

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
JUNE 30, 2014**

At 4:05pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk. It was advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on June 28, 2014, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Mayor McGee. Following the flag salute a moment of silence was observed.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Chau, Devine, Dewees, O'Neill, Perri, Piergiovanni, Travagline

Mayor Jerry McGee and Solicitor Kris Facenda were also in attendance.

**PUBLIC SESSION**

Council President Travagline opened the meeting to the public and asked if anyone wished to speak on any subject.

Sergeant Paul Newman, 130 Bonnie Lee Drive, stated he is a lifelong Northfield resident, an Army Veteran, and a registered voter. He shared that he tested for the Chief position and scored the highest overall. He added that his career goal is to be Chief. He said that he is not opposed to a shared service when it makes sense but respectfully asked Council to table its vote. He related the story of the recent incident at the school, noting that the Chief was not in attendance. He stated that it was a running joke that no one knew where the Chief was and the shared Chief system causes leadership failures. He asked what would be the ramifications if two critical incidents occurred in each of the two towns. He noted that the Linwood candidate is a seasoned candidate and would make a good Linwood Chief. He stated he would like Council to appoint him as Acting Chief, do their homework, and do the right thing for everyone.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, stated he retired in 1985 and in his career the Police Chiefs lived and worked in Northfield. He said he was opposed to the shared service and wants a leader here. He noted that a shared Chief has demoralized the Northfield Police Department.

Mark Bruno, 18 Ridgewood Court, stated he is a fiscally conservative taxpayer but when it comes to public safety, tax me all you want. He stated that he is on the School Board in Northfield and feels we need a Chief in Northfield, more officers and a Captain.

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Art Faden, 6 Raina Drive, stated he appreciates the job that Council does, and as a taxpayer he wants Council to save money. He noted the experience of some Council members in Fire and Rescue and related the story of how Fire and Rescue personnel respond to an emergency, collectively, based on an external alarm. He noted there is no external alarm for a Police Officer; they are by themselves. He stated that Police is the most critical employment in the nation. They are our protectors. He noted that the Linwood Chief will do a great job, but Northfield needs its own Chief. He further stated that he is certain Council does not have all the information and encouraged the town to take their time and get the information. He asked Council to table this until the Mayor chosen by the people can decide.

Steve Steinecke, Detective Sergeant, shared he has been in Northfield since 1998, is an Army Veteran and this is his 30<sup>th</sup> year as a Police officer. He stated that Chief Robert James was not forthright with Council regarding grants, money and other issues. He noted that he did a grant application in two days that had been pending for six months because Chief James did not do it.

Chester Brown, 230 Dolphin Avenue, a Linwood Police officer, stated that he feels it is a misconception that the two departments are almost as one. They share a Chief and radio and that's it.

Colin Hickey, 1440 Burton Avenue, a Linwood Police officer, stated he appreciates the efforts to save money but disagrees with the idea of a shared Chief. He added that both towns need their own Chief. He stated that a shared Chief lowers morale and productivity and he is not in favor of the idea of a shared Chief.

George Clark, 1121 Fuae Avenue, stated he was a police officer for 26 years, a resident of Northfield for 50 years and feels that Northfield needs its own Chief. He added that this decision does not need to be made tonight. He stated that so much research goes into buying trash trucks and fire trucks and urged council to do the research and make an educated decision.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, stated there are other ways to save money in Northfield. He noted that he will discuss with Council President Travagline at a later point.

Council President Travagline, seeing no one else wishing to speak closed the public session.

**RESOLUTIONS**

Council President Travagline motioned, Councilman O'Neill seconded to vote on Resolution 127-2014.

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**127-2014** To Reject All Bids for the Purchase of an Aerial Bucket Truck by the City of Northfield

Roll call: Mr. Chau – yes; Mr. Devine – yes; Mr. Dewees –yes; Mr. O’Neill –yes; Mr. Perri – yes; Mr. Piergiovanni – yes; Mr. Travagline – yes Motion carries.

Council President Travagline motioned, Councilman O’Neill seconded to vote on Resolution 128-2014.

**128-2014** Award of Contract for the Purchase of a File Server for the City of Northfield Municipal Offices

Roll call: Mr. Chau – yes; Mr. Devine – yes; Mr. Dewees –yes; Mr. O’Neill –yes; Mr. Perri – yes; Mr. Piergiovanni – yes; Mr. Travagline – yes Motion carries.

Council President Travagline motioned, Councilman O’Neill seconded to vote on Resolution 129-2014.

**129-2014** A Resolution Extending the Agreement between the City of Northfield and the City of Linwood to Share a Police Chief/Share Police Chief Services for a Period of One Year

Councilman Dewees stated that he is concerned about the number of officers in acting positions. He asked what action will be taken in that regard and wanted to know if they will be appointed permanently. He noted that if Colin Hickey is not in favor of a shared Chief, that perhaps he is not the best candidate for the job.

Council President Travagline deferred to Mayor McGee.

Mayor McGee stated he was waiting for the new Chief and will consult with him for his opinion.

Councilman Dewees asked how long the officers have been in the acting positions.

Mayor McGee answered a few years now. He stated Chief James was in the acting position for three years and does not feel it detracts. He reiterated that he wants to take his time.

Councilman Dewees asked for a time frame.

Mayor McGee answered a month or so.

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Council President Travagline asked if Mayor McGee agrees that acting positions affect morale.

Mayor McGee agreed, but added that he feels confident that the people in those jobs are doing their jobs. He further stated he does intend to make some of the positions permanent and reiterated that he wanted the new Chief to have input.

Council President Travagline stated the top priority should be to improve morale and to address the acting positions, even allow them to test for the jobs if necessary.

Mayor McGee responded that he waited for a purpose and now can address making some of the acting positions permanent.

Councilman Dewees asked if this would be in the next thirty days.

Mayor McGee said in one to two months.

Councilman Dewees asked about Colin Hickey's comments.

Mayor McGee stated he is entitled to his opinion, but does feel he will do the job and do it well.

Councilman Dewees stated that its hard to give him a vote of confidence if he expresses that he doesn't think a shared Chief is necessary.

Mayor McGee stated that Colin Hickey knew coming in that it could be a shared Chief position and is expressing his opinion.

Councilman Devine stated he thinks it should be tabled.

Council President Travagline stated he has a major concern if tabled. He noted that the Committee reached out to numerous people and he and the Mayor interviewed all four people. He added that if he and the Mayor felt Colin Hickey was not the right person they would not be recommending it.

Councilman Chau stated he is concerned and wants to be reassured that all stakeholders in Linwood and Somers Point have had an opportunity to come speak before the Committee.

Mayor McGee stated that he asked Municipal Clerk Canesi if there was ever a complaint filed about the Captain. He reported that she looked in the records and a complaint was never filed. He also stated he asked Chief James too, and he also said no. He noted that this has been testing itself for three years and there is nothing on

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paper from anyone including residents until these last couple of weeks. There is no documentation and he based his decision on that.

Councilman Chau stated that he doesn't know if this is a conspiracy but he is not feeling well about how this is going down.

Councilman Perri stated that the Mayor has been involved with Council President Travagline for the past three to four months. There has been a lot of legwork with Linwood and Linwood did appoint Hickey. He commented that this is a twelve month agreement with an opt out clause. He noted that there has been a lot of hard work over the past three to four months, lot of long meetings, and a lot of correspondence. He commented that the public does not always know what goes on behind the scenes. He commended Council President Travagline and Mayor McGee for their efforts.

Roll call: Mr. Chau – no; Mr. Devine – abstain; Mr. Dewees –no; Mr. O'Neill –no; Mr. Perri – yes; Mr. Piergiovanni – yes; Mr. Travagline – yes

Municipal Clerk Canesi believed the motion fails.

Solicitor Facenda stated he will research it.

At 4:43pm Council President Travagline called for a five minute recess.

At 5:08pm Council President resumed the meeting and asked Solicitor Facenda to speak.

Solicitor Facenda stated he has reviewed Roberts Rules of Order, which is the procedure that this Council adopted at the beginning of the year to answer procedural issues such as this. He stated that Roberts Rules of Order defines abstention as not voting at all. In this vote an abstention has no effect at all and we have a 3/3 tie. He further clarified that under our form of government the Mayor can break a tie according to NJSA 40A:61-4(c). He reiterated for Mayor McGee that he will break the tie.

Municipal Clerk Canesi asked Mayor McGee for his vote.

The vote on the foregoing resolution by the members present resulted in a tie; Mayor Gerard McGee cast the deciding vote in the affirmative.

Municipal Clerk Canesi stated that the motion carries.

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Council President Travagline motioned, Councilman Perri seconded to vote on Resolution 130-2014.

**130-2014**      A Resolution Authorizing an Amendment to the Agreement for a Shared Police Chief/Share Police Services with the City of Linwood

Roll call: Mr. Chau – yes; Mr. Devine – yes; Mr. Dewees –no; Mr. O’Neill –no; Mr. Perri – yes; Mr. Piergiovanni – yes; Mr. Travagline – yes Motion carries.

Councilman Perri read the meeting notices.

At 5:12pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC Municipal Clerk