

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
August 22, 2022
Via Remote Meeting Access Only

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Karner called the remote meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and read the open public meetings statement in accordance with the law.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Karner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilman Joseph Carty, Councilwoman Chimenti, Councilman Ted McLean, Councilman Rick Rinzler, Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie, Councilman Kevin Welsh, Mayor David Karner

Absent, as excused:

Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy S. Hicks, Borough Attorney Joseph Sordillo, Borough Auditor Kathryn Mantell

DISCUSSION

Nomination of Borough Council President

Motion by Councilwoman Chimenti, seconded by Councilman Carty to nominate Councilman Welsh as Council President for the one-year unexpired term, expiring December 31, 2022.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, Rinzler, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

Borough Council Committee Appointments

Mayor Karner reviewed the revisions to the 2022 Committee appointments and it was the consensus of the Borough Council that the appointments be accepted.

REPORTS

Council President Welsh – Fire, Water, Light, Buildings & Grounds

Council President Welsh stated he attended a meeting with representatives of the Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) on August 18, 2022 in preparation for the Fall Rummage Sale. Tents were expected to be installed the week of August 29, 2022; donations would be accepted from September 10-27, 2022 and the event would be held from October 7-9, 2022.

Councilwoman Tweedie – Health/Sanitation

Councilwoman Tweedie stated both she and Mayor Karner would be attending the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners meeting on August 23, 2022 wherein a grant check in the amount of approximately one million dollars would be presented to Bedminster Township. The grant funds would be utilized for improvements to the Miller Lane sewer pumping station located in Bedminster Township but which also services the Borough of Far Hills and the Borough of Peapack & Gladstone.

Councilwoman Tweedie stated an additional grant application was pending a decision in November/December 2022.

Lastly, she encouraged Borough Council members to visit the Miller Lane pumping station to understand the breadth of repairs necessary in order to bring the facility up to date and functioning efficiently.

Councilman McLean – Roads

Councilman McLean indicated gravel had spilled onto the roadway adjacent to 20 Lake Road and Bedminster DPW was notified and cleared the area. It was noted that a stop work order had previously been issued for this property by the Borough's Construction Official.

Councilman McLean reported that there was a chronic problem of poor drainage on a section of the sidewalk adjacent to the Polo Club along Route 202 and requested the Borough Council reconsider authorizing the proposal for an engineering survey submitted by Borough Engineer, Paul Ferriero.

Councilwoman Tweedie inquired if confirmation was received from Mr. Ferriero regarding the recent Polo Club drainage remediation project in another area and any resulting adverse effects to the sidewalk drainage.

Councilman McLean responded as the drainage issue on the sidewalk had been ongoing, he did not believe it was associated with the recent drainage work undertaken by the Polo Club.

Mayor Karner stated photos, taken by Councilman Rinzler during a recent rainfall, illustrated the drainage issue on the sidewalk. He added that Mr. Ferriero was currently out of the country but would review potential remediation options upon his return.

Councilman Carty – Finance/Insurance

Councilman Carty commended Councilwoman Tweedie for her on-going efforts regarding the maintenance of the sanitary sewer system throughout the Borough. He reported that the Borough's financials remained healthy.

Councilwoman Chimenti – Laws, Ordinances & Elections

Councilwoman Chimenti stated Court Administrator Marjorie Freeman has been out on leave but was anticipated to return to work in September. She acknowledged the efforts of Deputy Court Administrator Cathy Adamo and Municipal Judge Katty Wong-Taylor as the court proceedings continue to run smoothly. Lastly, she noted Somerset County recently approved the purchase of a new computer system for the municipal court.

Councilman Rinzler - Police

Councilman Rinzler expressed appreciation to the Borough officials and staff for their assistance in acclimating him to his position on the Council.

Mayor Karner

Mayor Karner reviewed the July 2022 Police Report.

Mayor Karner stated he held a meeting on August 10, 2022 with Council President Welsh, Councilwoman Tweedie, Mr. Sordillo, Ms. Hicks, and Mr. Bill Hotz, Raritan Valley Development Corporation to review the status of the affordable housing projects.

He continued that a meeting was held with representatives of the AVN on August 18, 2022 to review the numerous preparations for the Rummage Sale to be held October 7-9, 2022.

Lastly, he informed the public that the municipal building would be reopening to the public effective September 6, 2022 and the September 12, 2022 Borough Council meeting would be held in-person only.

REGULAR AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

8/8/22 – Regular Meeting Minutes

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

8/8/22 – Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Council President Welsh, seconded by Councilman McLean, was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content only.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 22-115 – Certification of Audit

Borough Auditor Kathryn Mantell, Nisivoccia, LLP presented an overview of the 2021 Audit and indicated the finances in the Borough were very strong.

Ms. Mantell stated that the only recommendation in the 2021 Audit pertained to the segregation of duties which was reflected in the Corrective Action Plan. It was noted that due to the limited number of staff in the Borough, this recommendation had also occurred in prior year audits.

Ms. Mantell commended Borough CFO Debra Stern and Borough Clerk Dorothy Hicks for their expertise and professionalism during the annual audit process.

Mayor Karner thanked Ms. Mantell for the detailed explanation of the audit and the services Nisivoccia provided to the Borough. He also acknowledged the efforts of Mayor Vallone whose oversight contributed to the strong financial stability of the Borough especially during the difficult times experienced through the pandemic.

Motion by Councilman Carty, seconded by Councilman McLean that Resolution 22-115 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, Rinzler, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

Resolution 22-116 – Corrective Action Plan

Motion by Councilman Carty, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti that Resolution 22-116 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, Rinzler, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

The items listed within the Consent Agenda portion of the meeting have been referred to the Borough Council for reading and study; a copy placed on the table in the meeting room and is considered routine and will be enacted with one motion the Borough Council with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is required, the item may be removed from the Agenda by Borough Council action and placed on the Regular Agenda under New Business.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 22-117 – Accepting Resignation/Confirming Appointments – Planning Board
2. Resolution 22-118 – Appointment - Advisory Recreation Committee
3. Resolution 22-119 – Authorizing Renewal of Membership - Suburban Municipal JIF
4. Resolution 22-120 – Authorizing Contract – Information Technology Services
ATON Computing, Inc.
5. Resolution 22-121 – Authorizing Payment of Bill List

Motion by Councilman McLean, seconded by Councilman Rinzler that Resolutions 22-117 through 22-121 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, Rinzler, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

Mayor Karner welcomed the new members to their respective board appointments and on behalf of the Borough expressed his appreciation for their time and dedication given to the Borough.

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 Councilman Carty, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti to open the meeting to public comment.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills inquired as to the status of the financial impact study for the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh development.

Mayor Karner responded he reported at the August 8, 2022 Borough Council meeting that on August 4, 2022 he along with Councilwoman Tweedie, Councilman Welsh, Mr. Sordillo, and Ms. Hicks met with representatives from Melillo Equities and the Pulte Group to discuss the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh project. He reiterated that there was a general consensus amongst all attendees that Borough Tax Assessor, Ed Kerwin would initially evaluate the proposed tax revenue of the project and if necessary, an independent firm could conduct a subsequent financial impact study.

Mayor Karner stated the Borough was concurrently reviewing the qualifications of three companies to conduct the independent financial analysis, should that be required.

Mr. Schwester commented that while Mr. Kerwin was highly qualified to serve as the Tax Assessor he questioned his ability to conduct the in-depth financial analysis being requested.

Mayor Karner thanked Mr. Schwester for his comments and stated that all necessary actions would be undertaken to review the financial impact of this project on the Borough.

Dr. George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills echoed the comment from Mr. Schwester regarding the importance of a financial impact study for the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh development and questioned the validity of a self-evaluation of the financials by the Pulte Group and Melillo Equities. He also inquired if the repairs planned with the sewer facility in Bedminster Township, in addition to the failure of the sewer system in Mendham Township, would give any indication of potential issues with the proposed treatment facility at the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh development.

Mayor Karner responded he scheduled meeting with the developers for a status update regarding each of the respective affordable housing developments.

Councilwoman Tweedie responded the two sewer systems were independent and could not be compared to one another. She recommended that Dr. Mellendick inquire of Bedminster Township for more specific information pertaining to the pumping station as well as reviewing the Planning Board application documents for the specific details regarding the treatment system at the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh development. She opined that the sewer issue in Mendham Township occurred over fifteen years ago.

Mayor Karner reiterated that Bedminster Township had been awarded grant funding to make improvements to the pumping station and there was no impact to the proposed treatment facility at the Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh development.

Mr. Sordillo clarified that the onsite sewer treatment facility proposed at Errico Acres/Residences at Overleigh would not be connecting to the sanitary sewer system in the Borough and was a completely independent system.

Lastly, Dr. Mellendick asked if the Borough would also be providing a remote meeting connection when the in-person meetings resume in September.

Mayor Karner responded that the Borough did not currently have the technology to also provide a remote connection during the in-person meetings.

Ms. Hicks added that a recording of the in-person meeting would be available upon request similar to the recordings of the remote meetings.

Mark Vogel, 5 Spring Street, Far Hills suggested scheduling another Community Clean-Up Day immediately following the AVN Rummage Sale. He stated that he and his wife often pick up trash at the fairgrounds and along the Raritan River. He noted there was a single garbage can which was consistently overflowing and inquired if the sanitation company was emptying this particular can as it did not contain a serial number similar to the others located at the fairgrounds. Lastly, he inquired about the overgrown brush along Railroad Avenue which may have contributed poor drainage and the subsequent flooding last year at St. Elizabeth's Church parking lot which overflowed onto his property damaging his patio.

Mayor Karner expressed his appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Vogel for their ongoing efforts in maintaining the beautification of the Borough and for volunteering for a Community Clean-Up Day.

He stated that the cleaning of the fairgrounds immediately following the rummage sale was discussed with the representatives from the AVN. With regard to the overflowing garbage can, it may have been a result of some recent unauthorized usage of the fairgrounds and along the bank of the Raritan River. The Far Hills Police Department installed “No Parking” signs in an effort to remediate the situation. Lastly, pertaining to the overgrown brush along Railroad Avenue, he noted NJ Transit was notified and were provided photographs of the areas in need of trimming.

There were no further comments from the public.

Motion by Councilman Carty, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie to close the meeting to public comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution 22-122

- Attorney Client Privilege – Litigation – Affordable Housing Litigation
- Attorney Client Privilege – Route 202 Bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan River
- Contract Negotiations – Lease – Atlantic Visiting Nurse
- Contract Negotiations – Lease – Butler’s Pantry Trackside Restaurant

Motion by Councilman McLean, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried to approve Resolution 22-122.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Karner requested recommendations from the Borough Council for residents who may be interested in serving on the Planning Board.

A brief discussion ensued regarding police presence during public meetings when they resume to being held in-person in September. Councilmen Carty and Rinzler were asked to coordinate this with Chief DeCarolus.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the technology required to hold a concurrent in-person and remote meeting resulting in a consensus that it would be cost prohibitive to do so at this time.

Mayor Karner stated at the first in-person meeting of the Borough Council to be held on September 12, 2022, Mayor Paul J. Vallone, MD and Janis Vallone were invited to attend to acknowledge the years of service and dedication Mayor Vallone provided to the Borough. A plaque and gifts of appreciation were also planned to be presented, however, at this time, they have respectfully declined to attend. Ms. Hicks was asked to make arrangements to deliver the plaque and gifts at a later date.

Motion by Councilwoman Tweedie, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

APPROVED – 9/12/2022


Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk