

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 12, 2009**

At 7:00pm. this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Acting Municipal Clerk. It was properly advertised according to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

The flag salute was led by Mayor Vincent Mazzeo. Following the flag salute, there was a moment of silence in honor of Charlie Smith, who passed away on May 9<sup>th</sup> of this year. A long time Northfield resident, Charlie was a Veteran of World War II; may he rest in peace.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Mr. Carew, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Smith, Mr. Turon, Mr. Vain, and Mrs. Kern  
Absent: Mr. O'Grady

City Solicitor Keith Bonchi and City Engineer Matt Doran were also in attendance.

Council President Kern welcomed the members of the public to the meeting, acknowledging that a great many in attendance had come to discuss the City's emergency medical services. She explained the normal order of business for Council meetings, adding she'd be deviating somewhat this evening to ensure that the previously scheduled public hearing for the 2009 budget would be opened promptly at 7:30pm, as advertised. Kern stated that Resolution 91-2009 must be adopted prior to the public hearing, and as a result, the vote on tonight's resolutions will be the 1<sup>st</sup> matter of business.

**RESOLUTIONS/CONSENT AGENDA**

On a motion of Councilman Turon second of Councilman Vain, all present in favor of a Consent Agenda for Resolutions 91-2009 through 94-2009 as follows:

- 91-2009** A Resolution Of The City Of Northfield, County Of Atlantic, State Of New Jersey, Authorizing The Reading Of The Budget By Title Only
- 92-2009** Reduction of the Proposed MRHS District Board of Education Budget
- 93-2009** Reduction of the Proposed NCS Board of Education Budget
- 94-2009** To Authorize Liquor License for Atlantic City Country Club for the Year 2009-2010

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Councilman Turon motioned, Councilman Vain seconded to adopt Resolutions 91-2009 through 94-2009 by consent agenda. Vain stated he'd be abstaining from the vote on 94-2009 only.

Roll call: Mr. Carew – yes; Mr. Martinez – yes; Mr. O'Grady –absent; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Turon – yes; Mr. Vain – yes; Mrs. Kern – yes. Motion carries.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilman Martinez stated there will be a South Jersey Energy Savings Resource meeting held on May 27<sup>th</sup> at Rowan University. The Board of Public Utilities Office of Clean Energy will be in attendance; the event includes an orientation of the Sustainablejersey™ program.

Councilman Turon provided statistics from the Fire Report for the month of April 2009: total fire incidents – 16; total EMS incidents – 20; total non emergency responses – 5. Turon referred to Resolutions 92-2009 and 93-2009, adopted this evening to reduce the defeated MRHS and NCS budgets, respectively. Turon sat on both committees in meetings with school district representatives; the committees were able to reduce the MRHS and NCS budgets by \$100,000 and \$27,000, respectively. He commented that the budgets were bare-bones as submitted, and it was difficult to make the reductions. Nonetheless, the meetings were amicable, and productive, with very good ideas generated as a result.

President Kern thanked Mr. Turon, Mr. O'Grady, and Mayor Mazzeo for meeting with the MRHS committee, and Mr. Turon, Mr. Smith, and Mayor Mazzeo for meeting with the NCS committee.

Councilman Vain reported that he recently met with Matt Doran and County representatives about the Zion and Oak traffic safety issues; the County suggests re-striping of the intersection. If this does not improve the situation, further measures will be taken. Vain has a map illustrating the new striping if anyone is interested in viewing it. The plan for Cedarbridge/Zion/Burroughs is in its final stages and construction should take place in late summer 2009; Vain thanked Matt Doran for his efforts on the project. Vain has gotten positive feedback from parents, and even a few children, about the speed limit reduction on Burton Avenue. He attended a shared service meeting with NCS personnel last week; they are presently exploring five different opportunities. Little League is selling pizza as a fund-raiser and would appreciate community support. Vain said he met with Chief James, and Robbie Dollard of Doran Engineering to discuss a potential location for the next speed hump. Areas are still being scouted and public input is welcome.

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Councilman Carew said Birch Grove Park is open and doing very well with a lot of activity. He referred to the Open Space Grant that will fund the new concession stand; plans are being put together and Carew has spoken to a contractor about the specifications for a pre-fab building. He hopes to make a presentation to Council in June or July. Carew thanked Jim Clark and the Road Department for their effort in readying the public spaces and recreation areas for the spring and summer season; despite the crazy weather, the fields and bike path look great and crews are now working on the grounds at City Hall. He met briefly with representatives from MRHS about the status of the work approved during the recent referendum; plans are in development with the architects and engineers, with dates to be announced in the near future.

President Kern announced that Councilman Smith's committee report would follow the Mayor's and Engineer's reports.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Mazzeo offered congratulations to Patrolman Krisina Ramsi who was named Volunteer of the Year for the New Jersey D.A.R.E. program; this is an honor reserved for D.A.R.E. officers who show a high level of dedication to the program and other worthwhile activities that go above and beyond the course of normal duties. Northfield was one of three municipalities in Atlantic County selected to receive new Cannondale police bicycles from the Newman Foundation; this foundation was formed to honor the life of Officer Keith Newman, an Essex County Police Officer killed in the line of duty in 1989. Tomorrow at 6pm there will be a Teen Driving Seminar in Council Chambers being presented by the Northfield Police Department, AAA Mid-Atlantic, and the NJ Division of Highway and Traffic Safety. All young drivers and parents are welcome. There was a speed sentry placed at Shepherd Drive to record traffic and volume based on time and date; the device showed vehicle speed and flashed if the posted 25 mph speed limit was being exceeded. The data revealed that 58% of traffic was traveling at 20 mph or less, peak volume occurred between 8:00am and 8:59am, 12:00pm and 12:59pm, and 3:00pm to 6:00pm. This device is now being placed on Wabash Avenue between Merritt Drive and Oakcrest Avenue to measure traffic traveling towards Linwood. Memorial Day is fast approaching; parade lineup will be at 8:45am at Haddon and Broad, with all residents encouraged to join in the festivities. Mazzeo said he attended the Mayor's Convention last week in Atlantic City at the Borgata. The contract for revaluation services has been signed and sent to the State for review, with work to begin in a few weeks. Mazzeo asked Councilman Turon to review the effect of sending out sewer bills once annually, as opposed to the current mailing schedule of two times per year. This should afford a small postage savings.

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**ENGINEER'S REPORT**

The City Engineer's report was provided to Mayor and Council and is on file in the City Clerk's office. Matt Doran provided updates to the report as follows: the Stormwater Pump Station at Philmar Circle is now operating; once the fencing is done the project will be complete.

**POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT**

Captain Clark reported that several additional officers will join the bike patrol in residential areas when the new Cannondale bicycles mentioned by Mayor Mazzeo come in. All officers were also in range training this week. President Kern referred to a request made by a resident at the April 28<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting to start a Town Watch Program. She said Chief James advised that he's working on this and that meetings will be scheduled shortly.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS, CONTINUED**

Councilman Smith said that earlier in the year he had recommended that the City solicit proposals for Rescue Squad Services, and that four bids – all at zero cost - were received as a result of the RFP jointly advertised by Linwood and Northfield. Northfield and Linwood each had members of their respective Councils that made up the review committee, with Smith, Vain and Carew representing Northfield. The towns met individually, and then as a group a number of times as part of the vetting process. All proposals were reviewed in detail and given serious consideration. At one point, the top two bidders were identified, and the groups met again and the joint committee came to the unanimous decision to choose Atlanticare. As head of Northfield's committee, Smith recommends Atlanticare to the Northfield Council. Smith continued, saying that in 2008, the Northfield Rescue Squad became a part-paid squad that began to bill patients for service. He stated that Solicitor Bonchi's opinion was that based on this change, the City had to go out to bid for rescue squad service. Smith shared a personal story of his own positive interaction with the squad, and said he acknowledges the dedication, care, and support provided by the past and present members. He is aware of and respects the emotional attachments formed with regard to the squad, but we must look to the future. It became clear that Atlanticare has superior resources, such as high quality of personnel and training, a communications command center, response time history, financial stability and technological capabilities to go along with the compassion and concern that more completely meet the needs of the citizens of Northfield. Smith stressed that he does not make the recommendation lightly, but that he believes it is the right decision.

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**ORDINANCES**

On a motion of Councilman Vain, second of Councilman Martinez all present in favor of reading Ordinance 9-2009 by title only.

**9-2009**           An Ordinance Establishing Cedarbridge Road as a One-Way Street from Juniper Drive to Wabash Avenue and Restricting Parking on the South Side of Cedarbridge Road  
*Introduction / No Public Input / Published in the Press 05/16/2009*  
*Public Hearing and Final Adoption 05/26/2009*

Roll call: Mr. Carew – yes; Mr. Martinez – yes; Mr. O’Grady – absent; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Turon – yes; Mr. Vain – yes; Mrs. Kern – yes. Motion carries for final adoption of Ordinance 9-2009.

On a motion of Councilman Smith, second of Councilman Carew all present in favor of reading Ordinance 10-2009 by title only.

**10-2009**           An Ordinance Repealing City Of Northfield Ordinance 37-1977, Adopted By The Council Of The City Of Northfield As Ordinance No. 4-77, That Established The Northfield Rescue Squad, Inc. To Render Emergency Medical Services In The City Of Northfield  
*Introduction / No Public Input / Published in the Press 05/16/2009*  
*Public Hearing and Final Adoption 05/26/2009*

Councilman Martinez requested discussion and clarification of the Solicitor’s opinion, mentioned earlier by Councilman Smith, that the bid process was legally required. Solicitor Bonchi stated that when the Northfield Rescue Squad started billing residents for services over a certain dollar amount, then it triggers public bidding statutes. Martinez asked why Atlanticare was chosen if all bids were zero, adding that NRS came in with a zero proposal prior to the initiation of the bid process. He stated that he did not have ample time to review the proposals; discussion ensued with regard to availability of the RFP’s for Martinez’ review. Mayor Mazzeo said he was under the impression that the goal was to create cost savings; he asked the committee what they were able to identify in terms of cost savings. Councilman Smith stated that cost savings was not the only issue considered, and repeated the factors listed earlier during his committee report.

At 7:29pm, Council President Kern tabled the discussion to allow for the previously advertised budget hearing.

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**RESOLUTION/2009 BUDGET**

**74B-2009      7:30 PM/ PUBLIC HEARING**  
Final Adoption of the 2009 Budget  
Open to the Public

Council President Kern opened the hearing to the public; seeing no one wishing to speak, she closed the public session.

Councilman Turon, motioned, Councilman Martinez seconded for final adoption of Resolution 74B-2009.

Roll call: Mr. Carew – yes; Mr. Martinez – yes; Mr. O’Grady – absent; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Turon – yes; Mr. Vain – yes; Mrs. Kern – yes. Motion carries for final adoption of the 2009 Budget.

**DISCUSSION OF ORDINANCE 10-2009, CONTINUED**

Councilman Smith continued his previous explanation, acknowledging the costs that the NRS has offered to assume this year, adding that there are other costs involved. In the last 3 years the city has contributed substantial sums of money to the NRS. Discussion ensued between Martinez and Smith regarding billing amounts and procedures between NRS and Atlanticare. Martinez inquired about dispatch and ambulance availability; Carew replied that there will be 2 ambulances here during peak hours; 1 during off peak, and explained the deployment system in use by Atlanticare. Mayor Mazzeo said he recommends leaving the NRS in town and reviewing all proposals to see what costs are going to be.

President Kern reiterated that there was a motion and 2nd on the floor for final adoption of Ordinance 10-2009, and asked the City Clerk to call roll.

Roll call: Mr. Carew – yes; Mr. Martinez – no; Mr. O’Grady – absent; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Turon – yes; Mr. Vain – yes; Mrs. Kern – yes. Motion carries for final adoption of Ordinance 10-2009.

**PUBLIC SESSION**

Council President Kern opened this meeting to the public and asked if anyone from the public wished to speak. She advised the public that all questions posed would be written down, and answered by Council after the Public Session.

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Frank Perri, 7 Haddon Avenue, President of the Northfield Rescue Squad Inc., said the savings of a switch to another EMS provider are not known and the award shouldn't be voted on. He mentioned that he sent letter to council asking them to reconsider and that the NRS be given an opportunity to continue to serve residents. They have a 33 year record. He said he sent a list of questions to which he got no response, and feels that the RFP criteria unfairly discriminated against the NRS. The NRS saved the community \$80,000.00 this year, and he hopes council will reconsider and give the NRS a chance for another year. There have been no complaints or lawsuits in the past 18 years; he feels the insurance requirements were outrageous and were tailored for Atlanticare.

Mark Doherty, 405 Chestnut Avenue said he is disturbed by the lack of data to support savings to residents. He has personally used the NRS twice in the past 2 months, and his insurance doesn't cover ambulances. He'd have to pay \$1600 vs. \$0 with the NRS and sees no cost savings to residents. He reminded Council that November is just around the corner every year.

Ray Adams 238 Mt Vernon Avenue, Chief of the NRS, asked if there will be an ambulance dedicated to the residents of the town. He said Councilman Vain campaigned on shared service savings, but Adams does not see any savings in changing EMS providers. He referred to Councilman Carew commenting that he had toured the Atlanticare facility, adding that this was not part of the RFP. Adams continued, asking when a Northfield resident calls 911 where the call goes. He feels three weeks is not long enough to consider the RFP's and mentions that Smith has only been a Council member for three months. Adams takes offense in accusations are made that NRS' quality of care is lacking.

Marsha Mazzeo, 135 Bonnie Lee Drive, finds it strange that Atlanticare charged Linwood \$180,000 last year and are now willing to do it for zero.

Carolyn Peterson, 2312 Shepherd Drive, state that Council has been quoted as saying there were no issues with quality of care with the NRS, and that the RFP process it was strictly financially motivated. She's concerned with the quality of care she'll get with Atlanticare. Why is council pursuing this if there are no savings? She submitted a petition with 180 names of residents in support of the squad. She is concerned about where the ambulances will be housed, and if in Linwood, that means a Dolphin Avenue resident is four miles away.

Randy Dennis, 708 Deborah Street, Safety Officer for the NRS, referred to Carew's comment that Atlanticare had three ambulances at a recent Linwood accident. Dennis said he was at that accident and then responded to a call in Northfield, and then got a call to go back to the Linwood scene. Where were the extra rigs?

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Peri Pantazes, 1 Madison Avenue; has used the NRS numerous times. She said tax dollar savings is important, but not at the expense of our loved ones. She said Linwood is saving money, but the switch to EHT dispatch didn't save any money, it just created a mess. She urges council to reconsider and vote no.

Ray Adams Sr, 238 Mt Vernon Avenue, Treasurer for NRS, stated that if the proposal is passed it will cost residents \$300 per trip, and five residents will be put out of work. He advised Council to listen to their constituents and keep the NRS.

Eileen Toland, 4304 Dolphin Avenue, said the bottom line is money; her Mom used the NRS this past winter, and it was like your friends came to take care of your Mom. She wants to know hard numbers, adding that residents will be discouraged from dialing 911 because they won't be able to pay for the ambulance ride.

Robin Dennis, 708 Deborah Street, mentions the City of Northfield website references our town as the 'Gateway to the Shore'. Urges council to be proactive and keep the NRS. She listed various community events that NRS attends and supports free of charge, and will be disappointed and fearful if Atlanticare replaces the NRS.

Barry Krause, 7 Turnberry Drive, EHT, VP of NRS, said he takes offense to comments about quality of care provided by the NRS. In his other job he provides mutual aid to Atlanticare for their transports, which is a big money maker. He asked how Atlanticare could be willing to give up a money maker to send an ambulance. He wanted to know why Council did not approach the NRS and ask for more financial concessions, as opposed to going out to bid.

Donna Perri, 1713 West Mill Road, lifetime member of NRS and an RN, asked if any other avenues less serious than rescue services were reviewed for possible shared service opportunities, such as crossing guards, park upkeep, road department, etc. She asked what the technical differences were between the Atlanticare and NRS proposals, and why weren't EMS services put out to public bid when the squad went paid? Did anyone from council contact Atlanticare prior to the RFP being drafted? She is concerned about response time, and wants to know what the actual response time going to be.

Clarence Abbott, 2211 Zion Road, said his mother has used NRS on numerous occasions, but that most Northfield residents probably have not. He says paid squads are of lesser quality than the NRS, and that for the patient, the expense of a paid ambulance ride causes anxiety, especially for older folks. He suggests subscriber service for EMS.



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Faith Lancaster, Assistant Chief of NRS, 114 West Cleveland Street, Whitesboro, said she is offended by comments that there is a lack of professionalism within the NRS. She has been an EMT for 20 yrs; 10 of them spent in Northfield, with 8 years as a volunteer. She asked what the user fee is.

John Fredericks, 18 Forrest Drive, said he is 77 years old, a 50-year Northfield resident and long time NRS volunteer. He says there are horror stories about mutual aid in Northfield, and recounted his long personal history with the squad. At one time ranks of the squad were very high, but something happened and the ranks diminished. He disagreed with the decision for the squad to go paid. He wants to serve on the squad and got recertified but got no reply from NRS. He feels we should trust the judgment of the City Fathers. He has over 10,000 volunteer hours logged in emergency rooms and feels Atlanticare is the best.

Nancy Van Riper, 6 Cara Court, said that on March 26<sup>th</sup>, Council President Kern was quoted saying that Northfield stopped looking into consolidating the courts because there were no savings. She wants to know why council voted yes in this case if that was true.

Carmen Cruz, 445 South Poplar Avenue, Galloway, has been a NRS volunteer in Northfield for 1 year, and in that time has learned that Northfield is a family community. She referred to a possible Atlanticare job fair for current NRS members, saying that she won't work for them.

Jim Shippen, 2306 Shepherd Drive, said residents are being asked to sacrifice a priceless resource for no savings at all. When NRS shows up, they are your neighbors and your friends; you cannot put a dollar value on that. Residents are being asked to pay \$300 more by people who will perceive him as a number. He feels this is partisan politics, urging Council to reconsider. He said residents will remember this at election time.

Lou Milone, 106 Haddon Avenue, hopes council reconsiders. He has used NRS for his wife several times, and has used another carrier and there is no comparison. If Northfield gets rid of its ambulances Atlanticare will raise the price because we will have no other recourse at that point.

Joan Brennan, 116 Dolphin Avenue, mentioned a visit to a previous council meeting and said Council seemed upset about what happened at her residence. She is a strong supporter of NRS; both of her parents used their services. She mentioned high crime rate on her street, saying that Kern was not responsive and did not fulfill promises made at last council meeting to address the issue. She says she volunteered to form a Community Watch committee but no one from council responded to her.

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Councilman Carew responded to Ms Brennan, saying that he, Chief James and Captain Clark visited her residence immediately after the prior Council meeting she's referring to, and said Chief James is in the process of helping to set up the Community Watch.

Lynn Perri, 7 Haddon Avenue, said she joined NRS at the urging of Mike Turon who is a lifetime member. She feels this is politically motivated. She has heard rumors that the Fire Department staff is saying the quality of service delivered by NRS is not up to par. She hopes Atlanticare fees will not deter residents from calling 911. She asks Council to support the squad and the residents, adding that the Perri's and Adamases are offering to resign if it will keep the NRS in town.

John Fredericks, 18 Forrest Drive, referred to Mrs. Brennan, the Dolphin Avenue resident who commented about a town watch, saying he will help with the effort, and will contribute \$3,000 on behalf of the Boy Scouts for the purchase of a K-9 dog.

Frank Perri, 7 Haddon Avenue, said the Atlanticare proposal is a reduction in service overall for Northfield and Linwood. An ambulance should be dedicated to the town, not dispatched from the other town.

Ray Adams Sr, 238 Mt Vernon Avenue, asked for clarification that the RFPs were non-binding; that none of the bids have to be accepted. President Kern confirmed that to be true.

President Kern and the Council members began to respond to the questions posed by residents during the Public Session:

Kern: Is there an ambulance dedicated to Northfield? Councilman Smith said that during peak hours there will be 1 rig for both towns; off peak they will use dynamic deployment. He added that Atlanticare's responses time are well under the national average.

Kern: When a resident dials 911 what happens? Smith advised that the call goes to the EHT dispatch center, and then to the Atlanticare Command Center.

Kern: What are response times? Carew advised that Atlanticare averages just over 3 minutes. Lynn Perri asked if that is when they are dispatched, or when they arrive to the patient? Carew said it is their arrival at the patient (in Linwood).

Councilman Carew attempted to clarify the issue of billing for self-paying patients; these patients will be charged Medicaid/Medicare rate and are automatically designated and are sent information for State charity care. This is in accordance with

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State Statute; it is not the \$800 rate, it is the Medicare rate of \$360, and then it is based on the ability of the patient to pay.

Carew added that the Council is concerned about the possibility of NRS employees losing their jobs and has asked Atlanticare to hold a job fair here for potentially displaced workers. Timeline for the job fair has yet to be determined.

Carew said the 4 Seasons was a concern and that Atlanticare will visit and familiarize themselves with the facility, its layout etc.

Kern: Was Atlanticare contacted prior to the RFP's being submitted? Kern responded saying no. There was actually a legal challenge to another bid, which Councilman Smith addressed so the bid could be considered

Kern responded to claims about lack of professionalism saying that Council knows that the squad behaves professionally.

Councilman Vain stated that cost savings exist no matter who gets the bid; over the past 3 years the squad has cost the city money. Councilman Carew recited the total costs expended by the City for the operation of the squad for 2006-2007-2008. Frank Perri countered that the numbers were incorrect.

President Kern said she hopes the concerns expressed have been addressed; she said Council recognizes the passion of those that have come before council this evening, and that they appreciate residents coming to Council.

Councilman Smith read the meeting notices. The next regular meeting of Council will be on Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.

On motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi  
Acting Municipal Clerk