

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
March 8, 2021
VIA REMOTE MEETING ACCESS ONLY

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Vallone called the remote meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. and read the open public meetings statement in accordance with the law.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Vallone led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President David Karner, Councilman Ted McLean, Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie, Councilman Kevin Welsh, Mayor Paul J. Vallone, MD
Absent, as Excused: Councilman Joseph Carty, Councilwoman Mary Chimenti
Absent:
Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy S. Hicks, Borough Attorney Joseph Sordillo, Chief of Police Michael DeCarolis

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

REPORTS

Councilman Kevin Welsh – Fire, Water, Light, Buildings & Grounds

No report.

Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie – Health/Sanitation

Councilwoman Tweedie reported there was an increase in the inflow and infiltration (I&I) due to the freeze and thaw of the ice over the manholes, the increase water from the melting of the snow as well as the remaining snow blockage of some of the storm sewers. The Borough's Environmental Engineer, Natural Systems Utilities will be reviewing the manholes throughout the Borough to ensure they are properly sealed in order to decrease I&I.

Councilman Ted McLean – Roads

No report.

Council President David Karner – Police

Council President Karner presented the February 2021 Police Report. He provided an update on the 100th Anniversary Event indicating the time capsule and memorial stone have been delivered and asked that everyone consider items to contribute to the time capsule. He noted the time capsule would be buried and not opened until fifty years later in 2071. One of the banners detailing the event was installed along the fence at the Fairgrounds and the installation of the second banner across Route 202 is pending authorization from JCP&L and the NJDOT.

Lastly, Council President Karner informed the Council that he and Councilman Carty met with Chief DeCarolis to review the police budget.

Chief Michael DeCarolis

Chief DeCarolis reported there would be an upcoming high visibility enforcement detail as well as a DWI detail over the St. Patrick's Day holiday. He also reminded residents to lock their vehicles and to report any suspicious behavior to the Far Hills Police Department.

Mayor Vallone

Mayor Vallone reported that unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions for large events, the spring 2021 VNA Rummage Sale was cancelled. The Essex Horse Trials and Steeplechase Event normally held in July and October are currently on hold, pending further guidance from the Governor's office.

He stated that budget meetings are ongoing in preparation for the introduction of the Borough's 2021 Budget.

Mayor Vallone informed the Council that, per the latest Somerset County Department of Health report, there were currently 18 Borough residents that have tested positive for Covid. He encouraged residents to continue to adhere to the social distancing and mask protocols for the health and safety of everyone. Mayor Vallone stated the Somerset County Call Center number was posted on the Borough website for residents to obtain up to date information regarding testing and vaccination.

He recognized the ten years of service Councilman Richard Hand had generously given to the Borough Council and noted that a plaque would be presented to him in the near future.

Mayor Vallone apprised the Borough Council that he was informed this afternoon by the attorney representing Melillo Equities that an application for the development of the Errico Acres site was anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Board within the next few weeks.

Mr. Sordillo provided a brief overview of the application process governed by the Municipal Land Use Law and indicated that while an application may be submitted in the next few weeks, the public hearing on the development would most likely occur at the May or June 2021 Planning Board meeting.

REGULAR AGENDA**APPROVAL OF MINUTES****02/22/21 – Regular Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Councilman McLean, seconded by Council President Karner, was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content and release.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS**ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION**

ORDINANCE 2021-04 - ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS APPROPRIATING \$75,000.00 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND TO THE BOROUGH'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS.

Mr. Sordillo provided a brief overview of the Ordinance.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie, was unanimously carried to open the public hearing.

There were no comments from the public.

Ms. Hicks advised that the notice of the public hearing was published in the newspaper of record, and that no communication, either written or verbal was received regarding the Ordinance.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie, was unanimously carried to close the public hearing.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman McLean that Ordinance 2021-04 be adopted.

Roll Call:

Aye: Karner, McLean, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

NEW BUSINESS CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 21-061 – Confirming Resignation – Planning Board
2. Resolution 21-062 – Authorizing Contribution to Raritan Headwaters Association
via the Clean Communities Grant
3. Resolution 21-063 – Payment of Bill List

Motion by Councilwoman Tweedie, seconded by Councilman McLean that Resolutions 21-061 through 21-063 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Karner, McLean, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION

Hidden Valley Road – Roadway Conditions

Councilman McLean indicated that a resident had expressed concern regarding the substantial number of trucks currently traversing on Hidden Valley Way and the potential damage to the roadway.

Mayor Vallone provided a brief overview of the oil leak sustained at 80 Hidden Valley Way and noted the NJDEP was now involved and has assumed control of the inspection and enforcement of the remediation.

Mr. Sordillo advised that the Borough has no authority over the NJDEP remediation process at the property site, nor any liability for any spillage onto neighboring properties. He did note, however, that while trucks cannot be restricted from utilizing this roadway, the Borough via ordinance could seek recompensation for any damage to the roadway. A brief discussion ensued resulting in the

Borough Engineer, Ferriero Engineering being asked to review the current condition of the roadway to establish a baseline condition and monitor for any damage to the roadway caused by the trucks in connection with the remediation. Mr. Sordillo was asked to contact the homeowner and the NJDEP to determine the status of the remediation and time frame for completion.

Schley Road and Far Hills Avenue – Roadway Conditions

Council President Karner stated he was contacted by residents regarding the current condition of the potholes and depressions in the roadway.

Trees – Peapack Road

Council President Karner reported that there were a few trees at the Fairgrounds and along Peapack Road that needed pruning or removal. It was suggested to contact Somerset County for possible remediation as some trees were located adjacent to Peapack Road, a County roadway.

A brief discussion ensued regarding repairs and upkeep of the Fairgrounds with Mayor Vallone indicating he would meet with Council President Karner and Councilman Welsh to review potential improvements when the weather improves.

Councilman Welsh added that he reached out to the homeowner regarding the trees and would review the areas for potential remediation.

PUBLIC COMMENT – *The Mayor and Council welcome comments from any member of the public. To help facilitate an orderly meeting and to permit the opportunity for anyone who wishes to be heard, speakers shall limit their comments to 5 minutes.*

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie, was unanimously carried to open the meeting to public comment.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills inquired as to the information that would be included in the Planning Board application for the Errico Acres development.

Mr. Sordillo provided a brief overview of the components of a Site Plan Application and noted that when submitted it would be a public document. He noted that the discussion with the attorney representing the developer included ensuring appropriate technology was in place to accommodate public attendance at the upcoming Planning Board meeting(s) as well as for public access to the application, once submitted.

George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills inquired as to the projected \$800,000.00 value for the market rate units at the Errico Acres development and the timing of the submission of the application to the Planning Board. Lastly, he inquired as to how the oil leak was discovered and the responsible party for the remediation.

Mayor Vallone responded that the Borough Council had previously expressed the expectation of a high quality-housing product to the developer.

Mr. Sordillo reiterated the application process governed under the Municipal Land Use Law. With regard to responsibility of the oil leak remediation, Mr. Sordillo indicated that that would be fact sensitive and referenced the NJ Spill Act, which would govern the determination of any responsible party.

Gavin Macomber, 50 Hidden Valley Road, Far Hills commented that he spoke with the contractor regarding the oil leak remediation and was informed there was over 4,000 tons of soil and bedrock that needed to be removed and expressed his concern with both the spill and the potential damage to the roadway.

Mayor Vallone expressed his appreciation to Mr. Macomber for sharing his concern regarding the spill and the potential damage to the roadway to the Borough's attention and asked that Mr. Sordillo reach out to the NJDEP for a status update on the remediation.

Jack Koury, 11 Far Hills Avenue, Far Hills commented upon the deteriorating condition of Far Hills Avenue and Schley Road and asked when the roads could be repaired. He also stated that trees at the Matheny site were tagged and inquired if there could be a coordinated effort to simultaneously address the trees at the Fairgrounds and along Peapack Road. He also expressed support for a community clean up in the Fairgrounds.

Council President Karner suggested the grandstands were in need of some paint and upkeep. Mayor Vallone added that improvements to the walking track were also being considered as an overall improvement project for the Fairgrounds was being considered.

Richard Rinzler, 11 Hurlingham Club Road, Far Hills inquired if the Borough could utilize a community service workers program for a cleanup for the Fairgrounds.

Chief DeCarolis responded in prior years the Borough had direct oversight of the community service workers program, but it was now under the purview of Somerset County, however, he would reach out to the County.

There were no further comments from the public.


Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie, was unanimously carried to close the meeting to public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman McLean, was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVED – 03-22-21


Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk