

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
AUGUST 16, 2022**

At 6:02pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 8, 2022, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Bucci; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Leeds; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Smith; Councilman Utts; Council President Polistina; Mayor Chau

Solicitor Facenda, Engineer Nassar and Chief Newman were also in attendance.

Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Tim Joo was in the audience as well.

Council President Polistina asked Councilman Dewees to speak regarding the evening's presentation.

6PM PRESENTATION:

Rick Kroger, Public Works, in Recognition of 27 Years of Service

Councilman Dewees introduced Rick to all in attendance. He had been employed with the Public Works Department for 27 years, since 1995. Rick started as a Laborer and worked his way up to the Operator position, and while he was well versed in many aspects of City operations, he was an expert in the Sewer Department. On behalf of the City, Councilman Dewees wished him well and deferred to Mayor Chau to present his retirement clock.

At Mayor Chau's request, Rick introduced the members of his family who had joined him this evening. Mayor Chau thanked Rick's dad, former Police Chief, Ed Kroger, for his many years of service as well. Mayor Chau joked about the benefits of retirement and presented Rick with a clock in commemoration of his years of service. He thanked Rick for his time and dedication during his 27 years of employment, offered congratulations, and wished Rick well.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Councilman Dewees reported that the slide has been replaced at the First Street Playground. The quote was in for the stairs at the football tower. He was getting

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quotes to replace the roof on the football snack bar, and would report at the next meeting.

Councilman Utts - Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Cultural Committee, Veteran Liaison, Mainland Regional; Technology / MRHS Channel; Planning Board

Councilman Utts reported the Cultural Committee had a re-grand opening of the Museum the evening of National Night Out. He felt National Night Out would have been better attended if it was held at the Bike Path. The Planning Board discussion included a sign for City Hall. The board was opposed to LED signs in residential neighborhoods. The Country Club was denied for the same type of sign. The Planning Board felt approving the sign for the City puts the Board at risk. He did feel there is a need for a sign, and liked the suggestion made by a member of the Planning Board that the sign be located at the intersection of Tilton Road and Route 9.

Council President Polistina advised we don't own that land.

Mayor Chau noted we lease it. He felt there was room on the existing Northfield sign at that location for an LED sign.

Council President Polistina replied we still need a sign to identify City Hall and the Police Department.

Councilman Utts noted the Planning Board was asking that the City keep the nits down, etc.

Councilman Notaro was not opposed to LED signs; he was opposed to us doing it and the Country Club being told no.

Councilwoman Bucci felt there was a difference, the City's sign was a public service.

Solicitor Facenda advised, in terms of the Country Club denial, they had 45 days to appeal when the decision was made. That time had passed.

Mayor Chau added, they can come back with another application.

Solicitor Facenda added that if they did, it would need to be for a different sign.

Councilman Utts reiterated that the Planning Board just wanted to be consistent.

Mayor Chau repeated that the Tilton Road location was a great location, and we could have our own sign here.

Solicitor Facenda clarified that the Planning Board presentation was just that, a presentation. It was not an application, they don't approve or deny, this is Council's

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decision in a capital improvement project. They gave recommendations, to include consideration of a different location and, if the City proceeds, to comply with our ordinance with regard to the sign itself.

Mayor Chau announced that there were locations owned by the City who have indicated they want an LED sign, he cited the library and volunteer fire company. Can they have an LED sign?

Solicitor Facenda stated if the City owns the land and wanted to proceed with such a project, then yes, the City could proceed.

Councilman Notaro - Sewer Operations; Northfield Football, Cheer, Basketball (FAN)

Councilman Notaro reported he attended the ACUA midyear meeting, it was very interesting. Northfield was coming in below forecasted flow levels. FAN was gearing up for the new season.

Councilman Leeds – Fire Department/EMS

Councilman Leeds thanked the Fire and Police Departments for their quick response to help residents at the Four Seasons. He announced recent changes at Inspira, and said he'd spoken with the new manager the day before National Night Out. The manager advised they would try to have a rig stationed at the event, but ultimately were unable to provide one. He commended the Fire Company for their assistance and response when a resident needed first aid. Councilman Leeds said he agreed the turnout at National Night Out was low, but added that we are competing with other towns who have bounce houses and other things. He commended Shannon Campbell and Councilwoman Bucci for their efforts for the event, as well as the Police Department. He noted the donation from Sam's for 500 hotdogs and hamburgers. The new Inspira contact was not aware they were supposed to provide a monthly report, Councilman Leeds would have it for next meeting.

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

Councilman Smith reported he visited the new Court, and met with judges and the Court Administrator. They explained and addressed several issues with the Court, one of the major concerns was being able to get someone on the phone. Court staff are working on it, and the Smith advised that the Court Administrator gives out her personal cell phone number. He added that the Administrator is working 60-70 hours a week. There was discussion of possibly setting up dedicated lines for law enforcement; options are being investigated. Another City was recently added, making it 10 and there was the possibility of another one or two by the end of the year. This was a new undertaking and a major one, there would be hiccups. Overall,

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the judges were very pleased. They were hiring new clerks. It was still a work in progress, but, Councilman Smith felt very comfortable with what he saw.

Mayor Chau, to Chief Newman, said he thought our tickets had e-summonses.

Chief Newman replied that we have e-ticket; Chief Newman state that he had no idea how to access e-summons.

Councilman Smith added that he forwarded a powerpoint presentation to Chief Newman that had been shared; he suggested the Chief contact Ventnor as they were using it.

Chief Newman replied that it was his understanding that this was solely for local ordinance-type violations.

Council President Polistina asked if the budget came up?

Councilman Smith replied no, it was more of an operational visit.

Councilman Notaro asked when a new town comes on board does that calculate a new number?

Councilman Smith replied it would, but Corbin City is very small and largely State Police.

Councilman Smith continued; Little League Fall Ball sign ups were coming up on the last day August 19th. Northfield Community School has its Board of Education meeting next Monday at 7pm. Shared Services had a few meetings, Councilman Leeds, Councilman Notaro and Councilman Smith met with Linwood to discuss dispatch. We were dissatisfied with Egg Harbor Township dispatch and our approach to them was not met favorably. We were looking at possibly Ocean City; Councilman Leeds and Councilman Smith were meeting with the Ocean City Chief tomorrow. They were looking at alternatives for dispatch.

Councilwoman Bucci – Insurance and Safety; Library; Municipal Alliance; Economic Development / Chamber of Commerce

Councilwoman Bucci had nothing to report for Insurance and Safety. The Library was wrapping up its summer programs and they have eliminated the mask requirement. National Night Out was a nice turnout but Councilwoman Bucci said she agreed with Councilman Utts that it should be moved back to the Bike Path. Trunk or Treat was scheduled for October 8th at Birch Grove Park. The next Economic Development Commission meeting was this Thursday at 7pm.

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Council President Polistina – Finance and Collections; Senior Citizens

Council President Polistina announced that our Tax Collector had resigned, but has agreed to stay on in a part-time capacity until we hire a replacement. That Resolution was on the agenda this evening. It was a busy time since tax bills just went out. We were seeking a new Collector; we all know this job market is difficult. Everyone received their digital copy of the audit. There were no findings in the audit it was essentially a clean audit.

Council President Polistina moved to ongoing business.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – ONGOING BUSINESS

- ∞ Northfield Avenue at Rt 9 Drainage –*Update* from Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar reported for County drainage; he met with the new County Engineer and he would finalize a sketch that would be part of the interlocal agreement.

- ∞ Stormwater Facilities Shared with the County of Atlantic – *Update* from Engineer Nassar*

There was no update.

- ∞ Potential Public Auction of City Owned Property Block 66 Lot 11 – *Pending * if available*

Council President Polistina announced the land sale remained pending.

Councilman Dewees, to Engineer Nassar, asked if the County Engineer gave a date?

Engineer Nassar replied, no, but he would follow up.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- ∞ Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

Engineer Nassar reported that he and Councilman Dewees had a preapplication meeting with the State for the transportation grants, they received some helpful information to assist us with an application for the Bike Path. They recommended a phased-approach, which Engineer Nassar would pursue. The deadline was November.

- ∞ Changes to Sign Ordinance

Council President Polistina said Councilwoman Bucci had suggested changes based on businesses she'd gotten feedback from in her Economic Development

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Commission activities. One of the items was grand opening signage, which right now is 30 days. Councilwoman Bucci suggested 90 days. He was not opposed to 90 days for a grand opening.

Mayor Chau asked about special events, and sales.

Council President Polistina replied those were also under consideration; he noted that flags and banners were prohibited.

Mayor Chau added that some were not kept in good repair, there was one still on New Road that was shredded. The owners of the building were no longer there, we can't go in and remove it because it's not our property.

Councilwoman Bucci suggested a good-repair standard.

Council President Polistina noted that the recommendation included setbacks, and a limit to how many there can be.

Councilwoman Bucci felt that businesses should be able to have signs.

Councilman Dewees added they can't be in sight triangles.

Mayor Chau noted we have no process to document when these signs go up.

Clerk Canesi stated that at present we do, it's the date from mercantile license.

Councilwoman Bucci commented that Tilton Road was different; Cafe Bru is away from everything. She felt business should be able to have signs year-round.

Council President Polistina would will put recommendations together and share them with Council.

Mayor Chau stated that in his experience and years on the Planning Board, signs have been a free-for-all. Mayor Chau said he'd created the sign ordinance but it was misinterpreted and there were now illegal signs. Illuminated signs can be and are a distraction.

Councilman Utts would compare the new recommendations to the ordinance we have now.

Councilman Leeds would also like to look into the prohibition on tattoo shops; it's 2022.

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∞ City Hall Sign

Council President Polistina said he would like to take a straw poll about whether Council wished to proceed with the sign.

Councilman Leeds understood the concerns, but felt our sign was for public information. He felt we should proceed.

Mayor Chau wanted to look at Tilton Road.

Councilman Smith would like to see a rendering of the sign.

Clerk Canesi announced that the Planning Board had it, it was public. Deputy Clerk Campbell would forward the rendering to Council.

Councilman Notaro also wanted to see the sign rendering.

Councilman Utts and Councilman Dewees were in favor.

Solicitor Facenda clarified that we would have a Resolution for the sign on the next Council agenda.

All generally agreed.

∞ Ordinance No. 10-2022 – Discussion of Fees

Councilman Polistina moved to the abandoned property ordinance; discussion of fees.

Solicitor Facenda clarified the purpose of the per diem fine, and said it dealt with out of state creditors.

Council President Polistina proceeded to review the various fees and discussion ensued.

Clerk Canesi confirmed that Ordinance 10-2022 was being introduced as presented, with no changes. All agreed.

REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Council President Polistina reviewed the Regular Meeting agenda.

Council President Polistina asked if anyone wanted anything voted on separately from the consent agenda. There were no requests.

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Council President Polistina made the agenda assignments.

PUBLIC SESSION/ FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

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

Rich Nugent, 9 Golf View Drive, said he believed he was misled about coming here. He thanked Council for their passion. He thought there was going to be a discussion on halfway houses, he wanted to ask a few questions. Mr. Nugent said he understood these houses were strictly regulated by DCA; he asked if there was a minimum length of stay.

Council President Polistina replied yes, they were regulated by DCA.

Mr. Nugent responded so, he could buy a house and do this?

Solicitor Facenda replied yes, if you go through the process.

Mr. Nugent said he was not against it, but ...

Council President Polistina explained the House Manager requirement.

Mr. Nugent asked, you get no notification?

Clerk Canesi explained the relationship that existed based on the need for a Uniform Construction Code permit; if work requiring a permit was done, the State retrieved the file, otherwise there was no notification requirement, or permission requirement.

Mr. Nugent asked about sex offenders.

Chief Newman stated that lower tiers do not require public notification; higher tiers there was. He advised Council and Mr. Nugent that they can look that up on the internet.

Mr. Nugent noted the address at the corner of Golf View.

Mayor Chau replied, that address is not one of these homes.

Council President Polistina felt we need to find out what is going on to determine if something is illegal.

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Seeing no one in Zoom wishing to speak, Clerk Canesi read the following letter from Megan and Scott Aspenberg, 651 Hollywood Drive:

“Northfield City Council,

We are unable to make it to tonight's meeting and wanted to write to you to express our concerns about the sober living house that is across the street from our home, and about the growing number of these homes in Northfield. We live in a quiet, single family zoned neighborhood in between the Northfield elementary school and Birch Grove Park. A sober living home was established across the street from us in October 2021. We did not receive any notice about this house and calls with questions to City Hall were not answered. There are new men constantly moving in and out of the home. The turnover rate of that house must be high because we have stopped being able to recognize the men coming and going. There are between eight and eleven cars parked in front of the house on an almost daily basis. We bought our home in a single-family zoned neighborhood in Northfield so that we would know our neighbors and our daughter would be safe to play in the neighborhood. We have no idea who lives in the house across the street from us, or even how many people. The cars parked across the street have license plates from all over the country, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, and West Virginia just to name a few. They are not just men from our community.

We are asking city council to look into the ordinance that was discussed at the March city council meeting that to our understanding would prohibit Class F, sober living homes to be within a certain number of feet from a school or playground. It would also limit the number of these homes in our town. It is our understanding that there are new laws or ordinances trying to be passed now that will make the citizens of Northfield responsible for paying taxes on these homes, as they will be considered nonprofits. These homes make an average of \$10,000 - \$20,000 a month for the owners. They are registered LLC businesses. The men that stay in these homes pay rent to live there. These homes should not be considered nonprofits and our citizens should not have to pay their taxes. The last we heard we have sixteen sober living homes in Northfield. With the number of these homes growing in our town, we would not like to see our taxes raised.

We hope that the Northfield City Council will look into this ordinance and will help us continue to keep Northfield a safe town for all of its citizens.

Thank you,
Megan and Scott Aspenberg”

Councilman Notaro stated this was pushed on us by the State, he would support an ordinance to limit the number, or the location. We could end up with a hundred of these homes.

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Mayor Chau, said with all due respect, what would an ordinance do?

Councilman Notaro felt it would send a message to the State.

Councilman Smith believed residents like the Aspenbergs should be directed to the State legislators; he understood what Councilman Notaro was saying but we are hamstrung. We didn't know if 16 was accurate.

Clerk Canesi replied, that's about right; you can call the State at any time and ask how many there are, it wasn't a secret, they just don't proactively tell you.

Solicitor Facenda advised that other towns have done a zoning ordinance, likely the most enforceable. We discussed it, but did not proceed. Council came to the conclusion that it wouldn't matter.

Councilman Smith responded, we may find out after the fact and then what, issue a summons?

Solicitor Facenda replied, yes.

Councilman Notaro announced he had contacted our legislators, but he was one person. The people have to contact the legislators. He felt maybe a Resolution directed to our legislators was a better answer. The people of the town can rally, and follow up with phone calls to our legislators.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Council President Polistina closed the public comment portion of this meeting.

At 7:30pm, on a motion of Councilman Dewees, seconded by Councilman Leeds, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk