

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION  
MAY 16, 2023**

At 6:00pm 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; Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Leeds; Councilman Notaro; Council President Polistina; Mayor Chau

**Absent:** Councilman Smith

Solicitor Facenda, Engineer Nassar, and Chief VonColln were also present.

Council President Polistina moved to Committee reports.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Councilman Leeds referred to and explained recent errors involving inaccurate response times and other information on the most recent Fire Department reports as provided by our 911 dispatch service.

Councilman Leeds mentioned a business owner who had donated \$1,000 for flags for Shore Road but said the flags never went up; can the business owner get his money back?

Mayor Chau replied that the flags are up, but business owner's names could not go on them.

Councilman Leeds asked do business owners know that?

Mayor Chau replied he did not know.

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

Councilman Dewees did not have a report.

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

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Councilwoman Bucci announced upcoming Municipal Alliance events, including Life Skills through Bike Skills, and National Night Out. Any interested party should contact Shannon Campbell in the Clerk's Office. Councilwoman Bucci said she, Clerk Canesi, and Council President Polistina were supposed to get together to discuss insurance; she would like to make that happen.

Council President Polistina said he would like to include our risk management consultant.

Councilwoman Bucci, continued; she attended a summit in Smithville with Michael Grossman. She received a call from the owner of Rita's water ice that Code Enforcement was sent out to their location regarding a flag that is in front of this business. Councilwoman Bucci felt using a uniformed police officer for Code Enforcement was weaponizing them. We finally have a Police Chief that is approachable. Council should look in to moving Code Enforcement back to the Building Department.

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

Councilman Smith was absent.

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

Councilwoman Carfagno congratulated the Mainland Regional High School Girls Varsity Crew team, the prom and graduation were coming up, the next board meeting was scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup>. She was unable to attend the last Cultural Committee meeting, the July 4th awards would be presented at the June 27<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. She announced details for the Memorial Day Ceremony.

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

Councilman Notaro updated Council on the renovation of the football field it was coming along nicely; he hoped to make this a yearly process. He spoke with the contractor about moving the date for the project to allow lacrosse a little more time on the field.

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

Council President Polistina asked Mayor Chau if the library was still seeking a director?

Mayor Chau announced they hired one.

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Council President Polistina listed upcoming library events. He announced he tentatively planned a June 28<sup>th</sup> town hall style meeting for the seniors.

Council President Polistina moved to the ad hoc committee reports.

**AD HOC COMMITTEES**

- Electric Vehicles (Councilmen Polistina, Notaro) – there was no update.
- Food Trucks (Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Dewees) – Councilwoman Bucci announced they were working on amending the ordinance for food trucks.
- Sales of Retail Cannabis (Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Leeds) – Councilwoman Bucci had an update on the sale of retail cannabis. She appreciated Councilman Smith's concerns that were expressed last week. She also heard from Leo Schoffer. We were elected to represent the people and the majority of people voted for this, it was coming here whether we want it or not. She reiterated that \$250,000.00 per store was possible, and would like Chief VonColln's opinion and would like to have a vote on this tonight.

Councilman Notaro confirmed that any vote taken would be a straw poll.

Chief VonColln stated that marijuana was a depressant and a hallucinogen; statewide, impaired driving was on the rise, it is undetermined if this is due to cannabis or not. His main concern was the consumption of marijuana before they leave the parking lot, which could be a strain on police resources. He did not disagree with Councilwoman Bucci, it was already here. He was also worried about litter and trash. He suggested oversight, such as a parking lot enforcement attendant to take the strain off of police resources. Fellow Chiefs have advised that there was no major crime in the retail stores.

Council President Polistina said to his knowledge there was no test for impairment.

Chief VonColln confirmed, and advised we have one officer going through DRE (Drug Recognition Expert) school right now, it was a time-consuming training process. We would need to send an additional officer to the training and we would need to be prepared.

Council President Polistina felt it was premature to vote, and there were issues that needed follow up. The revenue was great but he didn't think that was anyone's primary concern. More funds would be beneficial, but the City is doing well. Council President Polistina's concerns were related to the downsides. If more people are needed on the committee let him know.

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Councilwoman Bucci asked what items were missing?

Council President Polistina asked what were the actual numbers for Egg Harbor Township cannabis sales? As Councilman Smith mentioned, adolescent use was a concern. The proximity to food establishments, liquor stores, schools, parks etc - did we do that research? He felt before we move forward those are the answers that he would want.

Solicitor Facenda noted also, that Council would need to determine the number of licenses and where they would be allowed.

Mayor Chau asked, since it is legalized to sell, was there any penalty for consuming it on the premises?

Council President Polistina believed the regulations prohibit this.

Mayor Chau asked about odor?

Solicitor Facenda replied that we were not contemplating cultivation; he did not believe it was a concern with retail establishments. He also believed there were regulations that address this.

- Affordable Housing (Councilman Polistina, Councilwoman Carfagno) – Council President Polistina announced there was a meeting next week for the affordable housing projects; we would discuss what our requirements were and what our anticipated requirements for the next round that was coming up next year.

Council President Polistina moved to ongoing business.

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

- Stormwater Facilities Shared with Atlantic County–*No Update*
- Potential Sale / Development of City Owned Properties: Block 66 Lot 11; Block 69 Lot 1.02; Block 121 Lot 1

Regarding Habitat, Council President Polistina announced there was a slight setback, their funding was low and we are regrouping there to try and expand the number of units that could be built there. The Phase I Environmental assessment needed to be done, but Habitat can no longer fund the study.

- Possible Zoning ordinance to regulate Cooperative Sober Living Residences

Solicitor Facenda announced he should have an ordinance for the next meeting.

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

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

Engineer Nassar referred to the upcoming Oak Avenue project, he was contacted by New Jersey American Water about their need to put a new main on Oak Avenue, we would need to delay our paving but we would get funds from them because they would have needed to pave the road once the main work was done. He needed approval from Council; he would do a cost sharing agreement to formalize, as a condition of the street opening permit.

All members present were generally in favor.

Engineer Nassar suggested the following streets for the upcoming grant: Wabash from Mill Road to the Linwood border and on the other side Wabash to Ridgewood Drive.

Councilman Notaro asked could the bike path be brought into that?

Engineer Nassar replied no, the Municipal Aid Grant was for roadways.

All members present were generally in favor.

- Possible Amendment to Chapter 297 – Animals and Fowl

Council President Polistina moved to a possible amendment to Chapter 297, he announced there were issues with both pigs and chickens, in town. We have spoken about this during Council meetings and we've heard from residents in these areas, and pigs were not appropriate for these smaller lots.

Councilman Notaro agreed, he added that Egg Harbor Township was holding firm with their five-acre requirement.

Council President Polistina knew there were several residents that have chickens.

Engineer Nassar added that Rutgers has recommended required lot sizes.

Clerk Canesi noted that our regulations were not in our Zoning Ordinance, it was in the section of the code that dealt with pets.

Council President Polistina asked would existing chicken owners be grandfathered?

Councilwoman Bucci suggested licensing them like we do pets.

Mayor Chau asked, if Council did not move on this, were we going to consider this a violation of our code?

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Solicitor Facenda advised that was not our decision.

Mayor Chau asked was Chief VonColln going to send the Code Enforcement Officer?

Solicitor Facenda replied that was the day-to-day operation of the Police Department and up to the Chief.

**REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Council President Polistina reviewed the Regular Meeting agenda.

Council President Polistina made the 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.

Leo Schoffer, 1 Canale Drive, Egg Harbor Township, said he did not wish to comment on the merits of the question but does wish to comment on the process, it was Mr. Schoffer's opinion that in light of the non-binding referendum that an ordinance be introduced and allow the public to comment. At your next meeting, introduce the ordinance, and make your decision based on the public hearing.

Council President Polistina wanted to make sure our ordinance was accurate.

Mr. Schoffer added that he got the impression that it was possible that no ordinance may be introduced.

Council President Polistina agreed that was possible.

Mr. Schoffer felt the public should decide.

Joan Brennan, 116 Dolphin Avenue, said she planned on talking to the Chief about crime. Her neighbor's car was recently stolen. Crime has gotten serious and out of control. Our Chief and Police Department were next to none. She felt we needed to start the Neighborhood Watch again, she talked to a couple of police officers about it already. Ms Brennan ran the program for eight years, everybody on Council is needed to show up, meet at local restaurants to talk about problems. She cited various crimes that have occurred in recent years. Regarding marijuana, she voted for it, we needed to take our time and work through it. Restaurants have trash too. She had all paperwork needed for the Neighborhood Watch but needed Council's support.

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Seeing no one else, in person or on Zoom wishing to speak, Council President Polistina closed the public session.

At 6:41pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk