swearing In Ceremony

Fire Chief Alan Weidner introduced two, new Firefighters/EMT's, William Kuchinsky and Henry Worthington and announced the accomplishments of each of them. Mayor Guenther administered the oaths of office. Both gentlemen were accompanied by their families.

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Recognition of Farmer's Market Volunteers

Mayor Guenther spoke of the popularity and success of the Farmer's Market and the hard work of the volunteers. Councilwoman Lisa McClay and other key members of the committee recognized all of the committee members, sponsors and volunteers and presented them with trophies.

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Public Comments on Agenda Items Only

John Pucci of 100 Sheridan Square congratulated the new firefighters. He also commented on how much he enjoyed the Brigantine Farmer's Market. Mr. Pucci felt that the agenda should be posted on the website earlier so they public has more of a chance to review it. He also asked if they were any reoccurring items of concerns on the current audit that were also listed on last year's audit.

Anne Philips of 308 27th Street questioned the number of full and part time firefighters and asked what is Council's "goal" regarding this topic.

Councilwoman McClay thanked Mr. Pucci for his kind words about the Farmer's Market. She also addressed the issue of the general ledger that was mentioned in the audit. C.F.O. Margaret Gorman said that she is "working diligently to get it up and running".

Councilman DeLucry stated, “Having part-time fire fighters has always been a goal of mine. We are always going to have and we need to have full time staffing, that has never been in question but it has always been my view that we need to have part-time as well to supplement because there is a substantial savings and it is all attributable to the fact that part time employees are not eligible for health benefits and pension contributions.”

Councilman Pulella asked Chief Weidner how many firefighters there currently are. Chief Weidner said that including the two new firefighters, there are four, seven men shifts. Including the Chief and the Fire Official, there are thirty sworn firefighters in the City. Chief Weidner said his optimal number would be four, eight men shifts and that would reduce overtime dramatically.

Mayor Guenther questioned the general ledger. C.F.O. Gorman responded, “At this point, I would say it is about 80% done. There are a few things that need to be double checked but it should be up to 100% within the next month or two.” Mayor Guenther asked, “Prior to this, there was an accounting system that was acceptable.” Ms. Gorman added, “It was an accounting system that was accepted but at any point in time, if you were to say, “Today, what is our balance?”, it couldn’t give it to you.” Mayor Guenther asked, “Meaning, if I were to ask you what our balance is, you could give it to me?” Ms. Gorman responded, “I could give you a print out sheet of the balance.” Ms. Gorman added, “In the past, it was done on an Excel spreadsheet and given over to the auditors.” Councilman Picardi asked if it is a more accurate because it is up to date all of the time. Ms. Gorman responded, “Yes, because the receipts are posted within five days.” Ms. Gorman confirmed for Councilman DeLucry that the software for the Edmunds system was available in 2013, it just wasn’t used. Mayor Guenther asked about the mechanics and if it was a lot of data to be inputted. Ms. Gorman explained the process and that each account has its own check register.

Mayor Guenther voiced his support for full time firefighters and prefaced his argument by saying, we have individuals on the list who have qualified for the position by passing all of the required tests and haven’t been successful qualifying any of the part time firefighters. Chief Weidner stated, “We currently have three candidates on our full time firefighter list who have been put into Firefighter One. They are attending school right now and are not being paid as full time, they are being paid as part time. At this time their only duty is to go to school.” City Manager Jennifer Blumenthal confirmed that none of the candidates for part time status were successful in meeting the qualifications.

Councilman DeLucry said that he was also in favor of hiring part time firefighters. “I believe it is in the best interest of the taxpayers.”

Councilman Picardi said, “There is no logical reason to think that anyone who holds the same qualifications and same training for full time or part time is any less professional than anyone else.”

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Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman Kern to adopt Ordinance No. 13 of 2015 which is a bond ordinance authorizing the issuance of up to \$12,030,000 aggregate principal amount, general obligation bonds or notes for the construction of certain clean water and drinking water projects.

Mayor Guenther called for the public hearing on Ordinance No. 13 of 2014.

Robert Pollillo of 2 Girard Place questioned if the items were “absolutely necessary at this time”. City Engineer Ed Stinson explained that some items have a higher priority than others and listed the projects in the order that he felt had the highest need. Mr. Stinson felt that all of the projects were necessary.

Anne Phillips of 308 27th Street felt it was good that these projects would affect the community rating in a positive way but asked how this debt would affect the budget in terms of debt service. Mayor Guenther referred to a spread sheet prepared by the municipal auditor and read off the new debt service figures.

Councilman Pulella reported on the figures and felt it was an “ideal situation” for the City to participate in and felt it was the “prudent thing to do”.

Councilman Simpson was concerned with the amount of the payments and how it would affect the taxpayers. “How much does this cost? It is irresponsible for someone to vote on a \$12,000,000 bond if you don’t know what the award will be.”

John Pucci of 100 Sheridan Square was disappointed with the process and was never given the amortization chart that he said was promised to him at the last meeting. He objected to the public hearing because he felt the public was not informed of the details. Mayor Guenther said that Council had received the information from the auditor the day before but found the information to be “a little confusing”.

Councilman DeLucry said that he thought the information he received from the auditor was “clear and concise” and felt that based on the consensus of the professionals these are all necessary projects. “I don’t want to have to tell the homeowner who is in an area of repeated flooding where we are proposing these projects or is depending on the cleanliness of their drinking water that, “We were a little concerned about the debt service so we didn’t do this project. It is dollars and cents and they all lead in favor of doing these projects.”

Councilman Picardi added, “As public officials, our number one responsibility is public safety and every one of these issues is a public safety issue.”

Ann Wenitsky of 4725 Atlantic-Brigantine Blvd. wondered “Why can’t we just know how much these projects are going to cost?”

Councilman Kern said this is just authorizing us to borrow the money to do the projects.

Chuck Herberman of 321 6th street South spoke of the federal interest rates.

City Engineer Ed Stinson explained the importance of each project on the list.

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All “Yes”.

Motion Carried.

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Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman DeLucry to adopt the following resolution.

RESOLUTION 2014-170
INSERTION OF SPECIAL ITEM OF REVENUE
2014 BJA BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Police Chief Reed reported that this money will replace seven expired vests.

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All “Yes”.

Motion Carried.

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Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman Kern to adopt the following resolution.

RESOLUTION 2014-171
CERTIFICATION OF ANNUAL AUDIT

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All “Yes”.

Motion Carried.

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Consent Agenda

Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman Simpson to adopt and approve the following resolutions and requests.

RESOLUTION 2014-172
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD REFUND

VFW Raffle License #714
Atlantic County/Atlantic City Surf Fishing Derby Request
City of Brigantine/Chamber of Commerce Tailgate Party Request
City of Brigantine/Chamber of Commerce Halloween Block Party and Street Closure Request

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All "Yes".

Motion Carried.

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Manager/Council Discussion

Councilman DeLucry updated Council on the Beach Committee and said that they had done a site visit of the beach and will have their recommendations at a future council meeting.

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Public Comment

Gail Pratt of 406 23rd Street said that her taxes had gone up \$14,400 in one year and it is just too expensive for them to live in Brigantine any more. Ms. Pratt spoke about the dune restriction line and didn't feel that her appraisal is accurate.

Barry Glazier of 405 24th Street said that he now pays \$50,000 a year in real estate taxes and that is an increase of 30%. He would appreciate it if Council could "sharpen their pencils" when it comes to the budget.

Anne Phillips of 308 27th Street commented on the number of firefighters and wondered what number of firefighters Council would feel necessary. Ms. Phillips mentioned the consolidation of the schools in order to save money. Lastly, Ms. Phillips asked the status of City property that is for sale. In regards to the firefighter question, Mayor Guenther said, "We need to come up with a number that works for safety as well as one that decreases overtime going forward." In regards to the consolidation of schools, Mayor Guenther reported that he had spoken to the Superintendent regarding this and asked him to prepare a report. Mayor Guenther spoke about the sale of public land and said that this is currently not a good market to sell real estate in Brigantine but Council is looking at all of their options. Councilman Pullella stated again that he is favor of part time firefighters and reducing the number of full time firefighters through attrition. Councilman Pullella pointed out the cost savings to the City when the previous C.F.O. cost the City \$100,000 in salary and benefits and the current C.F.O. is part time and earns a salary of \$15,000. Councilman Simpson agreed that the firefighters do a tremendous job but felt the costs can be controlled by hiring new firefighters at a lower cost and increasing the pay steps.

Mike Brennan of 1113 Bayshore Avenue explained the tax appeal process.

John Livezey of 203 9th Street North said he is not hearing solutions on how part time employees will work in the City of Brigantine.

Joan Reese Evans of 1419 Bayshore Avenue spoke about flood mitigation and the importance of bulkheads.

Close of Public Comments

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Councilman Picardi moved, seconded by Councilman Simpson to adopt the following resolution.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All "Yes".

Motion Carried.

City Clerk Lynn Sweeney read the statement pertaining to the Open Public Meetings Act and announced that Council will discuss a contract matter in Executive Session. Council did not expect to take any formal action upon their return.

Council adjourned to Executive Session at 9:55 P.M.

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Council returned from Executive Session at 10:05 P.M.

City Solicitor Fred Scerni announced that Council discussed the following topic in Executive Session: Contracts.

Councilman Simpson moved, seconded by Councilman Picardi to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call: Simpson, McClay, Picardi, DeLucry, Pullella, Kern, Guenther: All "Yes".

Motion Carried.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 10:08 P.M.

Mayor Philip Guenther

Lynn Sweeney, RMC
City Clerk