

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
APRIL 8, 2014**

At 6:05pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk. It was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 11, 2014 in accordance with Public Law 75, 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, Solicitor Kris Facenda and Municipal Engineer Dan Kwapinski were also in attendance.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Council President Travagline announced that, in recent months, committee activity has been productive and feels that is why there are no topics for discussion on the Work Session.

Council President Travagline reviewed the agenda for the regular meeting.

Councilman Dewees stated he had a question about Resolution 71-2014.

Council President Travagline asked Engineer Kwapinski to explain.

Engineer Kwapinski stated that the traffic evaluation in the areas of Steelman Avenue, Amherst Avenue and Oxford Circle is to determine if any remedy exists that would reduce the amount of traffic that uses these streets as a cut through.

Councilman Dewees asked for motor vehicle crash data.

Councilman Chau noted that this data was provided and there were not many.

Councilman Dewees asked what they are trying to accomplish and if there have been complaints.

Council President Travagline stated that he has received numerous complaints from residents on all of these streets.

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Councilman Perri stated he had questions about Resolution 74-2014.

Councilman Dewees noted that funding was approved in 2010 or 2011 for the purchase of a bucket truck. He said that it will be used for trimming small trees, changing light bulbs, hanging flags etc.

Councilman Perri asked if these services were looked at for privatization or a shared service.

Councilman Dewees stated they looked at buying a used truck and could not find one that could be certified.

Councilman Perri noted his opposition to the purchase.

Mayor McGee stated that tree trimmers have to be certified and that Worker's Compensation rates are higher.

Councilman Dewees indicated that no trees would be trimmed near electrical wires.

Councilman Devine asked the price of the bucket truck.

Councilman Dewees stated there is no price yet. This Resolution authorizes us to go out to bid.

Councilman Devine asked if we have approached Linwood for a shared service.

Councilman Dewees answered no.

Councilman Perri noted that a bucket truck should be stored indoors due to the hydraulics.

Councilman Dewees indicated there is room in the City Garage for storage.

Councilman Chau requested that the Planning Board Chair, Richard Levitt, be permitted to attend the closed Executive Session being authorized under Resolution 76-2014.

Solicitor Facenda noted that it may not be advisable at this point.

Mayor McGee referred to Resolution 75-2014 and indicated that during budget presentation that \$35,000 was put aside for the hiring of a Business Administrator.

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He noted that the Grant Writer resolution was written so that the contract can deplete that \$35,000 with the approval of Council. He said that Council President Travagline advised him that he was adamantly opposed to a Business Administrator. Mayor McGee added he was misled.

Council President Travagline clarified that the \$35,000 can be used with the consent of Council for the Grant Writer if the money is not being used for a Business Administrator. He further stated that he feels Mayor McGee is obstructing the business of Council by refusing to sign a contract that was authorized by Council. He noted that if a viable option for a Business Administrator is presented, he will entertain it, but will not increase payroll, just like he would not increase the payroll for Police and Fire. He stated the City is reducing payroll, not increasing it.

Councilman Perri stated that he feels the budget was not set up the way it was explained. He added that the \$35,000 was to be specifically set aside for the Administrator and \$10,000 for the Grant Writer. He noted that he was very surprised how the budget ended up being set up. He also questioned the authority of the Council President Pro Tem when the Mayor is available.

Solicitor Facenda stated the matter required extensive research and that he had confirmed with the Mayor that he did not intend to sign the contract. Solicitor Facenda added that he felt the refusal to sign the contract should be interpreted by the Council as a vacancy. He asked Councilman Perri who should sign, if not the Mayor.

Councilman Perri said that it can only be the Mayor. He added that the Resolution should be reworded.

Solicitor Facenda stated the issue of the budget funds and the contract are not related and perhaps should not be mixed. He added that it was the intent of Council that the City contract for services, so we need to make sure that happens.

Councilman Perri responded that he feels the \$35,000 should be used to fund a part-time Administrator and that the budget should be amended. He stated he does not like how the budget was put together.

Mayor McGee asked for a ruling, as opposed to an opinion.

Council President Travagline noted that the Solicitor's opinion has led to this decision.

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Councilman O'Neill stated that when the budget was presented Mayor McGee asked the CFO questions and those questions were answered to his satisfaction. Councilman O'Neill added that everyone had the same opportunity.

Councilman Perri stated that the budget has only been introduced. If he overlooked it, he overlooked it. He reiterated that the budget should be amended.

Councilman Piergiovanni asked the Mayor to confirm his understanding that if he does not want to sign a contract he does not have to.

Mayor McGee confirmed and added that if he does not sign a contract within ten days then it goes back to Council for the Resolution to be reintroduced.

Councilman Piergiovanni noted that this is a budgetary issue. He stated that he has heard that the City wants a Business Administrator to reduce costs but hasn't seen a business case for it or the numbers behind it. He added that we cannot increase payroll right now and if we can do things more efficiently or better he's all for it. The idea of a Business Administrator sounds good, but he would like to see a business case for it.

Councilman Perri stated he will produce that for the agenda of May 13, 2014.

Mayor McGee asked if the Grant Writer presented a business plan before he came before Council.

Councilman Piergiovanni stated that comparing a Business Administrator to a Grant Writer is comparing apples to oranges. A Grant Writer is a specific job and a Business Administrator is to look at head counts, payroll, expenses, etc. a broad range of functions.

Council President Travagline asked Councilman Devine, as member of the Grant Committee, to provide his opinion.

Councilman Devine noted several projects the Grant Writer discussed including Tilton Road, Stormwater and Birch Grove Park.

Councilman Perri stated he would like to dispose of the consent agenda.

Councilman O'Neill stated he would like to keep the consent agenda.

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Council President Travagline indicated to Councilman Perri that he can have anything pulled that he would like to vote on separately and proceeded to make assignments.

Councilman Perri stated he would like to vote Resolutions 74-2014 and 75-2014 separately and asked if the City has already bought a server.

Councilman O'Neill answered no we did not.

Council President Travagline completed making the assignments for the regular meeting agenda.

PUBLIC SESSION

Council President Travagline opened the meeting to any member of the public wishing to speak on any subject.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, noted that his nephews built the shed at Veterans' Park and they will finish it this Saturday. He also stated he feels the Fire Truck is being bought to curry favor with Volunteer Fire Company due to the upcoming Election. He added that he felt the Cherry Picker is being bought to appease someone. He stated that he felt Mayor McGee is a fine person and is doing a fine job. He further added that Mayor McGee is being persecuted after only one month on the job.

Tom Wolfe, 317 Davis Avenue, stated he hasn't heard anyone talk about Second Street. He shared that the last time he was at a Council meeting he was told that someone would look at Second Street.

Councilman Piergiovanni noted that he did look and that it is bad.

Councilman Chau requested that the City Engineer take a look.

Engineer Kwapinski noted that it is included on the Engineer's report.

Tom Wolfe, 317 Davis Avenue, asked Councilman Dewees why the City would purchase an Aerial Truck.

Councilman Dewees explained tree trimming, light bulb changes and flag installation.

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Tom Wolfe, 317 Davis Avenue, stated that only an electrical contractor should be doing work on the ballasts. He suggested having an electrician change the bulbs and also asked if the energy switch is going through.

Council President Travagline answered yes the Energy Aggregation Program was approved.

Tom Wolfe, 317 Davis Avenue, asked the purpose of the program.

Solicitor Facenda explained the Energy Aggregation Program.

Larry Carlson, 922 First Street, agreed with Mr. Webb's assessment of Council. He added that since Vince Mazzeo never refused to sign a contract, he assumed there is a reason for that. He reiterated his recollection that the \$35,000 was said, by the CFO, to be put aside for the Grant Writer/Administrator because that opened up a title. He further commented that if the budget does not include the title of Administrator, he was hoodwinked.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, thanked Tom Polistina and Steve Vain for their help with the Veterans' Park and commented that they are looking for more help. He noted that Councilman Frank Perri has been helping and he urged the Mayor not to sign anything that may incriminate him.

Gail Poholsky, 114 East Revere Avenue, asked which Councilman is in charge of the bike path.

Councilman Dewees indicated that he is.

Gail Poholsky, 114 East Revere Avenue, noted there are many lights out on the path and that there is graffiti on the benches. She further urged Council to work together.

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

At 7:03pm on motions properly made and seconded this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC
Municipal Clerk