

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
August 23, 2021
VIA REMOTE MEETING ACCESS ONLY

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Vallone called the remote meeting to order at 7:00 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: Councilwoman Mary Chimenti, Council President David Karner,
Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie, Councilman Kevin Welsh, Mayor Paul J.
Vallone, MD
Absent, as Excused: Councilman Joseph Carty, Councilman Ted McLean
Absent:
Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy S. Hicks, Borough Attorney Joseph Sordillo

REPORTS

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

Councilman Welsh reported he would be attending the meeting with representatives of the Atlantic Health/Visiting Nurse Association on September 14, 2021 in preparation for the 2021 Fall Rummage Sale.

Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie – Health/Sanitation

Councilwoman Tweedie reported the sanitary sewer system was in good working order but would be monitored in light of the recent storm.

Councilwoman Mary Chimenti – Laws and Ordinances

Councilwoman Chimenti reported Municipal Court deposits for July 2021 were \$1,884.54. She stated she met recently with Court Administrator, Ms. Freeman to review current staffing requirements and credentialing as required by the NJ Judiciary.

Council President David Karner – Police

Council President Karner reported he had been in contact with Chief DeCarolis and although there was a significant amount of flooding throughout Somerset County, fortunately, there were no major issues in Far Hills. He noted there was some debris in the storm drains along Peapack Road near the intersection of Route 202 and inquired as to the entity responsible for the maintenance of these storm drains.

Council President Karner stated Chief DeCarolis, Lieutenant Kocur, Detective/Corporal Kamieniecki and Officer Jenkins attended the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police Conference in Atlantic City this week.

With the upcoming school year, he indicated he had spoken with Chief DeCarolis regarding increasing patrol to ensure bus and traffic safety.

Lastly, he apprised the Borough Council of the upcoming purchase of body-worn camera equipment for the police department.

Mayor Paul J. Vallone, MD

Mayor Vallone added the Borough would be reimbursed through a grant for the purchase of this police equipment and expressed his appreciation to Council President Karner, Ms. Hicks, Ms. Stern and Chief DeCarolis for their efforts in securing this funding.

Mayor Vallone stated that due to the increasing number of Covid cases from the Delta variant, to ensure the safety of our staff and residents, all Far Hills public meetings would continue to be held via Zoom until further notice.

Mayor Vallone stated the Borough was extremely fortunate as there were no injuries or significant damage as a result of Hurricane Henri. Lastly, he reported that the vegetation overgrowth adjacent to Moorland Farm along Route 202 has been remediated.

Mayor Vallone stated he would also be addressing two issues of concern that had occurred during public comment at recent Borough Council meetings. The first was a comment made by a resident at the August 9, 2021 Borough Council meeting who insisted that Planning Board Attorney, Peter Henry made a statement “the look of the new Far Hills” at the August 2, 2021 Planning Board meeting during the Residences at Overleigh presentation. Mayor Vallone clarified that after reviewing the recording of the August 2, 2021 Planning Board meeting, the comment was not made by Mr. Henry but was instead by Planning Board member, Mr. Robert Lewis. Mayor Vallone indicated that this was appropriately reported in the Bernardsville News and the August 2, 2021 Planning Board minutes and transcript would reflect the correct author of this statement.

Secondly, Mayor Vallone stated he received several phone calls and comments from residents who expressed outrage regarding comments made at the August 9, 2021 Borough Council meeting. During the public comment portion of that meeting, a resident referenced the lack of windows of the interior townhome units at the proposed affordable housing development, Residences at Overleigh. The resident commented rooms in Auschwitz had more windows than these townhomes.

Mayor Vallone stated that this comment conjures up horrible memories for those individuals whose families and loved ones were subjected to the atrocities experienced in these concentration camps. I want in the strongest possible manner to stress that I, this Borough Council and the Borough of Far Hills has always and will always have zero, zero tolerance for comments that are racist, that are poignantly hurtful or demeaning to any individual, religion or group of individuals. Yes, it is the right of residents to express their feelings about issues; however, there is no right to injure, demean, belittle or invoke such atrocities during any proceeding in this Borough. If such comments continue or are patterned or repetitively cause angst, discomfort or are harmful to any individual or groups of individuals, the speaker of such hurtful comments will be barred from future meetings in this Borough to the fullest extent of the law.

It is indeed unfortunate that I even have to address such a thing here in Far Hills, but I trust my position is extremely clear on this issue. Let's hope that we do not have to address such comments again.

Mayor Vallone noted that he would also read this statement at the next Planning Board and Board of Health meeting, as well as having it published on Borough website.

REGULAR AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

08/09/21 – Regular Meeting Minutes

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

NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCE – INTRODUCTION

ORDINANCE 2021-12 - ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2021-08 APPROPRIATING AN ADDITIONAL \$2,573.00 FOR POLICE BODY WORN CAMERAS

Council President Karner provided a brief overview of the Ordinance.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Welsh that Ordinance 2021-12 be introduced.

Roll Call:

Aye: Chimenti, Karner, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Recused:

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 and are considered routine and will be enacted with one motion of the Borough Council with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is required, the item may be removed from the Consent Agenda by Borough Council action and placed on the Regular Agenda under New Business.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 21-116 – Authorizing Raffle License – Far Hills Race Meeting
2. Resolution 21-117 – Authorizing Refund of Escrow – Board of Health – B18 L9
3. Resolution 21-118 – Authorizing the Acceptance of and Participation in the SFY21 Body Worn Camera Grant Program
4. Resolution 21-119 – Authorizing Payment of Bill List

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie that Resolutions 21-116 through 21-119 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Chimenti, Karner, Tweedie, Welsh

Nay:

Abstain:

Recused:
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 Vallone reminded the public of the upcoming Borough Council meeting schedule, noting that the first meeting in October would be held on Tuesday, October 12 due to the holiday.

Ms. Hicks informed members of the public that the Borough Council would be adhering to the five-minute time limit for public comment. Members of the public would be advised when one minute remained; and again when thirty seconds remained.

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

Karen Reilly, 7 Fox Hunt Court, Far Hills inquired if there was any flooding at Pulte/Residences at Overleigh property as a result of the recent storm and if any members of the Borough Council or Planning Board subsequently viewed the site.

Mr. Sordillo responded that the site was private property and no members of the Borough Council or Planning Board would be permitted on the property without the owner's permission. He added that the site must meet the NJDEP requirements for storm water management and that approval was a component of the Pulte/Residences at Overleigh application before the Planning Board.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills stated he attended the Planning Board site walk on August 14, 2021 at the Pulte/Residences at Overleigh development and commented upon the wet soil conditions and expressed concerns regarding poor soil percolation. He suggested a reduction in the number of units in order to lessen the ecological impact and again offered to sponsor a financial impact study for this development.

Mayor Vallone responded that the Borough's professionals previously analyzed the financials for this project and Mr. Sordillo responded that both he and the Borough Planner, Mr. Banisch had significant experience in land development and contract negotiations. A brief discussion ensued confirming the for-sale units in the development would be deeded as age-restricted.

George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills expressed concern regarding the craftsmanship and layout of the for-sale units and the unlikelihood of achieving the \$800,000.00 price point. He further commented upon the lack of windows and style of these units and stated that they had been compared to the housing on display at the New York City Tenement Museum. He further inquired as to what action the Borough Council was going to take to ensure the quality and higher price point for the units in the Pulte/Residences at Overleigh development.

A discussion ensued and Mayor Vallone reiterated that as a result of the underwhelming architectural presentation, made by representatives for the Pulte/Residences at Overleigh development at the August 2, 2021 Planning Board meeting, he immediately contacted the developer and relayed the overall dissatisfaction with the building product as presented.

Richard Rinzler, 11 Hurlingham Club Road, Far Hills expressed his appreciation to the Borough Council for their time and dedication throughout the entire affordable housing process as well as the statement made by Mayor Vallone at tonight's meeting. Mr. Rinzler indicated that as a Planning Board member he attended the site walk, along with his wife on August 14, 2021. He opined that he found the representatives from Pulte/Residences at Overleigh accommodating and responsive to questions presented during the site visit. Lastly, he expressed that the comment made comparing the for-sale units to the New York City Tenement Museum was inappropriate.

Council President Karner acknowledged the comments made by several members of the public but suggested that in the future they be presented in a less confrontational manner.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills stated that Councilwoman Tweedie made favorable comments about the architectural presentation during the Planning Board meeting, only to later at the next Borough Council meeting concur with Mayor Vallone that the architectural presentation was underwhelming.

After a brief debate, Mr. Sordillo reaffirmed Mayor Vallone's statement at the beginning of tonight's meeting regarding misstatements made by members of the public. Mr. Sordillo stated that without the transcripts or recordings of the meeting, we could not assume the accuracy of Mr. Schwester's statements about comments made by others at prior meetings.

George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills stated that the Borough Council was not responding appropriately to his comments which was why he felt it was necessary to repeat them at subsequent meetings.

There were no further comments from the public.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk

APPROVED – 9/13/21