

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
December 26, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Welsh called the remote meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. at the Far Hills Municipal Building and read the open public meetings statement in accordance with the law.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Welsh led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Mary Chimenti, Councilman Peter J. Coccoziello, Jr., Councilman Rick Rinzler, Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie, Mayor Kevin P. Welsh

Absent, as Excused: Councilman Joseph Carty, Council President David P. Karner

Absent:

Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy S. Hicks, Borough Attorney Albert Cruz

REPORTS

Councilman Coccoziello – Roads

Councilman Coccoziello reported work was continuing to develop an overall capital improvement plan for the Borough.

Councilman Rinzler inquired as to the road closure signage on Douglas Road. Councilman Coccoziello responded it was in preparation for the installation of the watermain for the Pulte Homes/Kimbolton Development.

Councilwoman Tweedie – Health/Sanitation

No report.

Councilwoman Chimenti – Laws & Ordinances

No report.

Councilman Rinzler – Police

Councilman Rinzler provided an update on the PBA negotiations indicating another meeting was planned for early January. He also stated that per Chief DeCarolis, Officer Sliwa was acclimating well to the Far Hills Police Department.

Mayor Welsh

Mayor Welsh wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday season. He expressed his appreciation to the members of the Borough Council, Planning Board and Board of Health for the time and dedication they have voluntarily given for the betterment of the residents of Far Hills. Mayor Welsh acknowledged the efforts of the Borough Clerk, Dorothy Hicks and CFO, Debra Stern as well as the entire staff indicating that they are truly the backbone of our community.

Mayor Welsh addressed comments made at the December 11, 2023 meeting regarding the retaining wall at the Pulte Homes/Kimbolton development indicating that the Borough was taking a practical and comprehensive approach to review each of the concerns raised by many residents. A meeting was

held on December 19, 2023 with himself, Councilman Coccoziello, Borough professionals and representatives from Pulte Homes to further review these concerns and a follow-up meeting was scheduled for January 11, 2024 to develop a practical resolution.

Mayor Welsh stated that tonight's meeting was the last in 2023 and indicated that the Borough's Reorganization meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

REGULAR AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

12/11/2023 – Regular Meeting Minutes

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

12/11/2023 – Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Councilwoman Chimenti, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content only.

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 23-189 – Authorizing the Filing of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
tabled from the December 11, 2023 meeting
2. Resolution 23-192 – Payment of Bill List

Councilman Rinzler inquired if the Borough had a choice in the change from a Stormwater Tier B to a Tier A municipality. Mayor Welsh responded that the Borough did not have a choice regarding this change.

Motion by Councilwoman Chimenti, seconded by Councilman Rinzler that Resolutions 23-189 and 23-192 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Chimenti, Coccoziello, Rinzler, Tweedie

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

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.*

Mayor Welsh opened the meeting for public comment.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills inquired if the change from a Tier B to a Tier A municipality was related to the Pulte Homes/Kimbolton development. He also commented regarding

the issuance of a stop-work order and the potential legal implications should work continue at the site during the Borough's review of the retaining wall situation. He also expressed his concern with the Borough's professionals that were responsible for the oversight of this development. Mr. Schwester also commented upon the removal of numerous trees along Route 202 adjacent to the development and indicated that when he is on the Council full sized trees will be installed in this area.

Mr. Cruz responded that the Borough is currently in a fact-finding review process regarding the construction of the retaining wall. A meeting has been scheduled with representatives from Pulte on January 11, 2024 to determine if the matter can be resolved or if legal action would later become necessary.

Mayor Welsh responded that he was also concerned about the removal of the existing brush and trees in the buffer along Route 202 but confirmed that it was consistent with the approved landscape plan and was necessary to accommodate the planting of new trees which would have a caliper of 2.5 inches and would be approximately 14 feet in height.

George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills also expressed his concern regarding the continual diminishing of the buffer area along Route 202. He indicated that he drove on the site today and roads were in place and there were only a few remaining trees. He questioned the competency of the Borough's professionals in relation to this development in alignment with the Master Plan. Dr. Mellendick continued by stating that the community is against this development and felt that it is most damaging thing to happen to Far Hills.

Councilman Coccoziello commented the applicant has an obligation to perform in compliance with the submitted materials, testimony and Developer's Agreement and the Borough Council has an obligation to ensure that these are being adhered to. With regard to the landscaping and reforestation of the buffer area, he noted it was important to realize that the project is being completed in phases and the landscape reforestation plan will ultimately accomplish the goal of a dense buffer consisting of a variety of healthy and non-deciduous plant species.

Steve Newman, 19 Lake Road, Far Hills expressed his concern for Mr. Khan who has had a large retaining wall installed by Pulte directly behind his property and could not understand why the project could not be stopped during the investigation.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills commented that the installation of the retaining wall was the most obvious concern, however, inquired as to what other potential infractions may be occurring at the development. He expressed his concern regarding the ability of the Borough's current professionals and asked if an independent engineering firm had been retained to review the site.

There were no further comments from the public.

Mayor Welsh closed the meeting for public comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution 23-193

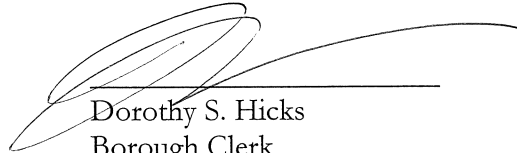
- Contract Negotiations – Police Benevolent Association
- Attorney Client Privilege – Kimbolton Development

Motion by Councilman Rinzler, seconded by Councilman Coccoziello and unanimously carried to approve Resolution 23-193.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilman Rinzler, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk

APPROVED – 1-22-2024