

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 7, 2023**

At 6:05pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 7, 2023, and 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; Council President Polistina; Mayor Chau

**Absent:** Councilwoman Carfagno

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

Council President Polistina moved to Committee reports.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Councilwoman Bucci reported that the McGowan family was featured in Mainland Living Magazine today, it was nice to see a Northfield family. Coffee with a Cop will be held on February 25<sup>th</sup> at Good Shepherd Church, RSVP is requested but not required. Cafe Bru will be providing coffee. Regarding the Economic Development Commission, the Northfield Business Association is up and running, it's a private non-profit created by local businesses; they were slated to launch their website soon. Councilwoman Bucci thanked Deidre Kreuz, Rachel Rivera, Mary Foltz and Steve Ross for work and support. She thanked Roseanne, from Republic Bank, as well. The list of Economic Development Commission members had been finalized. Councilwoman Bucci attended the recent Planning Board meeting to introduce herself and open a dialogue for the Economic Development Commission to help with the economic element of the Master Plan. She was surprised that she was on the agenda; despite saying she was not prepared she was questioned. She could have and should have declined to answer. Councilwoman Bucci claimed Dr. Levitt treated her poorly and she has heard the same from residents, she was disappointed that Mayor Chau let her be spoken to in that manner. She sent a letter to Mayor Chau about the incident but was dissatisfied with his response. She was mocked by members of the Board as she was leaving the room. This type of treatment should be looked at.

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

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Councilman Dewees reported that he received three quotes for the electrical work at the score tower, he will meet with Superintendent Vitale to look at the quotes. He also received quotes for reseeding the football field, he will meet with Superintendent Vitale to discuss these as well and any recommendations moving forward. He knows there is interest in using the field.

Councilman Notaro commented that he spoke with representatives of the lacrosse group; they were aware of the reseeding and suggested possible use of the practice field.

Councilman Dewees replied that he would meet with Superintendent Vitale and advise.

Councilman Dewees reported that Mayor Chau received a complaint about smoking on the bike path, in this case marijuana, but in any event smoking of any kind is prohibited on the bike path, at the park, and at the playgrounds. Signs would be ordered and installed.

**Councilman Leeds** – Fire Department/EMS; Planning Board

Councilman Leeds stated that there have been reports of delayed EMS responses; Councilman Leeds had concerns about the accuracy of response times from dispatch.

Councilman Leeds, to Councilwoman Bucci, said he had an emergency and notified the Planning Board secretary and was not able to attend the Planning Board meeting. He did however, watch it and agreed that some comments were less than professional. He agreed that Councilwoman Bucci was treated poorly. It seemed to be a pattern that needed to change. He also felt the need to revisit how many people are on the board.

Councilman Smith asked for confirmation that that the vendor Councilman Leeds was referring to was Egg Harbor Township Dispatch.

Councilman Leeds confirmed this to be correct.

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

Councilman Smith reported he had a meeting with Northfield Little League; they have some requests that will be discussed during the budget process. Regarding the Northfield Community School, they are having their second strategic planning meeting tomorrow; interested parties should contact the school to get on the list to attend. They are asking for input. Councilman Leeds and Councilman Smith will be attending a meeting with Linwood about dispatch. He hoped to have more to report at the next meeting.

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

Councilwoman Carfagno was absent.

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

Councilman Notaro reported that FAN has an upcoming meeting Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at the Northfield Community School; there were 3 board seats up this year.

**Council President Polistina** – Finance and Collections; Library; Senior Citizens

Council President Polistina reported Council would be discussing budget meetings later during this meeting. The Library Board hasn't met since our last meeting; they meet this week.

Mayor Chau spoke, indicating he was responding to Councilwoman Bucci's earlier comments; he understood and evidently there was some confusion as to why Councilwoman Bucci was placed on the Planning Board Agenda. When the topic of the sign ordinance came up, Mayor Chau did not know why she remained. As the Mayor, he did report to the Board on his experiences. He did not know why she stayed and agreed that there was contention.

Councilman Notaro felt communication between the Council and the Planning Board shouldn't be 'testy', which is a word that Mayor Chau used to describe the interaction.

Council President Polistina stated that we were all working together; he was not there but we would discuss this further. The two groups need to work together and rely on each other. He wanted to keep the relationship intact.

Solicitor Facenda commented that as he states every year, he will remind this body – and while he can't control other entities in the city - we are all here to serve the residents of the City and pursuant to the rules, we treat each other with decorum and respect and civility. If you don't agree, then agree to disagree, say your piece and move on.

Council President Polistina moved to the work session, ongoing topics.

**WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – ONGOING BUSINESS**

- Stormwater Facilities Shared with Atlantic County–*Update if available, Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar did not have an update.

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- Potential Public Auction of City Owned Property Block 66 Lot 11 – Receipt of Proposals Pending Block 66 Lot 11; Block 69 Lot 1.02; Block 121 Lot 1

Council President Polistina stated we have gotten a response back from Habitat regarding the two properties on Dolphin Avenue, hopefully we can move that along quickly. The other lot has not had a reply from an interested party.

**WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS**

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

Engineer Nassar reported that he received a link from Councilwoman Bucci but has not has a chance to look at it but he would go through it.

Engineer Nassar stated that he had a preconstruction meeting for the slip lining project and it would involve overnight work, and we will need police presence. It was our work, it made no sense for us to bill the contractor and have him pay, it would cost more. The Police Chief needs approximately 40 hours overtime for the project.

Council President Polistina would ensure we appropriate the funds when we discuss the budget.

- Selection of Budget Meeting Dates

Council President Polistina asked if all could attend the meetings on February 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:30pm?

Councilwoman Bucci was not available, all other members present were available.

After discussion, meetings were scheduled for February 23<sup>rd</sup>, March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 9<sup>th</sup> all would begin at 4:30pm.

- Potential Ordinance to Restrict Parking on Zion Road, between Tilton and the Bike Path

Clerk Canesi advised she received a call from the County Planning Department. The County was contacted by Mayor Chau, who, at the request of residents, had asked that the Southside of Zion Road from Tilton Road east be considered a no parking zone. There is already an ordinance that makes that section of Zion Road a no parking zone from Tilton Road 125' east. Signs have been put in place to support the current ordinance. The request now, is to extend the 125' to a further point. If extended, residents in that area can no longer park in front of their home, we need to be mindful of this. She deferred to Chief VonColln for further comment.

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Chief VonColln advised he did go out to the site, and Clerk Canesi was correct, if the no parking zone was extended, residents would not be able to park in front of their own homes. He explained where the current signs were, and where the current limitation of 125' ends. He believed the residents would want to be able to park in front of their own home.

Councilman Smith asked had the resident been consulted?

Chief VonColln stated that Officer Czaplinski went out there and spoke with the owners of Jersey Cow and Tilton Market, the resident wasn't home.

Councilman Smith urged conversation with the resident; he asked if they have long driveways?

Chief VonColln agreed, and yes, they do.

**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.

Councilman Notaro asked for Resolution 45-2023 be pulled for discussion.

Council President Polistina made the assignments.

Council President Polistina, to the Planning Board members who were present; advised that the Council had just received the response to the sign ordinance today; Council would review and compare to notes.

Richard Levitt, Planning Board Chair, 2204 Bay Drive, addressed Council noting that Mr. Fleishman's short note to the Council was not at all detailed. One misconception is that the referral to the Planning Board is to see if it is consistent with the Master Plan, not to see if the Planning Board likes it or not. Dr. Levitt said he was respectfully asking for five minutes to review that letter.

Solicitor Facenda asked, were Dr. Levitt's comments from the Board, or from Dr. Levitt personally?

Dr. Levitt, replied from the Board.

Solicitor Facenda asked that we ascribe that Dr. Levitt was here individually.

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**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.

Dr. Richard Levitt, to all, regarding Councilwoman Bucci's comments, he respectfully disagreed with her characterization of the meeting and urged all to listen to the tape. He would provide a transcript if necessary. As to the numbers of members, that is to ensure there is always a quorum when an applicant appears to be heard. They were a non-partisan board. Reducing the number of members would not accomplish anything; they were all volunteers, no one was paid and they do it because they are concerned about the City. He hoped all would listen to the tapes. Councilwoman Bucci emailed Chair Levitt and asked if she could come to the meeting, Dr. Levitt replied yes, and as he should have, he forwarded the email to Robin Atlas, Planning Board Secretary. He did not understand why she was surprised she was on the agenda.

Councilwoman Bucci replied that she did not ask to appear before the Board, she asked to speak to Dr. Levitt. She would never come to a meeting unprepared.

Dr. Levitt added that the Board asked questions but Councilwoman Bucci had no answers, he again urged all to listen to the tape. The 'testiness' was elsewhere.

Council President Polistina announced that the public comment portion of this meeting would continue, and Dr. Levitt would speak as scheduled on the Regular agenda.

Jim Shippen, 2306 Shepherd Drive, confirmed what Dr. Levitt said, there was no intention or disrespect towards Councilwoman Bucci. She had said several times she was not aware she was on the agenda. If Councilwoman Bucci had any questions she could have called Ms Atlas or checked the website, and viewed the agenda. As to disrespect, Mr. Shippen is almost convinced that it went the other way. The Board asked questions and no answers were given, to tell the Board that their suggestions were simply unacceptable, as opposed to discussing them, is in itself, disrespectful. The wording of the ordinance was so wide open as to almost guarantee confusion and unsightly signage in the City. He hoped they get the chance to discuss these changes. He thanked Council.

Council President Polistina said, in defense of Councilwoman Bucci, if she didn't anticipate being on the agenda, there would be no reason for her to check the agenda. She was only there to introduce herself.

Mayor Chau added that before the meeting, Councilwoman Bucci introduced herself and gave Dr. Levitt her card. She did state she was not expecting to be on the agenda.

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Councilman Notaro noted that the email indicated that she was coming to introduce herself.

Joan Brennan, 116 Dolphin Avenue (via Zoom), said the glass doors at museum have still not been repaired. She did email Facilities Coordinator Kathi Smith and she sent Superintendent Vitale out to take pictures. She asked if she should she move forward with having the repairs made. She also noted quite a bit of damage at the bandstand, even though there is police tape on it, can we find out if it will be repaired before we book bands this year. She had spoken with Roy Clark, who said one of the pumps is broken but it is being taken care of.

Councilman Notaro commented that the bandstand was old.

Councilman Dewees noted that we were applying for a grant to make improvements and repairs.

Mrs. Brennan stated that the stairs were now cracked as well, and said she had no idea about the grant. She thanked Council for the benches.

Council President Polistina said we would take a look and see if it's unsafe.

Councilman Dewees confirmed that he would take care of it; it will be addressed.

Ms Brennan was worried about the glass doors, it needed to be repaired.

Councilman Dewees asked had the quote been provided to the City?

Ms Brennan replied she was not sure, but will have it sent to Ms Smith.

Councilman Smith asked was there an alternative to glass? Maybe the glass is the problem.

Susan Palaia, 103 Julie Drive, Northfield, stated that at last meeting it was mentioned that an insurance waiver was required at the Library, unless you just go there and use it. She was confused, Friends of Library don't require insurance and they don't all live in Northfield. She has a group that would like to be able to use the room.

Council President Polistina advised a committee was formed to explore these issues. If it was a City sanctioned group, they are covered under the City policy.

Clerk Canesi noted that any inconsistency with regard to who is required to provide insurance to use the facilities is controlled by the Library. City regulations require a group of 10 people or more to obtain a certificate of insurance for using municipal facilities. If there is a claim or an action, the cost can be insurmountable and that is borne by all of the taxpayers in Northfield. Since the City insures the Library, we do ask them to follow the same guidelines as we do. If the Library allows walk ins to

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use the facility and waives the insurance requirements in that case, she was not aware of that. As Council President Polistina announced, a committee has been formed to see what can be done to make it easier for groups. The TULIP resource does allow you to purchase a year's worth of insurance. Clerk Canesi offered to help with TULIP options.

Mrs. Palaia advised that the County Library does not require insurance. Her group would like to use the Northfield Library since they are all residents here. She checked other libraries and most don't require insurance. She felt we should come up with a policy and exclude certain types of groups.

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

At 7:08pm, 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