

BOROUGH of GARWOOD

Workshop Session MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING **March 10, 2015**

Workshop session was opened by Mayor Lombardo at: 7:01 p.m.

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Cranford Chronicle, advertised on January 16, 2015, notification was sent to the Star Ledger and prominently posted on the municipal public bulletin board and filed in the office of the municipal clerk informing the Public of the time and place according to the Provisions of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975).

Present: Mayor Lombardo, Councilman Martin, Councilman Mathieu, Councilman Petruzzelli, Councilwoman Tarantino, Councilwoman Todisco and Council President Nierstedt.

Also Present: Borough Administrator/Clerk Christina M. Ariemma, Borough Attorney Robert Renaud and Borough Engineer Donald Guarriello.

Presentation by Natalie Capoccia, Dietitian for Garwood ShopRite, regarding National Nutrition Month.

Presentation by Barbara Tweedle, Municipal Alliance Chair

Mrs. Tweedle spoke of programs funded by the Alliance. She accepted and answered questions from council and the public. Ron Ferreira and Katelyn Tweedle from the Alliance were also in attendance. A very informative session was realized.

Presentation by Carol Kearney, Business and Industry Liaison

Mrs. Kearney updated council on chamber matters. She announced there are now 34 members from Garwood. She announced movie under the stars will happen again in 2015. June 7th is Garwood Rocks 2015. Garwood Rocks event is set to close some streets including South Avenue to Unami Park. She mentioned the sign ordinance is having an impact on the businesses. She suggested businesses meet with the Mayor on Mayor's Saturday.

Borough Engineer Donald Guarriello received DOT approval for 2014 grant cycle. Councilman Mathieu mentioned he attended a seminar about how municipalities evaluate the amount of roadwork done. He asked how this is calculated for Garwood.

At 7:53 p.m., a motion was made by Council President Nierstedt, seconded by Councilwoman Todisco to enter executive session with respect to contract negotiations for the recycling services contract. At 8:10 p.m., a motion was made by Council President Nierstedt, seconded by Councilwoman Todisco to resume the workshop session.

Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma mentioned council needs to select a day for Students In Government Day. The following dates are considered May 5 & 13 and the clerk was directed to notify the school.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS –

MAYOR'S REPORT

Yesterday afternoon Council President Bill Nierstedt, Councilwoman Sara Todisco and myself met with New Jersey transit about increasing the amount of train stops in Garwood. We discussed ridership from Cranford 1350, Westfield 2500 and Garwood 100. After much discussion it seems to me that Garwood's greatest ally is keeping the Transit informed on our efforts in securing parking spots for commuters and our redevelopment plans for the future. We were asked to submit a letter detailing all our efforts to increase parking and potential new ridership to New Jersey Transit for their consideration.

Union County Mayor's Roundtable was held on Monday, March 2, with a majority of the county sending either a Mayor or his representative. Presenters were: Mohammed Jalloh, Freeholder Chairman; Alfred Faella, Union County Manager; Grace Park, Acting Prosecutor, Joseph Cryan, Union County Sheriff; and Andrew Moran, Director of the Department of Public Safety for the County. We were also updated on the Pilgrim Pipeline, Economic Development Response Team, Brownfields Resources, Updated Emergency Contact Information as well as a variety of miscellaneous County information, which was followed by an extensive question and answer period.

On February 28, 2015, Councilwoman Todisco, Councilman Mathieu and myself attended a "Budgeting for Elected Officials" seminar. The main topics were budget law, budget planning, Capital and Debt Planning, State Aid, Cost of labor Negotiations, and Capital Budgeting. The presentation was very informative. For more details anyone can visit the website of the League of Municipalities.

Comments or matters for discussion from members of Council:

Councilman Martin no report.

Councilman Mathieu read the following report:

Freeholder Meeting, Thursday, February 26, 2015.

One item of relevance to Garwood mentioned by Freeholder Bruce Bergen, Senator Menendez helped get \$1M for an Army Corps of Engineers study of flooding along the Rahway River. The project sounded very preliminary. I suggest we stay on top of it and see how it proceeds.

Municipal Budget Seminar, Saturday, February 28, 2015

I attended a Municipal Budgeting Seminar sponsored by the NJ League of Municipalities. It was a great primer in budgeting and long-term planning. The Mayor and BA of Wharton Borough gave most of the seminar. They were confident, competent, and emphasized the planning and execution of long-term goals. For example, the Mayor of Wharton began the meeting by announcing that in 2015 his Boro will be debt free. They didn't offer a lot of excuses for why they couldn't get things done or why they had to raise taxes and couldn't make reforms. While acknowledging obstacles and difficulties to the municipal budgeting, they focused on getting things done in a common sense, cost-efficient way and achieving long-term goals thru multi-year preparation and planning. It was quite refreshing and showed the difference that leadership can make in the municipal budget process.

Hydraulic study of the entire water system. In Wharton, they maintain their own water supply, in addition to sewer system. They would inspect pipes every time gas company or other company ripped up the street. Linear road miles divided by 30, if you are doing less than that, you are not doing enough.

Ratables do not increase amount of overall tax revenue – they just redistribute it.

Update on NJ State Legislation

I was at an event last night where Assemblywoman Munoz made clear that she is still moving ahead with ending or substantially reducing sick-day payouts, a bill this Council supported unanimously. She is also moving ahead with State Senator Tom Kean on a bill to repeal the estate tax in New Jersey. I'd like for our Council to get behind that movement as well as I believe it drives seniors from our community and from our state. In fact, New Jersey is one of only two states that has an inheritance tax AND an estate tax.

Councilman Petruzzelli no report.

Councilwoman Tarantino read the following report:

Last month we passed a policy that states basically that council will be provided any ordinances prior to them being put on the agenda for introduction. This would give us the opportunity to make any updates or amendments. Then Tina would have time to revise the ordinance as we suggest and then it would on the agenda at the next meeting for introduction.

So tonight you have a few ordinances that you received in your packet for this reason.

One is to amend Article VIII B (Borough Administrator) in Chapter 5 of the code – To establish the position of Assistant Borough Administrator and describe the duties.

The other to amend article VIII A (other offices and positions) in Chapter 5 – to Establish the office on Aging and describe the duties.

We also have The ordinance to amend 21-37 - which is the ordinance about resident preferential permit parking.

Council President Nierstedt said this establishes a position and does not appoint or establish salaries. Council President Nierstedt asked for the qualifications for this position and Ms. Ariemma said she would supply that to Council.

There was discussion regarding the residential parking ordinance. Council President Nierstedt made suggestions and they were discussed. All agreed to add a line to the ordinance.

Councilman Mathieu asked why the committee is creating the Assistant Borough Administrator position. Councilwoman Todisco answered that in the event that something happened to the Borough Administrator there is not a person that knows how to manage the borough. Brief discussion followed. The clerk was directed to prepare these ordinances for introduction at the next regular meeting.

Councilwoman Todisco read the following report:

Budget Training:

I attended the budget seminar held by the League of Municipalities two weekends ago in West Windsor along with the Mayor and Councilman Mathieu. Although it covered a good amount of information that I've been fortunate to learn already from our CFO, auditors, and Administrator after being on the Finance Committee for a few years, there was also other valuable information shared. I appreciated hearing them repeat much of what our professionals say when it comes to a budget. Also, I really appreciated hearing from the CFO/BA and Mayor of Wharton, which is a borough that in some ways is very similar to Garwood as they have about 6500 residents and are about 2 square miles in size. The presenters spoke about how it is always important to look back when it comes to budgeting and how surplus does not mean extra. The proper term is really fund balance. They spoke about how a cap bank is necessary and it does not mean you will use it. They called it, "just good planning." This is something our auditors and CFO will discuss when they come to our special budget meetings. Also, the presenters discussed the history of energy tax receipts and how by the State has collected them for municipalities since 1980 (instead of municipalities collecting them themselves as they had done for 80 years prior) and municipalities do not get all the money back that they should. This is an issue I've followed and last year, the state legislature passed a bill to return energy tax receipts back to municipalities more appropriately, but the Governor vetoed it. They also discussed capital budgeting, debt, and labor negotiations. For me, the best part was speaking to each of the presenters individually after their presentations. In particular, it was interesting to compare notes with the mayor of Wharton as it is similar to Garwood.

I'd like to add to what Councilman Mathieu brought up earlier. For one, when I heard them mention that Wharton would be debt free, I knew I needed to know more. I personally spoke with their CFO/BA about this and he told me how they are doing this, not that he was going to say this publicly. After a few questions, I was able to get this information from him. You can only buy capital items, like dump trucks and dispatch consoles, by either spending cash from your capital account or by bonding, which is debt. When I asked him how much they have in their capital account, he said \$450,000, which I knew right off the bat would be depleted with the purchase of one garbage truck. So he explained that they will still be bonding every other year, but they will basically be buying their own debt. The auditors can explain it better, but that is the basic idea. So they really won't truly be debt free. Also, Councilman Mathieu brought up the idea that redevelopment does not mean more tax revenue, but I think this needs further explanation. You cannot collect more money than the municipality needs in its budget, but when you have an area redeveloped, those new buildings will be paying a greater portion of the tax bill than the rest of the town of homes and buildings that may be 20, or 50, or 100 years old. So that's how that works and redevelopment does benefit the other properties, especially homeowners.

Finance Meeting:

Mayor, if you don't mind, I have to tell a story from one of our Finance meetings a couple weeks ago. The others are too modest to share it. All 3 of us were in attendance and just about to get settled in for the meeting. Mike and Lou were in the hallway by the bathrooms and I was here in the Chamber. All of a sudden, I heard a guy come in and ask Lou if he worked here, which he replied yes. The gentleman said, "you're cigarette container is on fire." Sure enough it was. Lou and Mike both ran out. I soon followed behind them. It was a good size fire. Lou kicked it over and they both proceeded to scoop snow onto it until it was put out. The container was melted. It was fortunate that they were in the right place at the right time as was the gentleman that came in from the outside. Here's an example of bipartisanship.

Law Enforcement Resolution:

I noticed in our packet a couple months ago, we received a copy of a resolution forwarded to us by another community in NJ that states their support for local law enforcement. I would like us to look to pass a similar resolution. I ask the rest of the Council to review this so that we can discuss it at our next meeting and see if this is something we would like to do.

Council President Nierstedt:

1. Yesterday Mayor Lombardo, Councilwoman Todisco and I met with Sallie Morris, Thomas Morgan and John Leon of NJ Transit responding to the mayor's letter regarding the commencement of the Off-Peak Evening Direct "One Seat" Service to New York on the Raritan Valley Line and NJ Transit's apparent slight of Garwood. We discussed the current train schedule where Garwood is not included on at least 20 routes to and from New York. They stated that while parking is one of the major factors they use to add or not add stops, they also explained in some detail how one stop affects many other items – gas, time for riders to get to their destination, and others, they gave us some solace in that it is NOT the most important. They advised us on a daily basis Westfield has 2500 users, Cranford has 1500 and Garwood 100. They asked if we would please send them any and all measures that the Boro is taking regarding provision of commuter parking, as well as all redevelopment or large projects that the Boro has in discussion. They did not make any promises but left by asking when we would most appreciate additional stops if they could add some; we gave

them some advice. The meeting was cordial and I believe that NJT will work with us as we forward them details about Garwood growth.

2. I am not aware of any response received from Congressman Lance or our federal representatives, so I am asking our clerk to please give them a call to ensure receipt and response in a timely manner.
3. I have discussed the status of the South Avenue Redevelopment Study with the consultant who advised they are preparing the first draft and expect to have it ready for the April 22 PB meeting.
4. Housing Study – I have also spoken to our affordable housing consultant – who advised me that she has set up the site monitoring files and is entering the data including the senior housing complex. She and the board planner are discussing the Affordable Housing Ordinance so that they can reconcile outstanding density issues. The main problem is that the redevelopment areas do not yet have finalized densities that produce any housing figures. She should have all outstanding items completed in mid-March and then be ready for Planning Board and Borough Council review.

Council President Nierstedt asked council to support the Resolution from Scotch Plains concerning golf pro John Shippen. All agreed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

NONE

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: 8:46 p.m. Workshop, **Action:** Adjourn, **Moved by** Council President Nierstedt, **Seconded by** Councilwoman Todisco.