

DRAFT MINUTES

*These are the Draft Minutes of the Agenda Conference
of the North Plainfield Borough Council held on Monday, 16 August 2021.*

*Every attempt has been made to make these as comprehensive
and conclusive as possible. However, as it is a draft document, it is
not to be construed as a formal depiction of the official conduct of business and is
subject to revision up to and following the Governing Body's actual approval of same.
If changes are necessary, revised minutes will be posted to the website.*

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference (virtual) of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Monday, **August 16, 2021** at 7:42 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo
 Suzette Given
 Steven McIntyre
 Everett Merrill
 Keiona R. Miller
 Wendy Schaefer (absent-excused)
 Frank "Skip" Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
 David Hollod, Business Administrator
 Phil George, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
 Richard K. Phoenix, RMC, Borough Clerk
 Stephanie Sherwood, RMC, CMR, Deputy Clerk

Mr. Phoenix read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This virtual meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 28, 2020 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

The Pledge to the Flag was led by Mr. Hollod.

All then joined in a moment of silence for the Men and Women serving in our Armed Forces.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Frank N. D'Amore, Sr., 40 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, called for greater enforcement of the ordinance dealing with overcrowding, reporting that he could recall four fires in town that had resulted in deaths from overcrowding. Saying that the ordinance had been in place for ten years, he asked what had made it unenforceable.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Resolution to Authorize Mott MacDonald to Study Options for Recreational Improvements to the Vermeule Tract – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod explained that the Borough is in need of professional engineering services to provide guidance and assistance on the procedures required for the development of Vermeule Park and the Vermeule Community Center with potential improvements that will allow it to continue to maintain its historic designation. The Vermeule tract shows great potential for the addition of recreational facilities, since Somerset County had announced additional recreational grants. Certain old structures could be eliminated to create recreational space including the caretaker's cottage which is vacant, and some recreation offices which could be moved to the established 93 Greenbrook Road facility. The existing Vermeule properties remain under the jurisdiction of Green Acres and State Historic properties and Mott MacDonald will work with both agencies. Council President Stabile commented on the food bank located at 614 Greenbrook Road, that it is a satellite branch of the County's pantry serving eastern Somerset County, and might be forced to move. Mr. Hollod replied that a new North Plainfield location might be in order for the food pantry, such as a centrally located church. President Stabile asked about the approximate acreage involved and Mr. Hollod answered that it was four or five acres in total – the area being south of Vermeule Place.

2. **Flood Management Ordinance – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod explained that the ordinance is required of the Borough by the state and federal governments. It is a lengthy ordinance – particularly with forty (40) pages of highly technical jargon as well as new language and regulations. Flood Plain Management is meant to help hold down costs of flood insurance rates.

3. **2021 Proposed Capital Budget – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod explained that the proposal was now a spread sheet in Excel format - a five-year projection with sewer items being addressed by a separate bond ordinance. Everett Johnson, Esq. of the Wilentz firm will draft a bond ordinance for Council's consideration at the September Council meeting. Aggressive bonding last year took advantage of the state of the economy. Capital items include body-worn cameras for the Police Department; replacement of a rescue ambulance for the Fire Department; upgrades at the Memorial Library; a new variable message electronic sign across from Borough Hall; and, road improvement projects mainly funded by NJ Dept. of Transportation are all contained in the new bond ordinance. Ms. Corzo commented on possible expenditures for technology and office equipment appearing low, asking if there were sufficient monies for upgrades to the Borough's web presence. Mr. Hollod commented on the years-long reliance on Chief Parenti's commitment to and understanding of internet technology, adding that Mr. Asprocolas was part of that expertise, working for the Chief and the Borough as an IT specialist. Regarding hand-held radios, Mr. Hollod explained that they are replaced on a cycled basis as recommended by the Police Chief. The process can be stretched over a two-year interval for cost savings. The administrator added that there would be further discussions with the municipal court regarding

their office technology needs. Mr. McIntyre asked if the Police Dept. maintains a separate technology budget, and Mr. Hollod explained that it remains under the Borough for now.

4. **Award of Bid: 2021 Capital Road Improvement Project** – D.E.H. Mr. Hollod commented on the recent bid opening for the 2021 Capital Road Improvement Project. Of the four bids received, the lowest qualified bidder as determined by the Borough Attorney and Borough Engineer was CCM Contractors of Green Brook. The Administrator reported that the Borough had enjoyed positive experiences in past dealings with the contractor.

5. **Exempt Employees' Salaries** – L.L.R. The Mayor advised that the two salary resolutions reflected 2% cost of living salary increases for all listed parties.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Short Term Rental Ordinance** – W.W.S. With Ms. Schaefer's absence this evening, the Council President advised that the ordinance would be taken up at the Council's first September meeting, and that Mr. Capobianco would also be present for comments.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS:

Ms. Corzo explained that she had recently attended a minority business roundtable as guest speaker. She discussed how North Plainfield is supporting small businesses, particularly in the burgeoning cannabis retail sector. Partnering with Montclair State University and the Borough shows great promise, she advised. The Council President offered his congratulations to her on joining the speaking circuit.

Councilwoman Miller reported that Somerset County Cultural Arts is seeking nominees for excellence in the arts/fine & professional arts scholarship. There is a Friday (this week) deadline according to their website. She added that she would be putting up the appropriate links on-line shortly.

Ms. Givens reported on the recent National Night Out where the Municipal Alliance Committee enjoyed really great traffic at their table. The Council President suspected that continued concerns about Covid had likely eaten into attendance, while Mayor La Ronde observed that attendance at the most recent gathering was about the same as the last event two years ago. The Councilwoman noted a steady line for the free food, adding that MAC had given away all of their backpacks.

Mr. McIntyre reported on his efforts to re-establish the Borough's full bronze status with Sustainable NJ. A fresh resolution will be required to establish a Green Team. Mr. George assured the benefits of an active Green Team, and the Councilman asked about what appeared to be an increase in violent crime. Mr. Merrill advised of his conversation with Chief Parenti.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Miller, seconded by Mr. McIntyre and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President