

BOROUGH of GARWOOD

Workshop Session MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING

April 14, 2015

Workshop session was opened by Mayor Lombardo at: 7:05 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 of proclamation to Carol Lombardo and Maria Nierstedt for Library Week

Borough Engineer Donald Guarriello reported bids were taken for 2014 D.O.T. projects. Mr. Guarriello recommended awarding to the lowest bidder.

Councilwoman Tarantino asked about the broken sidewalk on South Avenue that was to be repaired this week. She asked Mr. Guarriello to inspect the area to see if work is complete.

Council President Nierstedt asked about fencing at the Garwood Sports and Recreation Complex and if there were any issues. Mr. Guarriello said there were no issues. Brief discussion followed. Councilman Mathieu mentioned the debris in a certain area of the park. Mr. Guarriello will inspect the area. Mayor Lombardo mentioned the gas pipe which is being done by the gas company.

Borough Attorney Robert Renaud reported he reviewed bids and low bidder is in order. He mentioned the Mayor's Advisory regarding the Council of Affordable Housing. He explained the matter in detail. He stated he prepared an ordinance concerning begging based on case law. The ordinance will repeal certain areas of the code. He explained the matter. Councilman Mathieu said it's because we fear litigation from ACLU. Councilman Mathieu said he has a moral problem with this matter and stated his opinion. Council President Nierstedt said his decision to agree on this matter is not reflective of fear of litigation and provided detailed information on the matter. Councilwoman Todisco and Councilwoman Tarantino agreed with Council President Nierstedt. All agreed to introduce the ordinance.

Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma mentioned the Planning Board memo. All agreed to table the matter for further consideration.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS –

Mayor's Report: Just as a reminder, we have a demanding day on Memorial Day May 25, 2015. There is the Cranford Memorial Day Parade, if you will be participating please let Tina know. We will assemble at 9:00 A.M. Also, Garwood's Annual Memorial Day Services will be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall on South Ave. The program will start at 12:00 Noon and will conducted by our Celebrations Committee. In my continuing efforts to meet with the residents of Garwood, Mayor Saturdays are continuing with Council representation which will be held as follows: April 25 with Councilman Mathieu of Building and Grounds; May 16th with Councilman Petruzzelli of Finance, and June 20th with Councilwoman Todisco of Streets and Roads. On March 31st, a meeting was held with the Union County Dept. of Economic Development with me, Council President Nierstedt, Planning Board Chairman Steve Greet and Vice Chair Kathy Villaggio. Representing the County was County Manager Al Faella, Deputy Manager Bill Reyes, Director of Economic Development and his Deputy. Also present were representatives from Strategic Planning, Work Force Development, and the Bureau of GIS, Division of Information Technologies. Garwood was the first community to be approached by this committee. There were a many topics discussed on all levels of government, lasting about 2 hrs. We discussed possible Shared Services and items available to Garwood. As a result, we have before us tonight Garwood's digitized Tax Maps by Block and Lot and by Address. This information is also available on a DVD to be used by our Professionals as needed. Our Business Administer is currently scheduling access and training into the program with the County. The County of

Union has saved the Boro of Garwood approximately \$30,000 by sharing this important information. There was a general consensus that there will be future meetings to go into more details but all parties agreed it was a lot of information for one session to absorb.

Comments or matters for discussion from members of Council:

Councilman Martin no report

Councilman Mathieu mentioned an article from the Wall Street Journal concerning recycling costs and the decrease in revenue in the market. Councilman Mathieu asked the Mayor to give him the floor to talk about a letter to the editor he wrote that contained information that members of the audience may have been offended by. The councilman explained his intentions in writing this piece and followed it by offering an apology to anyone that may have been truly offended.

Councilman Petruzzelli reported Garwood Day/Baseball opening day was great, that all areas were used including the bocce, playground and fields. He thanked Al DelConte for hanging the cabinets. Councilman Petruzzelli said to Councilman Mathieu that his article did offend him.

Councilwoman Tarantino talked about the success of Garwood Day and baseball opening day. She discussed the memo concerning the sign ordinance. She suggested it be referred back to Laws and Licenses. Mayor Lombardo agreed.

Councilwoman Tarantino read the following report: As you know, I went to the last two planning board meetings and helped them understand our changes to what we are calling the signs ordinance. It's really defining the usage of portable signs that the business are currently using and defines the criteria such as size and materials. In your packet this week you all received the list of recommendation the planning board came up with. Mayor, I would suggest that since we have not had 1st reading of this ordinance yet, that we take these recommendations back to Laws & License for review. So we know that our Community Development Grant was cut this year by \$1,500. Mayor you wrote a letter to try and get an increase which was denied. As a last attempt I made a phone call I had a conversation today with Mr. Thomas Connell of The Department of Economic Development. He very nicely explained that it wasn't just Garwood that was cut, but all 14 towns. He did though tell me that we could apply during the summer for contingency funds. This of course wouldn't be approved just because we ran out of money, but maybe if we had a different program we were running that didn't fall under the initial application. It something to think about that may bring in extra funds.

Councilwoman Todisco mentioned letter from an Assemblyman that was in our council mail packet regarding a possible Bill to show the public in a more transparent way that when they pay the tax bill that it actually goes to four entities. Reminder the EFG Annual Appreciation Dinner is Thursday from 5:30 to 8:30 honoring Educator of the Year, Tara Ridente and two residents, Bill Connelly and Mary Guare.

Council President Nierstedt made a suggestion that the bill should be forwarded to the Tax Assessor for comments. He expressed he supports the bill.

Council President Nierstedt no report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Anthony Bengivenga, President of Westfield UNICO stated that he is here to for one purpose and that is to address Councilman Mathieu concerning the letter to the editor written in the Westfield Leader regarding Italian/Americans and their relation to the sport of Bocce Ball. He stated his concerns with the article, accepted the apology and said he hopes Councilman Mathieu puts a retraction in the newspaper.

Manny Alfano President of Italian American Coalition stated he was offended and accepts the councilman's apology. He further expressed concerns regarding the letter in the newspaper.

Christian Peihaso Myrtle Avenue expressed his concerns with the schedule and limited use for Garwood children to have playtime on the fields at the GSRC. He read parts of Chapter 126-6, which states proposed activities or use of the park will not unreasonably interfere with or detract from general public enjoyment of the park. He said his son and friends have been sent home from the park almost every time they attempt to play there. He said he feels that this is in violation of the chapter.

Councilwoman Todisco responded concerning the use of the complex. She said she'd bring these concerns to the attention of the commission at their meeting tomorrow night. She also went over the calendar and offered days of the week that the field is unoccupied.

Rosemary Snow, 322 Willow Avenue thanked Mayor Lombardo for the newsletter.

Pat DiFabio, 414 Hemlock Avenue asked Councilman Mathieu why he did not mention in the letter to the editor that the borough received grant money for construction of the complex. Councilman Mathieu responded that it doesn't matter if there was grant money received; he said you still are paying for it in your taxes. Mr. DiFabio stated he was offended by the article and the insult to Italian/Americans.

Paul Nieves, 236 Fourth Avenue discussed the letter and the apology by Councilman Mathieu. He stated he is not of Italian decent however is very offended by the contents of his letter. He said the letter is disgraceful and he is embarrassed that he is a member of this council. Mr. Nieves suggested a retraction be written. He also stated his apology was not sincere.

Tom Pedas Point Resident said he feels sorry the children of Garwood have a hard time using the complex and he suggested putting up a reserved sign at the field.

Joe Sarno, 658 Willow Avenue said he was not offended by the article. He discussed Garwood Day and mentioned the lack of parking and said it was inconvenient to have the parking lot closed. He asked who made the decision to close the lot. Councilman Petruzzelli stated it was closed for the game truck and trailer and for safety. The stage for entertainment was brought in later in the day after the game truck left. It was also stated that the lot is generally closed for opening day and for the year end picnic.

Council President Nierstedt said we are aware of the parking issues at the complex. He said council plans to address these issues.

Liz Mathieu, 335 Hazel Avenue stated she was offended that there was alcohol served at the Garwood Baseball/Garwood Day. She felt it was setting a bad example for the children, stating there is a drinking problem in the Clark and Garwood Schools. She asked the council to think twice about serving alcohol at the next function.

Councilman Petruzzelli responded Baseball games ended at 5:30 the rest of that was sponsored by other people after the baseball was over.

Councilwoman Todisco stated it was clear that the day was presented by Garwood Baseball League. She also stated the event was separate from the business of this council. Councilwoman Todisco talked about Garwood Rocks and that is a family day, saying beer and wine are served at that event and asked if Mrs. Mathieu was offended that alcohol is served at that. Mrs. Mathieu replied yes she opposes that, that the alcohol should be purchased. Councilwoman Todisco stated is was purchased at Garwood Day. She again stated she felt thought it was inappropriate to have alcohol at the Baseball League event.

Councilwoman Tarantino stated this was not just a Baseball League event. This was also Garwood Day, an evening event with bands.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: 8:13 p.m. Workshop, **Action:** Adjourn, **Moved by** Councilman Petruzzelli, **Seconded by** Council President Nierstedt.