

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
October 24, 2022
IN PERSON MEETING AT MUNICIPAL BUILDING

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Karner called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 Mary Chimenti, Councilman Ted McLean, Councilman Rick Rinzler, Councilwoman Sheila Tweedie, Mayor David Karner
Absent, as excused: Council President Kevin Welsh
Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy Hicks, Police Chief Michael DeCarolis, Borough Attorney Joseph Sordillo

PRESENTATION

Special Recognition of Detective Christopher Merkle and Officer Thomas Finnerty, Jr.

Councilmen Rinzler and Carty acknowledged the exceptional efforts of both Detective Merkle and Officer Finnerty.

Chief DeCarolis presented Officer Thomas Finnerty, Jr. with the Life Saving Award in recognition of his quick action performing CPR and the use of a defibrillator to successfully resuscitate an individual while on vacation in South Carolina. Officer Finnerty's son, Thomas Finnerty, III, also a police officer assisted in these lifesaving efforts.

Chief DeCarolis presented Detective Christopher Merkle with the Meritorious Service Award in recognition of his work in securing the arrest of suspects linked to burglary, theft, and human trafficking at Natirar Park. Councilman Rinzler read a letter from Peapack and Gladstone's Chief of Police which expressed appreciation to Detective Merkle for his extraordinary efforts and assistance with the apprehension of these suspects.

Mayor Karner extended his appreciation and expressed pride in having such a fine and dedicated police force in the Borough of Far Hills.

REPORTS

Councilwoman Tweedie – Health/Sanitation

Councilwoman Tweedie reported she attended the Sanitary Transmission Advisory Board (STAB) meeting on October 13, 2022 and unfortunately, there was no update regarding the federal grant funding and the Somerset County grant funding has not yet been received.

Councilman McLean – Roads

Councilman McLean provided an overview of the Pennbrook Road Improvements project as well as the bids received and the necessary capital appropriations.

Councilman Carty – Finance/Insurance

No report.

Councilwoman Chimenti – Laws, Ordinances & Elections

Councilwoman Chimenti reported she would be meeting with Judge Katty Wong-Taylor following the court session on October 25, 2022 to review when in-person sessions would resume in the Borough.

Councilman Rinzler - Police

Councilman Rinzler reported there were minimal police incidents during the Far Hills Race event which occurred on October 15, 2022. He also noted that the surrounding neighborhoods were free from trash and debris which had been an issue with prior events.

Chief DeCarolis

No report.

Mayor Karner

Mayor Karner stated the Far Hills Race event was held on a beautiful day and expressed his appreciation to the Far Hills Police Department, Somerset County Prosecutor's office, the Far Hills Bedminster Fire Department, and the Far Hills Bedminster First Aid Squad. He also noted sponsors Peapack & Gladstone Bank and Open Road Auto Group as well as the National Steeplechase Association each of which contributed to a successful event. Lastly, he acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the Far Hills Race Association leadership, Messrs. Guy Torsilieri and Ron Kennedy.

He continued to report on the Atlantic Visiting Nurse (AVN) Association Rummage Sale which occurred on October 7-9, 2022 and was also a successful event. He acknowledged the efforts of Ms. Katie Dooley and Ms. Patricia Neill who co-chair the event plus the hundreds of volunteers who so graciously help support the event each year. He continued by reporting Council President Welsh had reviewed the track and fairgrounds following the event and the AVN was making all the necessary repairs.

Mayor Karner apprised the Council of the restoration efforts being undertaken by the AVN to the two barns at the J. Malcolm Belcher Fairgrounds.

Mayor Karner provided an update on the Request for Proposals for the Fiscal/Financial Impact Assessment and indicated that only one proposal had been submitted so far. It was noted the due date for submissions was October 28, 2022. He indicated a meeting would be scheduled with The Otteau Group as well as any additional responding firms to review the statement of work prior to making a final determination.

He stated in early November, young adults from the Matheny Medical and Education Center would be moving into the Matheny Group Home, located along Peapack Road, and encouraged resident to welcome them to Far Hills.

Mayor Karner indicated that CFO Debra Stern has returned from her leave of absence and expressed appreciation to the administration staff for their efforts in providing the necessary services to residents during her absence. He also offered his apologies to Councilman Rinzler for inadvertently omitting an acknowledgment of his appointment to Borough Council in Fall 2022 Newsletter.

Lastly, he informed the public of the 24% state-imposed increase in the health benefit plan premiums which would adversely affect employees and municipalities. He encouraged staff and residents to voice their concerns to their state representatives.

REGULAR AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

10/11/22 – Regular Meeting Minutes

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

10/11/22 – Executive Session Minutes

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

REGULAR AGENDA

ORDINANCE – INTRODUCTION

ORDINANCE 2022-09 AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING \$365,485.00 FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS – PENNBROOK ROAD – (Station 0+00 to 16+50)

Motion by Councilman McLean, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie to introduce Ordinance 2022-09.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, Rinzler, Tweedie

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 22-145 – Amending Resolution 22-131 - Authorizing Payment of Sewer and Property Taxes - Affordable Housing Restricted Unit
2. Resolution 22-146 – Accepting Resignation – Board of Health
3. Resolution 22-147 – Authorizing Contract – Special Counsel Land Use Affordable Housing
4. Resolution 22-148 – Authorizing Payment of Bill List

Motion by Councilman McLean, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie that Resolutions 22-145 through 22-148 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, McLean, 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.*

Motion by Councilman Rinzler, seconded by Councilman Carty to open the meeting to public comment.

Charles Schwester, 410 Lake Road, Far Hills expressed his displeasure with the campaign efforts of Mr. Mark Melillo, who was running for the Mayor of Bernardsville, and the utilization of a sticker on covering part of the front page of the Bernardsville News. He also commended the Borough Council for proceeding with the request for proposal for the financial impact study and opined that The Otteau Group was a highly qualified firm.

Dr. George Mellendick, 260 Lake Road, Far Hills inquired about the review and contractor selection for the Pennbrook Road Improvements project and expressed concern regarding maintaining the character of the road. He also commented upon the lack of response to the request for proposals for the financial impact study.

Mr. Sordillo responded by providing a brief overview of the Local Public Contracts Law which requires a municipality to award to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. He also noted the Borough Engineer, Ferriero Engineering prepared the bid specifications for the Pennbrook Road Improvements project. Additionally, he provided a brief overview of the RFP process utilized for the financial impact study.

Mr. Don Hewitt, 23 Dumont Road, Far Hills requested members of the Borough Council speak directly into the microphone as he was having difficulty hearing them.

Mayor Karner acknowledged Mr. Vogel for his comments made at the October 11, 2022 Borough Council meeting regarding the history of public meetings and the importance of public participation.

There were no further comments from the public.

Motion by Councilwoman Chimenti, seconded by Councilman Rinzler to close the meeting to public comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution 22-149

- Attorney Client Privilege – Litigation – Affordable Housing Litigation

Motion by Councilwoman Chimenti, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried to approve Resolution 22-149.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Councilman McLean inquired about the timing of the award of the Pennbrook Road Improvements project and the NJDOT grant procedures. Ms. Hicks responded that upon the adoption of Ordinance 2022-09 at the November 14, 2022 meeting, a resolution awarding the contract would be presented to the Borough Council for their consideration.

Mayor Karner provided a brief overview of the request from Mr. Doug Sutton for further revisions to lease agreement for the Butler's Pantry Trackside. A brief discussion ensued and Mr. Sordillo advised he would contact Mr. Sutton regarding the revisions to the lease agreement.

Motion by Councilwoman Tweedie, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk

APPROVED – 11/14/2022