

Borough of Palmyra
Virtual Regular Council Meeting, 6:30 PM
Monday May 18th, 2020

The Regular Council Meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Palmyra was called to order by Mayor Tait at 6:31PM

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Brandon Allmond, Laura Cloud, Farrah Jenkins, Michelle McCann, Bernadette Russell, President Timothy Howard, Mayor Gina Ragomo Tait

Absent: none

The pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by a moment of silence.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT

Mayor Tait read the following into the record:

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., and in consideration of Executive Order No. 103, issued by Governor Murphy on March 9, 2020, declaring a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency in the State of New Jersey, the Borough of Palmyra does hereby notify the public that to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens while ensuring the continued functioning of government, the meeting of the Mayor and Council will be a Virtual Council Meeting. Members of the public are invited to “attend” the Virtual Council Meeting but all members of the public participating in the meeting may be muted and their video image disabled. Notice of this meeting was published in the Burlington County Times on January 9th, 2020 and notification was sent to the Burlington County Times on May 7th, 2020. Notice was posted on the Municipal Door, Official Bulletin Board and the Borough of Palmyra Website and electronic signs on May 7th, 2020 and notice was given to all Council Members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 4th, 2020 – Council Caucus Meeting Minutes

Mayor Tait requested a motion for approval of the, May 4th, 2020 Council Caucus Meeting Minutes.

Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve the minutes from the, Council Caucus Meeting of May 4th, 2020. President Howard second the motion.

At the call of the roll the vote was:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried

CORRESPONDENCE

Municipal Clerk, Ms. Jackson acknowledged the following correspondence received:

Letter- Scott Coffina, Burlington County Prosecutor

PUBLIC COMMENT

Comments submitted for Public comment by the deadline required participants to email their questions or comments in advance to Borough Clerk, Rita Jackson and to include in the subject line "Meeting Question/Comment" and their name and full address. All comments will become part of the record and included with the Meeting Minutes. Comments should be limited to no more than (2) two minutes.

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open the Public Portion. Mrs. Russell made a motion to open the public portion for comments. President Howard second the motion.

Comments submitted are as follows:

Ms. Morison- Harbour Drive - Ms. Morison comment is as follows:

How many full-time employees are on borough payroll? Also, how many additional dependents of those employees are covered on the health insurance?

Mr. Gural indicated the following in regards to her comment:

Mr. Gural indicated on the Borough payroll are 35 full time employees 29 with state health benefits and the 29 employees have 49 additional dependents.

Mrs. Veitenheimer – Rowland Street – Mrs. Veitenheimer comments is as follows:

After reviewing the 2020 Municipal Budget, I found discrepancies between what the taxpayers are being told on the Borough's web site and what is actually in the proposed Budget.

1. The web site states, "All 2% across-the-board increases have been eliminated for all staff saving \$16,700". However, the 2020 appropriations under salary and wages for most positions show various increases. If raises are not being given, shouldn't the 2020 appropriations be the same as the 2019 appropriations for each of those line items?
2. The web site states, "Public Events line item has been slashed by \$8000 to just \$2000", but that line item in the budget shows \$4,000 being appropriated in 2020.
2. What is Community Youth Program that \$1,970 is being allocated to in 2020?
3. Under Anticipated Revenues, there is nothing listed under 2020 for the Recycling Tonnage Grant. Aren't we receiving anything this year even though we continue to recycle? Aren't there any other grants that Palmyra applied for and anticipates receiving this year?

I strongly feel more needs to be done to reduce the Municipal tax increase. Palmyra's Municipal Tax Rate as well as the Total Tax Rate is currently the third highest in Burlington County. Where are we the taxpayers supposed to come up with the additional monies? There are many more houses in Palmyra assessed above the \$147,783 average, so the tax increase is considerably higher for them. The Median Home Value in Palmyra is \$178,626.

The County's budget initially called for an increase, but the Freeholder's are working to reduce the budget to no increase. Anything Palmyra can do to reduce the increase would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Gural indicated the following in regards to her comment:

Mr. Gural indicated he would modify the statement on the website to read all non-union and non-uniform employees 2% across the board increases have been eliminated, the Police department in accordance with their PBA/contract they are still entitled to receive their 2% increase. Mr. Gural indicated there could have been some changes, people changing positions, taking on other positions since the budget was completed last year which would account for why the numbers are not the exact same as last year. Mr. Gural indicated there are no 2% across the board increases in the 2020 budget.

Mr. Gural indicated, appropriated under the public events line are three-line items, the Halloween Parade for \$2,000.00, Palmyra Day for 0.00 and public events for \$2,000.00, a total line of \$4,000.00.

Mr. Gural noted last year \$10,000.00 was appropriated to the public events line itself, this year it is only \$2,000.00 saving \$8,000.00.

Mr. Gural indicated there are five items in the community youth program line item. Mr. Gural indicated two of those items are not being funded this year, Boys and Girls State and Post Prom. Mr. Gural stated \$500.00 (\$250.00 each a boy and a girl) will be going to scholarships at Palmyra High School and \$1,470.00 is being budgeted for Catholic Charities.

Mr. Gural stated the recycling tonnage grant is not included in anticipated revenue as there is an equal expenditure associated with the grant. He indicated those funds are allocated for a specific purpose and are not deposited for use as general revenue.

Ms. Morrison- Harbour Drive- Ms. Morrison asked if it was a total of 78 people on the health insurance. Mr. Gural indicated yes. Mrs. Morrison stated those people are contributing on average \$16,092.00 a year which is \$141.00 a month towards the health insurance. Mr. Gural indicated that is very close. Ms. Morrison indicated perhaps those employees should be paying more towards their health insurance. Mr. Gural stated the state health benefits program is regulated by the State; he noted our contract with the PBA drives our need to stay with the State health benefits program as most of the full-time employees are in the police department. Mr. Gural noted the health programs including dental, and vision is continually being reviewed.

No other comments submitted, Mayor Tait asked for a motion to close the Public Portion. Mrs. Russell made a motion to close the public portion, President Howard second the motion.

All members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion Carried

2020 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Resolution 2020-124, Resolution to Read the 2020 Municipal Budget by Title Only

Mayor Tait requested a motion for approval of Resolution 2020-124 Resolution to Read the 2020 Municipal Budget by Title Only. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolution 2020-124. President Howard seconded the motion.

At the call of the roll, the vote was:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried, Resolution 2020-124 was approved

Resolution 2020-125, Resolution Authorizing the self-examination of the 2020 Municipal Budget

Mayor Tait requested a motion for approval of Resolution 2020-125 authorizing the self-examination of the 2020 Municipal Budget. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolutions 2020-125. President Howard seconded the motion.

At the call of the roll, the vote was:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried, Resolution 2020-125 was approved

Public Hearing 2020 Municipal Budget

Resolution 2020-126, Resolution Authorizing the Adoption of the 2020 Municipal Budget

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open Resolution 2020-126 for public hearing. Mrs. Russell made a motion to open Resolution 2020-126 for public comments. President Howard second the motion

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

No comments

Mayor Tait requested a motion to close the public portion. Mrs. Russell made a motion to close the public hearing, President Howard second the motion.

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2020-126 Authorizing the Adoption of the 2020 Municipal Budget. President Russell made a motion to approve Resolution 2020-126. President Howard seconded the motion

At the call of the roll, the vote was:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried, Resolution 2020-126 was approved

ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING Public Hearing to be held on June 15th, 2020

Ordinance 2020-04 An Ordinance of the Borough of Palmyra to Amend the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual to Cap the Maximum Amount Payable to Non-union Employees for Accrued but Unused Vacation Time to the Sum of \$15,000.00.

Mayor Tait asked if there was any discussion. Mrs. Russell asked if who this applies to could be clarified. Mayor Tait indicated it includes all staff including the Chief of Police and Lt. of the Police Department but not the people in the police department who fall under the PBA agreement. Mr. Jenkins asked how the \$15,000.00 dollars number was derived. Mr. Gural indicated it is the same number currently being used for our sick time policy. Mrs. Jenkins asked if that means someone retiring from the Borough would be able to retire and be paid both \$15,000.00 for accrued sick time and \$15,000.00 for accrued vacation time. Mr. Gural indicated yes. Mrs. Russell indicated that is significantly down from what it is currently. Mr. Gural indicated there is currently no cap on vacation time payout. Mrs. Jenkins asked if there was a need for our police officers not to take their vacation time. Mr. Gural explained the vacation time does not apply to our police officers as they are under the PBA agreement. There was some additional discussion regarding the use and ability of employees to take vacations time due to shortness of staff. Mr. Rosenberg indicated this ordinance is a direct reaction to certain abuses that have occurred thru out the state of New Jersey. Mr. Rosenberg also noted that the accrued time payable must be account for in the budget and affects the tax rate. Mrs. Jenkins indicated the amount could be lowered. Dr. Cloud indicated that allowable number of days to be carried could also be looked at a means of lowering our liability. Mr. Gural noted all employees do not receive sick time; most only get vacation time and PTO, the sick time was eliminated in 2012 and is only paid to those hired prior to that date which amounts to perhaps six employees currently. There was some additional discussion regarding sick time; who has it and the possibility of adding additional sick time for all full-time employees so that in the event of a personal crisis/illness employees would have the time needed so as not to have to rely on the accumulated vacation time. Mrs. Russell and Mrs. Jenkins indicated that the committee should perhaps begin to look at our current sick time policy.

Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-04 An Ordinance of the Borough of Palmyra to Amend the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual to Cap the Maximum Amount Payable to Non-union Employees for Accrued but Unused Vacation Time to the Sum of \$15,000.00. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-04. President Howard second the motion.

At the call of the roll:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: Mrs. Jenkins

Motion carried. Ordinance 2020-04 was approved on first reading.

ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING (Public Hearing)

Ordinance 2020-03 An Ordinance of the Borough of Palmyra Appropriating the Sum of \$25,000.00, from the Capital Improvement Fund, For the Intersection Landscaping Improvements in the Borough of Palmyra

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open Ordinance 2020-03 for public hearing. Mrs. Russell made a motion to open Ordinance 2020-03 for public comments. President Howard second the motion

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

Dr. Cloud asked who would be maintaining the beds once planted. Mr. Gural indicated public works.

No other comments Mayor Tait requested a motion to close the public portion. Mrs. Russell made a motion to close the public hearing, President Howard second the motion.

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-03 An Ordinance of the Borough of Palmyra Appropriating the Sum of \$25,000.00, from the Capital Improvement Fund, For the Intersection Landscaping Improvements in the Borough of Palmyra

Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-03. President Howard second the motion.

At the call of the roll:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion carried. Ordinance 2020-03 was approved.

RESOLUTION

Resolution 2020-127, Resolution Authorizing the Payment of Bills for the Month of May 2020 in the Amount of \$1,659,348.64.

Mayor Tait requested a motion for approve Resolution 2020-127. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolutions 2020-127. President Howard seconded the motion.

At the call of the roll, the vote was:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried, Resolution 2020-127 was approved.

REDEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gural indicated a preliminary negotiation meeting was held last week and it was very productive.

Mr. Gural indicated we received the acceptable use determination for the dredge spoils stored in the CDF. Mr. Gural stated we also served a will serve letter to the redeveloper which allows them to make

connects to our sewer plant. Mr. Rosenberg indicated in the next 60 days or so we will need to discuss some of the fine print of the redeveloper agreement.

Mr. Brewer indicated we obtained title to the 620-622 Highland Avenue property subject to going to the commissioners hearing to determine the value of the property somewhere between the \$135,000.00 and \$300,000.00. Mr. Brewer indicated the deadline for the commissioners to issue their report is August 14th, 2020. Mr. Brewer indicated we are still waiting for the hearing date.

MOTION TO APPROVE TREASURERS REPORT

Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's Reports for April 2020. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Reports for April 2020. President Howard second the motion.

At the call of the roll:

INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard

AGAINST: None

Motion Carried. Treasurers Report was approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Gural indicated earlier today we held a staff meeting talking about the possibility of bringing everyone back to work and the staff's comfort level with that. Mr. Gural noted there was also conversation regarding how to safely open to the public and managing social distancing. He indicated we are waiting for the Governor's order to open to the public and those time lines will be driven by that order. Mr. Gural indicated we are currently working from both office and home but the staff is ready to get back. Mayor Tait indicated she has been on many conference calls regarding the reopening of various things and noted everyone should remain vigilant with the social distancing currently in place as we are not thru this yet.

Mayor Tait indicated in regards to public events, the War Memorial Committee has decided to hold the Memorial Day ceremony on YouTube on Memorial Day. There was some additional discussion regarding people at the memorial site. Mayor Tait noted that because the public events budget was cut it is our hope to utilize that \$2,000.00 for the Christmas season event. Mayor Tait indicated she was approached by a parent of a 2020 Class student and they were wondering if they could put up a congratulatory banner in Grove Park and place Graduation Caps stakes with the names of the graduating seniors on each, in the park. Council agreed it was ok. There was some discussion regarding if the students would or wouldn't decorate the hat with their names. Mayor Tait also noted the Police Union donated the money for the caps and banner.

Mayor Tait indicated in council packets they received a letter of recommendation from Chief Pearlman regarding his replacement due to retirement. Mr. Gural indicated that council may wish to begin the process of meeting with potential candidates in regards to those recommendations. Mayor Tait indicated the Public Safety committee will begin to set that process in motion.

Mr. Gural indicated we are waiting for information from the Palmyra Police Association regarding the possibility of extending the current PBA contract for one year due to the current pandemic. He noted he has nothing further to report at this time.

Mr. Gural indicated we received a grant for the road improvement project on 5th street. Mr. Gural indicated the school wished to add some additional parking and a drop site in front of the school, however the state indicated they would not pay for anything that was not in the Borough's right of way, so the school would be responsible for paying for those improvements on their property. Mr. Gural stated the school decided not to advance that project at this time, so we will be doing the improvements to only 5th Street with no improvements to the school.

Mr. Gural indicated there is a great need to replace the current council and administrative laptops. Mr. Gural noted all are running outdated and unsecure software, indicating Microsoft 7, which is no longer updatable. Mr. Gural indicated there was \$35,000.00 included in the capital budget which we typically do not adopt until later in the summer. Mr. Gural indicated he did not feel it could wait until later in the summer given what we currently have to do with meetings and the ability to safely communicate during this time. Mr. Gural recommended we adopt the fully funded capital ordinance and purchase them thru capital funds and we do it sooner rather than later so we don't experience the security faults which we currently have. After some discussion, council agreed to move forward. Mr. Rosenberg asked if the computers would be purchased via state contract. Mr. Gural indicated yes.

Mr. Gural indicated the US EDA Grant is an opportunity for infrastructure and job creation, he noted Mr. Stock is interested in pursuing the grant and has agreed to pay all fees associated with Mr. Gerkens, our grant writer, applying for it for us. Mr. Stock has indicated it could be used to make the sanitary sewer connection from the other side of Rt. 73.

Mr. Gural stated he was in contact with the YMCA regarding them running the Summer Camp Program they were wishing to run again this year. Mr. Gural indicated he told them that given were we are currently the Borough did not feel that would be possible this year. Mayor Tait indicated that if they ran the program this year we would have to fully clean and sanitize that building every night which we do not have the staff to complete and the cost for hiring a professional service would be astronomical. Mrs. Russell indicated once a day would not be sufficient given what we are currently dealing with. Mayor Tait stated she felt it was in the best interest of the Borough community for the center to remain closed for the summer and in September we would reevaluate and perhaps have guidelines from the State as to how to safely move forward with opening of that building.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Gural indicated the Gmax Test was competed on the artificial turf field and the field passed. Mr. Gural indicated the test results were passed on to the various organizations utilizing the field by Mrs. Sykes. Mr. Gural indicated there is one area of concern which we will have to consider for replacement.

Mr. Gural indicated that although the primary election, to be held July 7th, 2020, will primarily be voted by mail the county is requiring us to open at least one polling location. The county needs to

know by May 27th, 2020 what that location is going to be. Mr. Gural indicated we have two locations the community center and the Harbour Club house. Mr. Gural indicated the community center would be the better location as it is larger and able to accommodate all voting districts with social distancing in place. After some discussion it was decided the community center would be used and opened that one day.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Allmond asked if it was possible to have any additional days for public works to open to handle the back up with bulk trash. Mr. Gural indicated we will begin opening on Wednesday nights from 3:00pm to 7:00pm soon.

Dr. Cloud indicated we need to message better to the community as many people are still hoping various events will take place. Dr. Cloud indicated she had some ideas regarding the river clean-up and would talk with Mr. Gural to get additional information.

Mrs. Jenkins - no comments

Mrs. McCann- no comments

Mrs. Russell asked if it was possible to update the website in regards to how the Borough intends to move forward with opening various things. She inquired about how various events like the Farmers Market, summer concerts etc. would be handled. Mayor Tait indicated we still need guidance from the state as to gathering sizes and those events are not budgeted for in this year's budget. Mrs. Russell thanked everyone for their hard work during this time.

President Howard noted we need to let people know we are not doing any events over the summer. President Howard noted Burlington County is having another food pantry give away tomorrow at 500 Bridge Street in Willingboro at 11:00 am.

Mayor Tait indicated the public safety committee, building and grounds and the redevelopment committees have met. Mayor Tait noted the passing of Mr. Joseph Horan last month. Mayor Tait indicated there are currently 40 cases of the corona virus in the Borough. Mayor Tait thanked public works for all their efforts on Saturdays. Mr. Gural stated they are averaging 84 people coming to public works on Saturdays. Mayor Tait urged all to have a safe and happy holiday and reminded all to watch the Memorial Day celebration on YouTube.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Russell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. President Howard second the motion.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Doretha R Jackson, RMC

Municipal Clerk