

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
NOVEMBER 15, 2022**

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 8, 2022, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Council Pro Tempore Dewees.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Bucci; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Leeds; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Smith; Councilman Utts; Council President Polistina

Absent: Mayor Chau

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

Council President Polistina called forward Joe Hasse from Planet Networks.

6PM PRESENTATION – Joe Haase, Planet Networks, Fiber Optic Cabling in Public ROW

Mr. Hasse introduced himself and explained the process of bringing internet into the present, with fiber optic cable. This did involve obtaining permission from the municipality, and a sample resolution for governing body approval had been provided. Planet Networks would provide insurance, and would abide by any permit processes that existed, if for example, a new pole needed to be installed. He offered to be available by phone if anyone had future questions. Planet Networks was starting with Egg Harbor Township, with Northfield possibly being the second town in this portion of the state.

Solicitor Facenda asked Mr. Hasse, when would you be up and running?

Mr. Hasse replied there were many variables, it could be late winter or early spring. They could run a mile of fiber in one day, but the planning process leading up to that is what takes time.

Council President Polistina asked about the installation process.

Mr. Hasse explained they run the mains and the secondary lines that would go to people's homes, all at once. As customers sign up, they would come back to run the line directly to the customer's home.

Councilman Smith asked about benefit to the residents.

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Mr. Hasse noted the benefit is that all speeds are the same, upload, download. Speed directly into the customer's home is faster to start with, and the technology is new, and state of the art. He introduced company CEO, Robert Boyle, who had just entered the meeting.

Councilwoman Bucci asked if they were a service provider.

Mr. Hasse replied yes, they are Planet Networks.

Council President Polistina asked about traffic control.

Mr. Boyle explained they go by the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Device) of New Jersey if it's a state road, etc. They have flaggers on staff. They work very closely with DOT, county, and local police agencies. They were held in high regard because they were known for doing things right. They started in 1994 and are a NJ based company.

Engineer Nassar asked how would you deal with developments that have underground utilities?

Mr. Boyle explained they would do the overheads first; the undergrounds are more expensive so they do them last.

Engineer Nassar advised that they would need to coordinate with the municipality if they are opening the road. Even if they were opening the shoulder.

Mr. Boyle replied they would do whatever the municipality required.

Mr. Hasse explained the vibratory plow they use cuts a trench one-half inch wide.

Mr. Boyle explained the process of underground installation, including resident notification and any restoration necessary. All work done will be in the right of way. He showed a sample of the device that goes on the overhead wires.

Council President Polistina thanked Mr. Hasse and Mr. Boyle and moved to Committee Reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Councilman Dewees reported the steps at the score tower at the football facility were done. The column work at City Hall should start soon. The playground equipment at

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the park was scheduled to be installed on November 18th and would take approximately two to three weeks, depending on weather.

Councilman Utts - Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Cultural Committee, Veteran Liaison, Mainland Regional; Technology / MRHS Channel; Planning Board

Councilman Utts reported the Planning Board was fairly quiet this month.

Councilman Utts read the following prepared statement:

“Last Tuesday we had an election, and, as you all know I lost. This was a little different for me from past losses because this time I had done the job, so it felt more like getting fired. (I've never been fired before). So it's inevitable that I would do some reflection after my defeat. I want to share a few of those.

First, I heard under no uncertain terms that our fire department thought, because I tabled a vote on the disgraceful meeting of October 7th, that I don't support the fire company. Nothing could be further from the truth. I, like all residents of our town, are incredibly grateful that our fire department, especially our volunteers, risk their personal safety to protect our lives and property. I don't think there is another group of volunteers in our town that demonstrate that sort of commitment to our town.

That said what happened on October 7 was disgraceful. Although the fire department seemingly laid the blame at my feet, the real blame belongs to whoever put this resolution on the agenda without a chance for analysis, debate and deliberation, even worse, someone encouraged the potential employee, his family and fellow fire fighters to come to a meeting to celebrate a resolution that had not been fully vetted.

In my three years here, I have voted affirmative to every appropriation the fire department has brought to us after careful consideration and deliberation, that's what the residents expect. The resolution to hire a full-time fire fighter appeared out of nowhere, and as we now see, after our CFO broke down the cost of a full time vs. part time firefighter, this decision deserved careful consideration. Add to that, that Councilman Smith referred to an agreement established before I was on council to go forward with part timers, again, required careful consideration. We see for instance, that the cost of a full-time firefighter with over 31 thousand for family health benefits that are expected to increase over 20% next year, coupled with a 36% contribution next year in the towns required pension payments, not to mention legacy payments of benefits that continue for the life a retired employee, that this decision will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars more than hiring three part-time fire fighters at less cost. One 40-hour employee vs. 60 plus hours of part-timers for less.

I ran a small business for many years and always thought my employees deserved more, but as an owner I had to balance the cost to my customers with the needs of my employees. Council has the same balancing act to consider.

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Again, I want to say I fully support our fire department and thank them for the job they do. But our job as council people is to do a cost benefit analysis, especially of a major, on-going expense. Council needs hear why we should hire a full-time position and how the department will be enhanced.

But back to the disgraceful meeting on October 7th that embarrassed the firefighters and worse, their families. The blame again, should rest with whoever asked them to attend a meeting prior to deliberation and a vote. For my part in that embarrassment and hurt, I humbly, and sincerely apologize.

Secondly, on a lighter note, I want to congratulate Councilwoman elect Renee Carfagno. We ran a respectful campaign and I can say, after spending the day with her, that I think she will be a real asset to this council. She has a master's in Holocaust studies and teaches middle school civics, showing that she has both compassion and intelligence, two attributes that I think will be a true benefit to our town. Plus, she recently became a grandmother, giving her even more reasons to improve our town for the next generation. Congratulations again to Renee on both recent life changes, and I thank her for a respectful campaign. I hope she finds the work as interesting and rewarding as I have. I also want to thank Shannon, Robin and Mary and the pollworkers for a well-run election day.

And lastly council president, I want to call out an act of political bullying. Now I know we recently had a President that attempted to normalize bullying: making fun of war heroes, handicap people, women, and anyone he sees as a threat.

Fortunately, for our country, people seem to be deciding this isn't the kind of country we want to be.

That makes it even more distressing that political bullying has come to our town. Now I have been a victim of Council Leeds bullying before when he sat in the Gallery and coughed bullsh*t several times while I was speaking. Immature, sure, disrespectful to me AND this institution, absolutely, but it doesn't arise to the level of using our mayor and police force to intimidate a supporter of the other side, this is the stuff of Nazi Germany, Russia, and other authoritarian regimes.

Shortly after a supporter of mine placed one of my lawn signs in her yard, she received a citation via certified mail. This is a woman we all know, who has volunteered countless hours in our town to enrich our culture and community. The violation, a car parked on the grass, which I see elsewhere in town. The resident, after receiving the citation called our police chief, who told her the mayor requested the citation, the resident called the mayor, who stated Councilman Leeds asked him to request the citation. I know when asked the mayor to explain the incident, that he knew this didn't pass the "smell test" but forwarded it to the police without bothering to reach out to the resident, that he knows well.

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The real violation here, putting my campaign sign in her yard. I don't think this is the kind of town we want, encouraging bullying, as our former US president has done. No, I hope that this council and as Councilman Leeds is President of your club, that your club makes it clear to councilman Leeds that political bullying, any bullying is unacceptable.

A few years ago, when Councilman Smith was running, our county club chairman sent out a direct mail piece disparaging Councilman Smith without telling the local club or candidate. Even though research shows negative advertising works in politics, I don't think there is a member of our club that didn't tell our county chair that we don't do this in our town, some quit the club over the incident.

I'm not asking Councilman Leeds to resign, nor do I expect he would. I've seen him do some good work on council, so what I'm asking is that Councilman Leeds remember now, as a duly elected official, that he represents the City of Northfield, not just his party, or even his district, but the whole town, AND that, THIS Council, you Mr. Mayor, and your club help him to check his bullying nature. An apology to the resident would be a good start.”

Councilman Notaro - Sewer Operations; Northfield Football, Cheer, Basketball (FAN)

Councilman Notaro thanked Councilman Utts for his service, he congratulated Councilman Leeds and Councilwoman Elect Carfagno. He congratulated the JV and Varsity football teams for moving on to the Cape Atlantic League Junior Championship. He thanked Councilman Dewees for getting bleachers for the park, he congratulated Mainland Football and Cheer for their accomplishment in moving on to the Group Four Tournament after a victory at sectionals. He thanked the Police and Fire Departments for their assistance in celebrating.

Councilman Leeds – Fire Department/EMS

Councilman Leeds read the Fire and EMS call report for the month of October. He congratulated the Fire Department on receiving a \$28,000 grant they applied for. Regarding Councilman Utts' statement, he was approached by someone at Wawa who gave him a list of properties that needed to be addressed, he reported them, and had no idea whose properties they were. He is not and would not single anyone out.

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

Councilman Smith felt the election was well done in the City, and that both sides handled themselves respectfully. As Councilman Utts indicated, a few years back that was not the case. He congratulated Councilwoman Elect Carfagno, and thanked Councilman Utts for his service. They don't always agree, but always conduct

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themselves respectfully. Councilman Smith congratulated Mainland as well, and in particular the Northfield residents who are members of the team. Regarding shared service discussions with Ocean City, they were going through some internal changes that make them believe they could not provide us with the service we'd need, in the first year. Councilman Smith thanked Chief Prettyman, and while this is not good news for us, we can perhaps revisit. Councilman Smith would continue to explore other opportunities.

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

Councilwoman Bucci congratulated Councilman Leeds and Councilwoman Elect Carfagno; she would miss working with Councilman Utts, she has really enjoyed working with him. The Economic Development Commission (EDC) had a focus group last night with 12 business representatives; Max Slusher ran the focus group and would provide a report to the EDC. Library attendance was up, they are working on their budget process and have finalized the maintenance agreement with the City, which they will forward to Clerk Canesi. There was a library survey available on the library website. She announced upcoming Alliance event, and the next insurance and safety meeting. The Boy Scout Tree Sale starts November 25th. She noted a local church who was collecting turkeys for Thanksgiving. She would like to look at a possible shared service for a leaf vacuum, or a grant, based on feedback she's seen on the Northfield Lounge Facebook page. She announced Shop with a Hero details, and said donations can be made via the Northfield Police Department, with checks payable to EHT PAL.

Council President Polistina – Finance and Collections; Senior Citizens

Council President Polistina announced the Best Practices Inventory, which we were required to do each year, which evaluates what we do against Statewide best practices. Low scores could affect state aid. There were 56 questions and we scored 34, no state aid is lost for a score of greater than 25. This is similar to last year's score. It is a self-evaluation, and they look at capital projects, finances, purchasing, etc. Everyone received a copy; we can look at those that we did not get points for as we evaluate next year.

Council President Polistina moved to 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 – *Pending*

Council President Polistina noted we were waiting for proposals to come back.

- Changes to Sign Ordinance – *Pending*

Councilwoman Bucci noted they were still working on the changes.

- Joint Court – ACPO Proposal to Provide MCP Services

Councilman Smith reported the court numbers have been adjusted downward to our benefit

- Fire Pit Ordinance – *Update if available, from Fire Pit Ordinance Committee*

Councilman Notaro reported that he and Solicitor Facenda went through the fire pit ordinance and copies have been provided to council; they were still tweaking the commercial aspects. He asked all to review the proposed ordinance that had been provided.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

Engineer Nassar was working with OEM Coordinator Joo on a grant proposal. He met with Superintendent Vitale today to review a few areas.

- Professional Services – Review of any Recommended Changes to the RFQ/P

Council President Polistina asked if anyone had changes to recommend for professional services.

Councilman Leeds wanted a standard length of time that the RFP would be posted.

All members present agreed proposals would be due December 16th; no changes to the RFP criteria.

- 2022 Best Practices Inventory – Finance Chair Polistina

Council President Polistina reported during his committee report.

- Selection of Reorganization Meeting Date

All agreed to the reorganization date of Tuesday, January 3rd at 6pm.

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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.

Council President Polistina asked for Resolution 203-2022 to be voted on separately.

Councilman Leeds asked for Resolution 210-2022 to be voted on separately.

Council President Polistina made the agenda assignments.

Councilman Dewees commented on Resolution 203-2022, and stated that it deals with the flat roof over the Fire Department. He had a conversation with Engineer Nassar and appreciated his expertise; there was special expertise required for this type of roof.

Engineer Nassar noted there was also a flat roof over the Mayor's Office, that was included.

Councilman Notaro asked was he watching the other portion of the project?

Councilman Dewees replied no, just the flat roof.

Councilman Leeds would be abstaining from 210-2022.

Solicitor Facenda noted that Council can include both in consent agenda, with abstentions noted.

Council President Polistina confirmed that he would be abstaining from 203-2022 and Councilman Leeds from 210-2022.

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.

Mike Wallace, 3 Surrey Avenue, referred to the small graveyard in the area of Mill and Rosedale. What's sad is the sign is on the ground, he believed the City has cut the property. He was looking to have it fixed up, there are makeshift steps. He didn't know where to start.

Council President Polistina stated that the City does not own that parcel.

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Councilman Dewees offered to work with Mr. Wallace as point-person.

Joan Brennan, 116 Dolphin Avenue, was willing to assist Mr. Wallace with the graveyard. She thanked Councilman Utts for his words earlier this evening, she was certain he would be elected again soon. She felt like when she's not working, she's working for the City of Northfield, not that anyone deserves special treatment. She lives on a County street, she can't park on the street, she wished someone would have just knocked on her door. She didn't know you could give a punch list to a Council person and have all of your stuff fixed. If she knew she would have given her list to Councilman Utts, or to Councilman Perri. She was a long-time resident, with a long history of commitment and service, all did their part to be good citizens. There were cars all over the City parked on grass, 12 on her street alone.

Council President Polistina said he appreciated how upset Ms. Brennan was, and appreciated what she did for the town.

Council President Polistina advised Mr. Wallace the cemetery property was owned by the estate of Ella Collins.

Councilman Dewees would address with Superintendent Vitale to see what we could do.

Chief Newman approached the podium and stated that regarding the matter Mrs. Brennan referred to, he was given a notice of violation by the Mayor, which had been forwarded by Councilman Leeds, there was an email trail. No summons or citation was issued. A 'notice of violation' was issued, which is what happens in every case. Chief Newman did not have time to knock on every door; he gives 10 days for compliance. He had a conversation with Ms. Brennan's husband, a very nice conversation, and he thought it had been addressed.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, he closed the public session.

At 7:07pm, 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