

Mayor and Council of the Borough of Allendale
Work Session Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2020

PRESENT: Mayor Ari Bernstein and Councilmembers Liz Homan, Edward O'Connell, Matthew O'Toole, and Steve Sasso

ABSENT: Councilmembers Jim Strauch and Amy Wilczynski

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Attorney Raymond Wiss
Acting Municipal Clerk Michelle Ryan

A Work Session Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Allendale was held in the Municipal Building at 500 West Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ on January 23, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:30p.m. by Mayor Ari Bernstein who asked that the Acting Municipal Clerk read the open public meetings statement:

“In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. The meeting dates for the year are confirmed at the Annual Meeting, are posted on the public bulletin board in the Municipal Building, published in The Record within the first 10 days of the New Year, and copies are sent to the Ridgewood News and Star Ledger.”

Public Comment:

Walter Widmer of 38 Hamilton Street shared that he had gone to Van Saun Park and observed each town's Christmas Tree display. He suggested for next year that the Borough consider having the scouts or another community organization decorate. The governing body thought that was a great idea and Mayor Bernstein asked Ms. Ryan to put it on the calendar for October to start discussing.

No other public came forward to comment.

Administration:

A. Agenda Review

Mayor Bernstein reviewed the Regular Session agenda. He noted an important item on the Agenda that he was looking forward to is the swearing in of the Fire Department and Fire Prevention Officers. The Minutes of the 2019 Sine Die Meeting and 2020 Reorganization Meetings were listed for approval. He advised that Ordinance 20-01 is listed for introduction explaining that the purpose of this salary ordinance is to add the title of “Clean Communities Coordinator/Certified Recycling Professional” and to fix the salary range for this position as well as the Deputy Municipal Clerk and Crew Chiefs for the year 2020 as set forth in the ordinance.

Mayor Bernstein then reviewed the resolutions on the Consent Agenda. Regarding Resolution 20-70, Mayor said that he was pleased to be a part of this once again as West Bergen Mental Health is a good program, which is open to employees, volunteers, emergency responders and their immediate family members under the age of 26 that are part of the household. Mayor asked Mr. Kistner to comment on the Streetscape Project listed on Resolutions 20-72 and 20-73.

Mr. Kistner stated that the original scope of the downtown revitalization project had changed and that surveying work is now needed. He felt that it was a much better project now. The original money budgeted for Neglia's services was not fully expended and now that the Borough has been

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awarded almost \$700,000 in grant funding, with the recent approval of Phase III from the DOT, Mr. Kistner will be meeting with Neglia Engineering and Councilmembers Wilczynski and Homan to finalize plans for this expanded project. Mr. Kistner hopes to have a shovel in the ground by this summer.

Mr. Kistner also explained that although there was a change order of about twenty percent being authorized for the Franklin Turnpike Project on Resolution 20-66, this project, even with the change order increase, was still under the engineer's estimate of \$225,000. The Borough of Allendale had billed the County of Bergen \$142,000 so far for this project and Mr. Kistner felt that the County would pay another \$5,000, bringing their total contribution to \$147,000 for this \$211,000 total project. The Borough of Allendale's portion for this project was under \$70,000. Mayor Bernstein thanked Mr. Kistner for all his hard work.

B. Council Reports

Councilman O'Connell – Public Works

On behalf of Councilman Strauch, who was absent, Councilman O'Connell gave the Public Works Committee's report. The DPW did an excellent job dealing with the past weekend's icy conditions under the supervision of Crew Chief Dan Richards. The Christmas Tree chipping program is winding down. All the holiday decorations were taken down and stored away. Heating unit repairs at the library will be addressed tomorrow as there was a part on backorder. The annual inspection and certification of all fire extinguishers at borough facilities was completed.

Councilman O'Connell – Public Safety

Councilman O'Connell reported that the police department received 17,223 calls in 2019, which is more than 47 per day. This is down from 2018's total. There are ongoing discussions about placing kiosks in the commuter lot in place of parking meters. Allendale Police Department calls for 2020 to date are 1,073 with 3 arrests. There have been 7 fire calls and 17 EMS calls as well. Detective Rizzo conducted pre-employment background investigations. The LEAD program's graduation is tomorrow and the police department is working with school officials to hopefully run a program for 7th graders in the spring.

Councilman Sasso – Land Use and Construction Code

Councilman Sasso expressed his gratitude to be back on the Land Use Committee. He advised that the committee's first meeting of the year was this past Monday, January 20th at 7:45am. The committee is going to try to meet the 3rd Monday of each month going forward. He was happy to report that there was not a lot of old business left over from 2019. At their first meeting, the committee level set and developed a good working agenda for this year. Mayor Bernstein concurred with Councilman Sasso that it was a good committee comprised with people of differing vantage points, who all take the time to work together for the betterment of Allendale. Mayor complimented Councilman Sasso on his grasp of the issues at hand and the ability to handle the tasks going forward. Councilman Sasso briefly explained the role of the Land Use Committee, especially their responsibility for the long-term vision for Allendale. He invited the public, fellow Councilmembers, and the Land Use Board members to reach out to him with any questions, concerns, or suggestions concerning construction code, development, and property maintenance issues.

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Councilwoman Homan – Water, Sewer and Public Utilities

Councilwoman Homan shared that she loves to talk about water, a tremendously valuable resource. She reiterated from previous meetings that Allendale owns the water hardware such as the pipes in the street, the three treatment facilities for the five wells, a water tower and a ground level tank. The residents own the portion of piping and fixtures from the curb box into their residences. The Borough of Allendale has an operation and management contract agreement with Suez, which means that Suez manages the system to ensure that everything is functioning properly to deliver water and performs the required testing to meet or exceed the NJ DEP's water quality standards. Allendale, from the five wells, produces about fifty percent of our own water and there is an annual bulk purchase agreement with Suez for the other fifty percent of water usage. Subsequently, there are a lot of fixed costs to run the operation and since Allendale Water has its own separate budget, it has to prepare and plan for repairs and improvements as well as future treatment needs and opportunities. The Water Committee is proposing a rate increase starting April 1, 2020 of approximately \$5 per quarter or \$20 to \$23 per year for the majority of Allendale's water users. The service charge of \$25 that is billed quarterly will remain the same. Allendale's service charge is lower than ones charged by nearby communities. Councilwoman Homan encouraged the public to reach out to her with any questions regarding this rate increase.

The Water Committee has been very diligent in planning capital investments and is in the process of finalizing a feasibility study for the treatment of PFAS compounds. The cost of the study will run around \$60,000, which will be paid for utilizing the quarterly service charges. PFAS's are groups of manmade chemicals, found in cookware, food packaging, stain repellants and the like. They are measured in parts per trillion, which is really small. Councilwoman Homan gave the analogy that it is like a grain of sand being in an olympic size swimming pool. Currently the NJ DEP regulates PFNA levels, a PFAS compound. Allendale's levels in water are compliant with these NJ DEP standards, however the Borough would like to have the feasibility study performed to see how to get to undetectable levels of PFAS. All Allendale's water testing results can be found in near real-time on NJ DEP's water watch website or the Annual Consumer Confidence Report is posted on the Allendale website. Most recently the Water Committee met on January 21st to discuss all these items and continues to meet with Suez to ensure that everything is going in a positive direction. She expressed her heartfelt gratitude for Layne Simon, Ron Kistner, Alissa Mayer and Mike Vreeland's tireless work.

Councilwoman Homan offered that she will be proposing a single use plastic bag ban for consideration. Other towns such as Ridgewood and Paramus have done it, and the State perhaps may do something, and she feels this is important for Allendale to do for the environment. She is working with Mr. Wiss to draft the language and will then circulate to the governing body. Councilwoman Homan is soliciting feedback from the community and will be meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and merchants to help craft.

Councilman O'Toole – Administration, Finance and Human Resources

Councilman O'Toole reported that his committee has been extremely busy, showing the governing body and the public in attendance the large stack of PO's that he was signing for emphasis. They have already held two budget meetings so far and they are currently working on version four of the operating budget. There are more meetings scheduled to work on both the operating and capital budgets. They are also putting together the Financial Advisory Committee, made up of

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economically minded residents, who will review the budgets and offer their input. At least two meetings, starting in early March, will be set up for that before the budget is introduced.

C. Mayor's Report

Mayor Bernstein reported that since the last Mayor and Council meeting, he has attended a senior housing meeting, two budget meetings, a Land Use Board meeting, a USRA Coalition meeting with Councilwoman Homan, a Library Board meeting as well as committee meetings.

Mayor Bernstein provided an update on the Borough's record scanning and archiving project to alleviate the overflow of paper within the borough. This is a better solution, with Accuscan having completed a second batch of building department records, eliminating trips to the archives at the police department. Now, just waiting for permission from the State of New Jersey to destroy the paper records.

Mayor gave an update on pet licensing as well. Residents can register in person at Borough Hall or online through GovPilot. Mayor Bernstein reminded the public that starting February 1st, late fees will be assessed. The January 11th Free Rabies Clinic was well attended with 48 pets being vaccinated and over 40 pets getting licensed for 2020. Mayor Bernstein thanked Jean Manus, Carolyn Pistone, Angela Mattiace, AVAC, Chief Daryl Bottaro, Maria Crean and Linda Morgan for all their efforts to organize a successful event.

Mayor Bernstein invited Ron Kistner to speak about the online auction through GovDeals.com. Mr. Kistner reported that the mason truck that has been sitting unused for several years was auctioned off for \$1,400 today. Mr. Kistner acknowledged Councilman Sasso's efforts a few years ago to spearhead the online auctions. The loader, which has been put back into service for the winter season, will be auctioned off in the springtime. The governing body thanked Mr. Kistner for all his efforts, which have thus far brought in \$25,000 through the auction.

Mayor Bernstein asked Councilwoman Homan to give an update on the USRA Coalition. She commended Upper Saddle River Mayor Joanne Minichetti and Former Allendale Mayor Liz White for putting this group together several years ago to deter substance abuse. She revealed that the group recently received a grant for \$650,000, to be used over a five-year period, to bring amazing programs to the Northern Highlands sending districts. The group, comprised of school officials, police department members, elected officials, and others meets monthly. Councilwoman Homan hoped to make the public more aware of this group and their activities as well as invited the public to share their ideas with them as well.

D. Staff Reports

Ray Wiss, Municipal Attorney, reported that since the last meeting he has been working on ordinance revisions at the committee level, various water utility issues with Councilwoman Homan, property maintenance issues with Mr. Kistner, OPRA requests with the Clerk's Office and the Police Department, collective bargaining negotiations with two labor units, and cell tower leases and extension agreements. On behalf of Councilwoman Wilczynski, Mr. Wiss reported that substantial progress has been made on 220/230 over the last few weeks toward addressing some of the last contingency issues in the due diligence period. He is hopeful most issues will be put to bed within the next four weeks and that the project will then be in a more formative stage.

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Michelle Ryan, Acting Municipal Clerk, reported that the Clerk's Office has received 31 OPRA requests to date in 2020. Tatiana Marquis has been primarily handling this task and she is doing a great job working with the departments and Mr. Wiss' office to fulfill these requests. She also provided an update regarding the transition in the Clerk's Office, which seems to be going well. Tatiana Marquis, Linda Garofalo and Carolyn Pistone are all doing an amazing job.

Ron Kistner, Administrative Officer/Director of Operations, reported that the subtenant of 220 West Crescent left behind a lot of items when they vacated the premises. Mr. Kistner met with several companies who were quoting \$20,000 to \$30,000 to clean out the facility. He had a meeting with GovDeals and he would like to put the removal of the items up for auction to one successful bidder. The Borough will make a little bit of money, but more importantly the place will be cleaned out without incurring costs.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilwoman Homan, second by Councilman O'Connell, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Michelle Ryan
Acting Municipal Clerk