

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION  
SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

At 6:03pm 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 followed by a moment of silence. Mayor Chau asked all to remember those serving in our Armed Forces, our First Responders and Public Officials. He also recognized the anniversary of the untimely death last year of Patrolman Johnathan Scull.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Councilwoman Bucci; Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Leeds; Council President Polistina; Mayor Chau.

**Absent:** Councilman Smith\*

*\*Councilman Smith was absent during roll call, he arrived at 6:10pm.*

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

Council President Polistina welcomed all and introduced Mayor Chau to administer the Oaths of Office for Lieutenant Pollak and Lieutenant Dever.

**OATH OF OFFICE**

- Lieutenant of Police Scott Pollak

Clerk Canesi announced the oath for Lieutenant Pollak and called him forward with his family.

Lieutenant Pollak introduced his wife Lora, daughter Mya, brother Craig, sisters Jana and Susanne, and his niece Olivia. He recognized his daughter Eva who was watching via Zoom.

Mayor Chau administered the Oath of Office to Lieutenant Pollak.

Sgt. Pollak thanked Mayor and Council and read the following statement:

“Thank you!

I know you’re all very thirsty, but I’m gonna be a few minutes.

Well, the last time I got promoted was to Sergeant in 2007 and my daughter Eva was 2 years old and she held the Bible for me. My wife Lora was holding her. We have a great picture of that, she was so small. Now Eva is 18, and away at college in South Carolina and can’t be here. Which makes me sad. But, I’m happy that my beautiful and sweet daughter Mya held the bible for me. Maybe if I get promoted again you will get the honor Lora.

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Mayor Chau, and all Members of City Council. I thank you for this opportunity and for the trust you have put into me to perform all of the duties and responsibilities of this position. I understand how important it is, and I promise you that I will not let you down. I will make you extremely happy that you promoted me to this position. I will accept nothing less than that. I will do everything that I can do with Chief VonColln and all of the members of our police department to deliver the best police services we can deliver to the citizens of Northfield. I have the utmost confidence that all of you, and the people in the Northfield community are going to be very happy with what we accomplish. Again, thank you so much!

To Rob Dever. Congratulations on your promotion to Lieutenant. You're a good man and a good friend. We've worked together for a long time. I'm happy for you, and your family. And I'm happy your daughters get to see you have this moment. It's truly special.

Chief VonColln. Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you for the trust and confidence you are placing in me to walk along side of you to perform the important duties that running this police department calls for. Chief VonColln got hired like 7 months before I did. When I first started, we were on different shifts but on the same side of the week. Which basically means if one of us was on days, the other one was on midnights. But there is an hour at shift change where an early man comes in to handle calls for the shift that is going off so they hopefully don't get tied up on any calls before they leave. And Mark would come in at 6 in the morning when I had worked a midnight shift. And we used to talk about investing and stocks. What stocks we had and all of that. And we would have The Press of Atlantic City dropped off at the back steps every morning back when people actually read newspapers. And this guy bought a stock called Qualcomm. Sorry Chief, I've gotta tell this story. It was crazy. This stock was going up like \$20 a day and split I don't know how many times. How many times did it actually split Chief do you remember?

So, I would just be looking at the stock section of the newspaper and Mark would come in at 6 am and see me looking at it and just have this big grin on his face. The point of this story Mayor and Council is that the Chief doesn't need that Chief's salary. He has that Qualcomm stock money.

But in all seriousness Chief. I forgive you for not tipping me off on QualComm. And I will give you everything I have to raise the bar of the Northfield Police Department in your vision. Things happen for a reason. And I now truly believe that I wasn't promoted earlier in my career for a reason. I know you know what I mean. Thank you! Thank you for this opportunity, our friendship, and your trust in me to walk along side of you to accomplish the great things for this police department that I know we will.

I want to recognize a couple of people that have had a profound impact on my law enforcement career. First of all, Art Faden. You're one of the weirdest dudes I've

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ever known. But man, you HAD, past tense, so much law enforcement knowledge in that weird brain of yours. I'm not gonna lie, you weren't the easiest person to work with. But I learned so much from working with you. It's funny. I'm not a morning person. It takes me a little bit to get my motor running at full speed. And I would walk into the Detective Bureau at 8 am and Art would be like why isn't this guy arrested yet? And I'd be like seriously? OK, he will be soon. But you taught me so many of the intricate nuances of investigations, made me think outside of the box, and to never give up on a case. I was fortunate to have worked with you for all of those years and I thank you for everything you taught me.

You could have given me a few minutes in the morning, but it's all good.

Steve Steinecke, Captain Steve. I also have a few other nicknames for him that I can't say here. But I started here as a cop in Northfield when I just turned 22 years old. I didn't know anything about anything. I came from being a Special Police Officer in Seaside Heights breaking up hotel parties and fights on the boardwalk to working with you. For those of you that don't know, Steve was a cop in New York City for 11 years I believe and got assigned to the DEA Task Force in his time there before coming to work in Northfield. So you can only imagine what kind of experience that brings. Steve, you taught me how to be a real cop when I was just a young man. You taught me how to get it. I was able to help so many people much more, solve much more crime, and arrest a whole bunch of people that deserved to be arrested because I had the good fortune of getting assigned to work with you when I was just a young man starting out. And I couldn't help but be better at my job by being around you. You also taught me a bunch of other stuff that I'm not going to mention here. It would be inappropriate. But I appreciate all of that too! That mouth of yours has had me dying laughing the past 24 years. My career in law enforcement is so much better because I worked with you. And we killed it in The Detective Bureau together buddy! If I'm fortunate enough to become an old man, I'll look back on our times working together and smile and laugh about all of the good things we did and the hilarious times we had together.

This job is filled with great people who want to do great things. I remember when I first started working here in 1999, I would hear older officers talking about things that were changing and how it wasn't going to be easy to deal with. And they were right. It wasn't easy. The fact of the matter is this job keeps getting harder and harder, more is continually expected of you, never less. But, what coincides with that is the people in this job keep getting better and better. And the reason for that is because, like I said, this job is filled with great people. People who continually meet the challenge. To all of my younger co-workers out there, which is pretty much all of you, it is an honor and a privilege to work with you. I know you will continue to adapt and overcome. When my daughters were little and we would go somewhere and they were playing with stuff, or eating, I would tell them leave it like you found it. Meaning clean up after yourself. But I'm not going to leave this police department like I found it, I'm going to leave it better. And I know you guys will do the same.

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Speaking of my daughters, that brings me to my family. The reason that I'm speaking right here right now is because of my Dad. He saw this in me. When I was a boy, I wasn't a bad kid, but I definitely needed some direction. My Dad came to me my Senior Year of high school and said they have this program in Seaside where you work during the Summer as a Special Police Officer, and then they send you to the police academy. You get trained and then it's easier for you to get a job as a cop because you're already trained. And that's the reason I'm standing here right now. Unfortunately, my dad passed away on August 4th and isn't here to witness this. My Mother also passed away on Christmas Eve in 2019. I hope somehow, they're seeing this and I'm making them proud.

My daughters, Eva, and Mya. Eva isn't here but I hope she watches this online. Thank you for being the kids of a cop. I know you have heard the comments at school about being the kid of a cop. And I was a very good Detective too. My interrogation skills are on point. So I'm sorry I didn't fall for your BS. Actually, I'm not. You're better off for that. I love you girls so much. Go do good things in life. I love you guys and will always be here for you no matter what.

My wife Lora. We started dating in high school. You have been with me from being an idiotic high school boy, to being a meter maid, special police officer, and so on. I'm sure you still think I'm an idiot but now we're here. You're the backbone of our family. I truly couldn't ask for a better wife, and mother of my children. Thank you for staying by my side through the trials and tribulations of this job and life. I love you and I'm blessed that you came into my life.

And I wanted to end this by talking to my co-workers that were involved in this most recent promotional process. If you were selected to be promoted congratulations, I'm happy for you. If you didn't get promoted, I've been there. What I can tell you about that from my personal experience is that looking at it now, I couldn't be happier about the way it has worked out. Take these experiences and learn from them, make yourself better to improve your chances the next time, and most importantly don't forget why you wanted to be a cop in the first place.

OK, I'm sorry I took so much time. But this is really important to me. Thank you to everyone that is here to support me. It means more to me than you know. I love this job. I love being a cop. And I love being a Northfield cop. I'm going to cry like a baby when I walk out of that door for the last time. But until then, let's get some great work done and have fun along the way! Thank you everyone!"

**OATH OF OFFICE**

- Lieutenant of Police Robert Dever

Clerk Canesi announced the oath for Lieutenant Dever and called him forward with his family.

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Lieutenant Dever introduced his father Daniel, his nephew Daniel, his mother JoAnn, his wife Paula, and daughters Maddi and Mya.

Mayor Chau administered the Oath of Office to Lieutenant Dever.

Lieutenant Dever joked that he'd been told there would be no speeches. He thanked Mayor and Council, Chief VonColln, and his family.

Mayor Chau, speaking to Lieutenant Pollak and Lieutenant Dever, said tonight it was his honor to administer the oath for the rank of Lieutenant. He gave them the charge to perform, and knows they have demonstrated the skills and leadership, he knows they would continue doing outstanding work. He congratulated both.

*At 6:18pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of a brief recess.*

*At 6:29pm, Council President Polistina called the meeting back to order.*

Council President Polistina moved to Committee reports.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

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

Councilman Leeds expressed his disappointed that the City did not have a 911 memorial yesterday, especially since we have a monument; a resident mentioned it to him. He read the EMS report for August, OEM was having an open house and was planning an upcoming CERT training class.

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

Councilman Dewees reported the columns in front of City Hall had been replaced.

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

Councilwoman Bucci attended the Absecon 911 Memorial last night; it was beautiful and well attended. She felt it was very important for us to remember that. The Economic Development Committee had submitted their report which will go to the Planning Board Engineer, there would be discussion and then incorporation into the master plan.

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

Councilman Smith apologized for his tardiness, he coaches cross country at MRHS and today was senior day, the event ran over. He congratulated the Lieutenants and wished them well. He received the Fall schedule from Babe Ruth so that was on the books. He reported that he and Council President Polistina attended a meeting at

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Northfield Community School along with Board of Education members for a presentation proposal for a referendum to fund school improvements. He appreciated them including us by providing the information.

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

Councilwoman Carfagno offered congratulations to Lieutenants Pollak and Dever; they were well deserved promotions. She reported Mainland Regional High School was off to a good start, the next Board of Education meeting was scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup>.

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

Councilman Notaro also congratulated Lieutenants Pollak and Dever; they were well deserved promotions. The Northfield Cardinals football teams had their home opener, it was a great day with Junior Varsity and Varsity both winning. He thanked Councilman Dewees for getting the field seeded and with ongoing maintenance. He thanked EMS, Fire and Police for their presence over the weekend, it was great and needed at one point.

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

Council President Polistina congratulated the two Lieutenants and acknowledged the other promotions that were on this evening's agenda.

**AD HOC COMMITTEES**

- Electric Vehicles (Councilmen Polistina, Notaro) – no update.
- Food Trucks (Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Dewees)

Councilwoman Bucci reported the committee was doing a final review.

- Affordable Housing (Councilwoman Carfagno, Councilman Polistina) – no update.
- Insurance Requirements Review (Councilman Polistina, Councilwoman Bucci) – No update.

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

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Solicitor Facenda commented on the title report, they will be forwarded to Habitat for their density prognosis report. We do not know who owns Block 121, Lot 1.

Clerk Canesi reported that she spoke to Lex from Habitat today regarding the Phase I environmental assessments; they all looked good, she would set up a call for later in the week with Solicitor Facenda, herself and the Habitat representative to discuss.

- Possible Zoning ordinance to regulate Cooperative Sober Living Residences - No update.

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

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities
- 2023 Safe Routes to Schools Grant – *Requested by Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar reported he and Councilman Dewees were working on finalizing the location.

Council President Polistina announced Council had a special meeting for a grant for a preplanning and sewer grant. Council was moving forward on it.

- Request for Lease of Birch Grove Park Land for Telecommunications Tower

Council President Polistina referred to the attachment provided to Council from Inrange Solutions.

Clerk Canesi noted that all were emailed the accompanying photo in color when they received the agenda packet.

Council President Polistina stated that the company is seeking to install a tower in Birch Grove Park. The park has a deed restriction which limits uses to recreation and related activities.

Clerk Canesi further explained the deed restriction for the park. She and Solicitor Facenda felt the restriction would impede this type of development, although that was up to Council. Our telecommunications ordinance stated that City land had to be given priority for any new development. She suggested someone contact Inrange Solutions to let them know development in the park was not an option.

Councilwoman Carfagno offered to contact Inrange Solutions.

Engineer Nassar suggested the Public Works building; it is close to the site they requested.

Solicitor Facenda would look at the deed restrictions for the park as well as the fire company.

**REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

Council President Polistina referred to the Regular Meeting agenda.

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Council President Polistina announced that CFO Stollenwerk was in attendance should anyone have questions regarding Resolution 168-2023. He thanked CFO Stollenwerk for spearheading that, it was a great savings to the City and great improvements.

Seeing no questions from Council, 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.

Heather Mellon, 2509 Herbert Drive, noted she has not been to a meeting in a while, so she did not know if the park had been discussed. We have a wonderful City, bike Path, Council people. One thing we have that most towns don't is a park; it was very near and dear to her heart. The Friends of Birch Grove Park is winding down. She heard there was an incident the other day involving a bench thrown into the lake. This was deplorable. She had been there a few times this summer and had seen a police officer on occasion. There were a lot of entrances, off Burton Avenue, Mill Road, a lot of people could get into the park without the police knowing about it. She suggested cameras but offered that she did not know how expensive that would be. She also felt the snack bar was underutilized. She would like to see it opened, she did not know how much salary would be involved to have one person or even volunteers, she believed this would cut down on mischief. She thanked Council.

Councilman Dewees replied, there was a bench dragged into the lake back by where the rings were, it was an isolated incident. To Mrs. Mellon's point about cameras, he stated we have several cameras out there, they do work and they were active, but they do not feed to the Police Department. If an incident happened, we could capture the recordings. He announced Council did have many things planned for Birch Grove Park including upgrades to the bandstand and picnic area. He is looking at options to better utilize Park Center.

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

At 6:50pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk