

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
MARCH 4, 2008**

This meeting was called to order by Carol A. Raph, Municipal Clerk. It was properly advertised according to Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

The flag salute was led by Mayor Vincent Mazzeo. Following the flag salute, there was a moment of silence to recognize the men and women serving our Country at home and abroad.

ROLL CALL

Present: Carew, Kern, O'Grady, Vain, Zlotnick, Martinez

Absent: Notaro

AGENDA REVIEW

Council President Martinez announced that Resolution 46-2008, the hiring of a part time Seasonal Maintenance employee at Birch Grove Park had been placed on the agenda in error. This Resolution will be removed and substituted with a Resolution to award a non-fair and open contract to Marturano Recreation in the amount of \$20,715 to replace the bleachers at Birch Grove Park ball fields. Council President Martinez called upon Councilman Carew to elaborate on this Resolution. Councilman Carew advised that there were a few JIF issues through the course of 2007, such as fencing and bleachers in need of repair and bleachers with safety concerns. The work included in the contract is for 7 sets of bleachers; also, once the work is completed, we will no longer need to move bleachers to accommodate various events as we will have a full complement for all of our fields.

Councilman Carew initiated further discussion regarding the removal of Resolution 46-2008, with substitution. He has been working with Councilman Notaro on the hiring of a part time seasonal maintenance employee for Birch Grove Park for quite a while; this was a position that was budgeted for in 2007 but not filled. The money for this position is in the 2008 salaries and wages budget; and filling the job this year is a priority. Councilman Carew advised that he recognizes the need to monitor expenses and that there is another position, also budgeted for in 2008, that will not be filled as a cost control measure. He added that the proposed hire is for a position that will be shared with the Road Department, Fields and Grounds, and City Hall. This is a 6-month position that does not include health and other benefits. Councilman Carew stressed that losing this position now due to budgetary concerns will not save money; we cannot handle the work that we currently have. The salary expense will be recouped in the form of maintenance savings if we can avoid hiring contractors when the need arises. Councilman Vain agreed with Councilman Carew that we need someone almost on a daily basis to perform necessary maintenance at the fields. Councilman Carew initiated a Motion to have the hiring of a part time seasonal worker put back on the agenda; Councilman Vain seconded.

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(Solicitor Scheffler enters the meeting.) Mayor Mazzeo asked when this item was added to the agenda as it was not discussed at the agenda meeting on Friday; Councilman Carew advised that the addition was late because he had been away, but that he did call Council President Martinez to advise him that a candidate had been selected. Councilman Carew asserted that Councilman Notaro, although not present, would agree with his argument in favor of the hiring. Mayor Mazzeo suggested deferring the hiring of this person until after next week's budget meetings because Northfield is facing the potential loss of \$232,700 in state aid due to Governor Corzine's recent budget announcement. Councilwoman Kern noted that there is a question as to whether or not a 32 hour employee, seasonal or not, is entitled to benefits. Council President Martinez requested that the benefits issue be investigated. He also advised that he and Councilman Notaro have discussed this issue and are in agreement that it should be looked at closely. He stated that Councilman Notaro would agree with Mayor Mazzeo that it could wait until after the budget meetings next week. Councilman Carew made a motion to rescind his motion to put the hiring of a part time seasonal maintenance employee for Birch Grove Park back on the agenda until the CFO can research and answer the benefits question. Motion seconded and carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

On February 25th Councilwoman Zlotnick attended the Northfield Board of Education meeting. The members of the Future Engineers Club and their Advisor, Mrs. Fields, were recognized for placing 4th out of 50 teams at the state-wide Future Cities competition held at Rutgers University. Northfield Community School faculty members Lisa Harvey and Kevin Jarrett were recognized as the 2007-2008 Northfield Teachers of the Year. Board Member Mr. Bill Chrisman made a suggestion that the Northfield Fire Department may be able to do the Fire Safety Inspection which would save the school approximately \$3000 in 2008-2009. Councilman Carew suggested that Councilwoman Zlotnick check with the Fire Inspector because there may be State guidelines in place that affect the inspections. She advised that she will do so. The terms of the new teacher's contract have been approved and the Board of Education is voting on the contract this evening. The Rescue Squad report indicated that there were 103 calls in the month of February; total mutual aid provided by Northfield: 3 to Egg Harbor Township, 1 to Linwood, 1 to Somers Point, and 1 to Pleasantville. Total mutual aid provided for Northfield: 1 from Linwood. She also attended a meeting last Friday evening with the Rescue Squad Committee, the Rescue Squad, and Solicitor Schaffer to discuss details of Memorandum of Understanding distributed to Council for review at the last Council meeting.

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Councilman Vain attended the Library Meeting; they had a Constellation Night on February 25th with a very nice turn-out of 45 people. It was a clear night and they reported that they were able to see the planet Saturn, which is an unusual occurrence. The Library is having an Internet Class for beginners on March 18th. Councilman Vain recognized and thanked Councilman O'Grady for his work on the Northfield City webpage. There will be a meeting on March 5th of the Freeholder Committee to discuss the feasibility of the Cedarbridge and Zion Road intersection project, given the impact of pending budget cuts. Councilman Vain asked Solicitor Scheffler for an update on the Burton Avenue Estates situation. Solicitor Scheffler spoke with John Pace from the Trocki Association said they had crafted a plan to correct the problem. They've retained their own independent engineer, but are willing to work with our engineer to ensure satisfaction from all parties. A written proposal from Mr. Pace is pending and Scheffler will follow up.

Councilman Carew announced that the Northfield Mother's League Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Saturday March 15th with a rain date of the 16th. Birch Grove Park's opening day will be April 5th and will include a Youth Fishing Tournament from 8am-noon with prizes for 2 age groups, 9 and under and 10 through 15; registration begins at 7am. One of the volunteers, George Bucci has been very helpful in coordinating opening day events. At 1pm there will be a dedication ceremony installing a plaque honoring Marie Wakefield, a Somers Point resident who bequeathed Birch Grove Park \$35,000 upon her death. The money was used to upgrade the playground facility. All are encouraged to attend the ceremony. Arbor Day with the Boy Scouts will be April 26th at 10am. The Senior Citizen Fishing Tournament will be June 7th, with no rain date and no license required. The Flora Dickinson Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs Tournament will be July 19th. The Family Fest is September 27th with a rain date of the 28th. Carew said thank you to Birch Grove Park Supervisor Vicki Rutter and to all volunteers who are helping to make Birch Grove Park as entertaining as possible, and special thanks to the Friends of Birch Grove Park, some of whom were in attendance at the Council Meeting.

Councilwoman Kern clarified a comment made in the newspaper with regard to her Violations and Municipal Court Report as mentioned at the last Council meeting. The need for benches as opposed to chairs is related to the use of Council Chambers for Municipal Court, not its use by Council. The benches are being installed as a security precaution for the Court. The City Hall Court Safety Meeting will be Monday March 10th, with Mayor Mazzeo, Judge Broom, members of the Police and Fire Departments, the Court Administrator, and Councilwoman Kern all slated to attend. She will report at the next Council meeting. The Northfield Education Foundation held an American Idol-style lip sync contest on Saturday evening. Councilwoman Kern was a panelist, along with one of the members of the NEF, and police officer Kristina Ramsi. It was a fun event, and she extended congratulations

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to all of the very talented participants. She also judged a Science Fair, along with Mayor Mazzeo and several community members. There were 86 outstanding projects; all of the children worked very hard and 15 projects were chosen to go to Stockton College. The Municipal Alliance will be having a meeting on March 10th in Council Chambers to plan a Community Night which will be sponsored by the Alliance. The Alliance will also be participating as a sponsor for the Flora Dickinson Fishing Tournament. At a previous meeting Mr. Malone inquired about the installation of flags along Shore Road; she will bring the issue up at the budget meeting. It is a very nice touch for our Coty when the flags are flown, so we will try our best.

Councilman O'Grady advised that the Planning Board is having a Public Hearing of the 2008 Master Plan on March 6th at 7:30; all are encouraged to attend. The Technology Committee is pleased to announce that new computers and a new server are being installed at City Hall and it is going well; they have also presented a potential solution to the email SPAM issue. There have been many positive changes to the city website, cityofnorthfield.org, and all are encouraged to visit the website soon and often. The Library web page has been reinstated, new events have been added, and the minutes for the Planning Board and City Council are up to date as well. Also included is software to allow the website to be updated remotely, and there is discussion regarding getting remote email access for all Council Members. The 1st meeting of the Traffic Safety Committee was held today to discuss city issues; the speed hump that was purchased will be installed in the spring. There will be another meeting in 4 weeks. Thank you to Chief James and to Mr. Green for participating. The Northfield Boy Scouts will be pursuing a Coin Collecting Merit Badge tomorrow at the Atlantic County Numismatic Society; O'Grady is a Society member and will be officiating. The Society will be hosting the Boy Scouts at the Linwood Library at their next club meeting.

Council President Martinez noted that Mr. Craig Tanzola was in attendance this evening, and was at the last Council Meeting as well. Mr. Tanzola raised the issue of speeding on Burton Avenue. He asked O'Grady if that was on the list of discussion topics for the Traffic Safety Committee; O'Grady replied that it was not discussed at today's brief meeting but that it has been a topic of discussion in the past and will continue to be addressed. In addition, O'Grady added that once the City's newest Police Officers have been fully trained, there will be additional resources to focus on this problem. Vain added that he had spoken with Chief James about Burton Avenue and that a decoy police vehicle had been placed there for a few weeks. The County had placed large 25 MPH decals on the street as well; possibly more decals would be helpful.

MAYOR'S REPORT

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Mayor Mazzeo noted that, as Councilwoman Kern mentioned, he judged the Science Fair at the middle school and saw some very interesting and creative ideas. On March 3rd, he presented a Proclamation to the kindergarten students in honor of 'Read Across America' day and Dr. Seuss' 104th birthday. He commented that it was a fun day and the students were excellent readers; he applauds the teachers for the reading capabilities demonstrated by these students. He had meeting with the Tax Assessor, Mark Sykes, regarding the tax maps that were presented by City Engineer Matt Doran. The necessary update is almost complete. He noted that this is the only the 1st step towards a revaluation; if approved by Council, the finalized maps would then get sent to the state for their approval. A revaluation is a 12-18 month process, and if approved today, wouldn't be completed until 2009-2010 . Mayor Mazzeo said he got a letter from the NJ Department of Transportation indicating that in 2007, the City of Northfield was awarded \$140,000 for the Cedarbridge Sidewalk Project. The City Engineer is aware and will begin steps to apply again in 2008 because the scope of this project is such that \$140,000 will not cover the entire cost. Mayor Mazzeo also had meeting with the Oak Avenue owner, realtor, with the engineer and solicitor. They are drawing up a contract for Council's approval for next meeting. Also the Atlantic County Mayor's Association formed a unified agreement to mount a legal challenge against \$35 million dollar tax appeal settlement awarded to the Trump properties. Northfield's share of this settlement is \$106,500. The legal charge to challenge would be \$15,000 and would be shared by 21 participating municipalities; our cost to participate in the challenge is \$513. Mayor Mazzeo should have a Resolution for consideration by Council at the next meeting. Governor Corzine's State Budget leaves Northfield in a tough situation with a potential loss of \$232,700 in state aid, and as such, Council will be faced with very difficult decisions during next week's Budget Meetings. Mayor Mazzeo attended the Birch Grove Advisory Board Meeting last night and commented that they are a dedicated group of people who do a great job. He extended his thanks to Councilman Carew's team for a great job. Mayor Mazzeo also welcomed Mary Canesi, the new Deputy City Clerk.

ENGINEERS REPORT

City Engineer Matt Doran advised that the 2008 Community Development Block Grant will be submitted by the due date of Friday, March 7th, and it includes truncated domes and small parking areas for the bike path. The Birch Grove Park stormwater pump station bids are due March 14th; as of last Friday 19 contractors had picked up plans and specifications. The Birch Grove Park Walkway bid date is also March 14th, and 12 packets had been picked up as of last Friday. Such heavy interest in both projects ensures that we can expect a very competitive bid process. The County Municipal Open Space Partnership, Round 9, was submitted on-time last Friday. The submission includes \$300,000 for the Birch Grove Park concession

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stand, and \$100,000 for an addition to the football building. Doran Engineering is currently working on proposals to meter the irrigation wells at Birch Grove Park; 7 have been isolated and 3 more should be completed tomorrow. As Mayor Mazzeo mentioned, the 2007 'Safe Routes to School' program got \$140,000 for 2007 and we'll apply for 2008 to get more funding for curbs and sidewalks for Cedarbridge Road, and speed humps and speed monitoring devices for around the school. Councilman Carew inquired as to where the sidewalks and curbing should start, since we know that current funds won't complete the project. Doran suggested that Phase 1 should possibly start at the bike path and end at the school, but he will have a formal recommendation for the next Council meeting. All were in agreement that planning for the next grant now is crucial and should start immediately.

President Martinez opened this meeting to the public to discuss any items that were covered at this session.

Mr. Craig Tanzola of 10 Magnolia Court thanked Police Chief James for writing a letter on the citizens' behalf regarding the traffic and speeding situation on Burton avenue. This road is one that is heavily traveled by our children when walking to and from sporting events, school etc. Mr. Tanzola would like someone to observe the speed of vehicles that travel Burton Avenue, as he believes many cars regularly travel well above the speed limit. He also mentioned that he inquired last year about a tax revaluation as there hasn't been one for many years and thanked Mayor Mazzeo for looking at the problem. Mr. Tanzola feels there is a great disparity in tax bills between newer and older homes of the same square footage, and said that the tax burden is inequitably distributed. The next wave of casino development will spur real estate prices in Northfield because it will be among the most desirable communities for relocating casino executives and their families. If the revaluation isn't done until after this next wave of casino development, he fears that many existing Northfield families will be unable to afford the resulting increase in their tax bill; this is happening now in Atlantic City. He also questioned why the commercial tax rate is the same as the residential rate; he is a business owner in Northfield but has also owned businesses in other municipalities and in his experience it is customary for the commercial tax rate to be higher because of the city services provided to businesses and their customers. He doesn't feel that businesses in Northfield are paying their fair share and is asking that Council consider a commercial revaluation as well. Council President Martinez thanked Mr. Tanzola for his comments.

After Mr. Tanzola was finished speaking, Councilman Carew clarified that the tax revaluation process was initiated prior to Mr. Tanzola's inquiries, but that as stated previously, it is a very lengthy process and that the Mayor and Council are in

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agreement that a revaluation is overdue. Unfortunately a revaluation is a costly endeavor and this is an effort that must be carefully planned.

Mr. Robert Webb of 218 West Revere Avenue expressed his concerns regarding the current state of the economy, locally and nation wide. He urges Council to save whatever City money they can and take prudent measures to remain fiscally sound. As someone who has lived through tough economic times, he recognizes the signs and is seeing them now, in the form of houses being repossessed due to the mortgage crisis, increased property taxes, etc. Mr. Webb was thanked for his concerns.

Seeing no one wishing to speak from the public, the work session portion of the meeting was closed.

Council President Martinez called for a brief recess before reconvening for the Regular Session of Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Raph, RMC/CMC