

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
APRIL 23, 2024**

At 6:03pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 6, 2024, and in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Council President Pro Tempore Dewees.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Bucci; Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Polistina; Councilman Smith; Council President Leeds.

Absent: Councilman Notaro; Mayor Chau

Solicitor Facenda, Engineer Mauro, Chief VonColln, Planner (CuvIELLO) Morrissey and Attorney Holm were also present.

Council President Leeds welcomed all, announced that we have a very full agenda this evening and moved to the 6pm Presentation.

6PM Presentation – Tiffany (CuvIELLO) Morrissey, Professional Planner

Using the overhead projector, Planner Morrissey showed a rendering of the planned area for the Affordable Housing overlay and the location proposed for Diocese project. She explained the purpose of the ordinance as creating opportunity by rezoning to allow age restricted affordable housing. If the ordinance is approved, next steps would be for the Diocese to apply to the Planning Board for site plan approval, and that would include the need for them to obtain all outside agency approvals as well.

Councilwoman Bucci asked what happens if we don't meet our affordable housing requirements.

Planner Morrissey responded that the City learned that lesson in 2015. The City did not have an affordable housing plan and was sued by a developer; we now have the 40 affordable units with the rest being market rate. Today, we have an Affordable Housing Plan and a Settlement Agreement with the Court, if we do not maintain that, we could be sued again by a developer.

Council President Leeds thanked Planner Morrissey for her presentation.

PUBLIC HEARING ORDINANCE 4-2024

Council President Leeds opened the public hearing for Ordinance 4-2024; he asked all to state their name and city of residence for the record and observe a 5-minute

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limit per speaker. Questions would be answered at the end of each person's 5-minutes to provide the maximum opportunity to be heard.

4-2024 An Ordinance Amending Section 215 of the Code of the City of Northfield Governing Land Use and Development

Joan Brennan, Northfield, was told by members of the Planning Board that she cannot say anything and that this is a done deal. Because the property is historic, ground-penetrating radar must be done before the zoning change to avoid a lawsuit. Bodies must be moved, by law. There are 540 dead buried there and more than one-half are black. She was told by County personnel that there are closer to 2,700 people buried there but that all records were destroyed by a flood. She asked why the Diocese was not building on their own property at St Gianna. A realtor for the Diocese told her the residents need to use County services. Mrs. Brennan expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak.

Councilman Polistina responded to Mrs. Brennan's questions. Regarding the radar study, they went to the spots where we are certain there are graves to test the area to see what they could expect to see - that is what they used as their example when they tested the back field. They found anomalies and the area where this was discovered will not be developed; the area will be sectioned-off and appropriately marked. As far as it being a done deal, we have not voted yet. The proposed plans have been adjusted to ensure that no areas where there are graves are developed. The location is favorable due to proximity to County services, for those in need of those services. The NJ Cemetery Board is aware of the project and has been looking at it. We are fairly certain there are no anomalies where development is slated to occur.

Council President Leeds added that no application for this building has been filed yet with the Planning Board.

Terri Reese, Northfield, said she has researched the Mt Laurel Doctrine, and understands the land use as far as our obligation as a municipality. Having this facility located close to Meadowview has its advantages, however Meadowview staff are overworked as it is. Are the employees expected to support these needs? How will this affect our taxes? There will be a demand on our services, on water, and sewer. What about vacant land that is for sale now? Are those properties tied to affordable housing?

Councilman Polistina responded; this land is owned by the County, so it is not a ratable, there are no tax dollars now. It is anticipated there will be a PILOT. Other vacant land is privately owned and they must present what they want to build and each project would stand on its own.

Planner Morrissey also responded; the City's obligation for rounds 1, 2 and 3, is 279 affordable housing units, we met that in various ways, and were able to reduce that number via vacant land adjustment to about 219. This project is proposed for 70

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units but there are many more that need to be developed to meet our obligation.

Linda Bakos, Northfield, lives on Dolphin Avenue and works for the County. She is certain that 90% of cars on Dolphin Avenue are vastly exceeding the speed limit. This will increase traffic and cause more speeding. She said she agrees that the project will stress the County's workforce and doesn't understand why the Oak Avenue property isn't being considered. The impact on the lives of area residents is not being considered, it will be an eyesore. She does not know why the Diocese is involved and why we aren't doing this ourselves. One parking spot per unit is not sufficient. She is concerned for the safety of senior citizens due to the proposed location and does not understand why the County doesn't know where the bodies are; all development should be halted until this is figured out.

Jacqueline Kondrk, Northfield, asked where is the report for the bodies that are buried? She is concerned about location and parking and feels the report of the bodies should be public. She wants to see plans and asked why zoning is being changed before plans are known. Does this open the door for additional development where the woods are? The location is not a good fit due to crime.

Sandra Russo, Northfield, asked who will be paying for the construction. If rent is being paid to the church, do we benefit from the tax situation at all?

Attorney Holm responded; as to who is paying for it? The Diocese is applying to the state for funding to create a 100% affordable housing project. A PILOT is required, usually 6.2% of gross receipts; currently you are not receiving any tax revenue so it will be an increase.

Diane Kummings, Northfield, asked if a structure will be built on the cemetery or will the development be built around it.

Council President Leeds responded; he believed Councilman Polistina stated that the planned development was relocated to avoid the area where anomalous results were found. The Diocese had the ground penetrating radar performed so any interested parties would need to request the report from them.

Stephan Mays, Pleasantville, appreciates opportunity to be heard. He was speaking on behalf of his parents, who live on Ridgewood Avenue. Behind Ridgewood Avenue is wooded, he is not sure what will become of those woods. Will cars come off New Road or will they come off Dolphin Avenue? His parents' home is adjacent to the development, they are concerned about water runoff.

Council President Leeds said he can't speak regarding plans because that has not been presented to the Planning Board.

Councilman Polistina said the entrance will only be on Dolphin Avenue, and there are no plans to develop the area on block 150 lot 1 is wooded.

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Planner Morrissey added that the wooded area along the homes is part of a CAFRA tree preservation area and can't be developed.

Ray Osbeck, Northfield, said he is a retired Firefighter and Construction Official in Absecon. It is a bad suggestion to put low- and moderate-income housing in that area. He said if Council votes, and votes no, he and the other residents can rest peacefully. How is it going to affect the Police and Fire Department? No one has ever complied with Mt Laurel; Absecon sent money to Bridgeton. Let them sue and we will take our chances in court.

Solicitor Facenda clarified that the public hearing and anticipated vote is regarding enabling legislation; understand that there is no project presented at this time to this Council. When the plans are submitted and plans are drawn, Police and Fire will have the opportunity to review. All the Council is doing is putting in place legislation to enable affordable housing.

Mr. Osbeck reiterated that the City should let them sue.

David Goldstein, Northfield, stated that he wants answers to his questions in writing. He said he has proven the County to be wrong and encourages the Council not to go down this path. The scans were not done right way. Those doing the scans have their own self interests. He does not trust the County. This is historical land and the Council has a moral and ethical obligation. The NAACP is going to get involved. He urged the Council not to approve the zoning. The County removed grave markers that were there. The Council should demand to see the scans.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak regarding Ordinance 4-2024, Council President Leeds closed the public hearing. He announced that the vote would occur during the Regular portion of the meeting later this evening.

Council President Leeds moved to Committee Reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Dewees – Buildings/Grounds, Athletic Fields; Birch Grove Park, Bike Path, 1st Street Playground, Veterans Park; Public Works: Roads, Engineering

Councilman Dewees announced that the roof replacement project had started.

Councilwoman Bucci – Insurance and Safety; Planning Board; Economic Development / Chamber of Commerce

Councilwoman Bucci offered condolences to the family of Stanley Grossman; she listed many of the significant contributions he's made to the community.

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Councilman Polistina – Finance and Collections; Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Library; Municipal Alliance Senior Citizens

Councilman Polistina explained the reason for proposed budget amendment; there is an adjustment to how worker's compensation premiums are reported. This does not affect our budget; it only affects our cap bank and we were already well below it. Since we are amending the budget, he noted that we recently found out that our EMS service would not be renewed. He discussed this with the Chief Financial Officer and he is proposing a further amendment to include an additional \$20,000 to fund a partial year of ambulance service. The additional funds will come from surplus, so the amendment will not affect tax rate.

Councilman Smith - Central Municipal Court; Little League and Babe Ruth; Northfield Community School; Shared Services

Councilman Smith said the Court Committee will be meeting with Judge Blee in May regarding the Central Municipal Court. For EMS, we did go out for RFP for shared service EMS with Linwood. There were three responses but we haven't had sufficient time to review them. He will report further.

Councilwoman Carfagno - Technology / MRHS Channel; Cultural Committee / Veteran Liaison; Mainland Regional

Councilwoman Carfagno thanked the Cultural Committee for the recent Flea Market, it was a great success. The next MRHS Board of Education meeting will be on May 20th. She wished a happy Passover to those that observed and offered condolences to the Grossman family.

Councilman Notaro - Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Sewer Operations; Northfield Sports (FAN)

Councilman Notaro was absent.

Council President Leeds – Fire Department/EMS

Council President Leeds also extended condolences to the Grossman family; he was a pillar of the community who has done a lot for the City. He read the Fire and EMS reports for March and noted crisis-level need for mutual aid responses. As Councilman Smith indicated our current shared service EMS vendor, Inspira, has opted not to renew our contract and will move into non-emergency transports only. He thanked the Northfield Mothers' League for the incredible spaghetti dinner, and mentioned Clerk Canesi, Councilwoman Carfagno, and Jacque Dewees', wife of Councilman Greg Dewees.

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AD HOC COMMITTEES

Electric Vehicles – *Councilmen Polistina and Notaro.*
There was no update.

Special Events Ordinance – *Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Dewees.*
Councilwoman Bucci has a draft of an event ordinance.

Affordable Housing – *Councilwomen Bucci and Carfagno, Councilman Polistina.*
Councilwoman Carfagno will report on Affordable Housing during Closed Session, including Habitat.

Insurance Requirements Review – *Councilman Polistina, Councilwoman Bucci.*
Councilwoman Bucci is working with the Solicitor on appropriate wording; he is waiting for her response.

Road Opening Ordinance – *Councilmen Dewees and Notaro.*
Councilman Dewees said he and Councilman Notaro had a productive meeting with the Engineer.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – ONGOING BUSINESS

- Potential Sale / Development of City Owned Properties: Block 66 Lot 11; Block 69 Lot 1.02

Update to be provided in Closed Session.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

There were none.

REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Council President Leeds made the assignments.

PUBLIC SESSION / FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

Council President Leeds opened the public portion of the meeting for any person to comment on any subject, he asked that they state their name and city of residence for the record and observe the five-minute limit per speaker.

David Goldstein, Northfield asked if the County has provided any information regarding scanning? Have they done anything to prove they've done due diligence to prove they know where the bodies are? Has the County done anything to ask what

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the residents want? He stated he knows the residents don't want it. He referred to a letter he got regarding his car being illegally parked; he sees other residents doing the same thing, so, somebody complained about him to a Council person at a Wawa, and it was political retribution, but others break the rule and no one says anything. Mr. Goldstein said he expects good people to do good things. The County can do what they want without the rezoning, the state is requiring them to scan the property. He repeated his earlier question about where the bodies are. Once the proof has been shown, Mr. Goldstein will defer to the greater good.

Jacqueline Kondrk, Northfield, said she was hearing about Fire and EMS, and the bid that is out; does that proposal consider all the new units being proposed? She is concerned about traffic and speeding on Dolphin Avenue, every day someone is going at least 50mph. The County does not take care of the road now. One parking spot per unit is a concern, and there is not enough concern about overflow onto residential streets. It is not a good fit for her neighborhood; she respects the project and the need but is concerned because there is nothing to see yet.

Council President Leeds responded; regarding EMS, we do a shared service to provide EMS to Linwood and Northfield. It is not based on call volume; it is a fixed cost to provide service. He explained mutual aid and how it works. As to speeding concerns, he asked Chief VonColln, who was in attendance, to put officers out there. If residents get tickets, they get tickets. Council President Leeds said he's also noticed that there are no stop signs on County roads at the bike path. He conducted a straw poll to request that County put stop signs on county roads. All were in favor.

Councilman Dewees said residents can also call the County Engineer to see if a traffic study has been done.

Councilman Smith offered that there is a meeting of the County Commissioners on May 7th at 4pm; he urged all to attend that meeting and request stop signs etc.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Council President Leeds closed the public session.

At 7:15pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk