

**Borough of Palmyra**  
**Virtual Council Caucus Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, 6:00 PM**

The Regular Council Meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Palmyra was called to order by Mayor Tait at 6:02 PM

**ROLL CALL**

At the call of the roll:

PRESENT: Mr. Brandon Allmond, Dr. Laura Cloud, Mrs. Michelle McCann, President Timothy Howard, Mayor Gina Ragomo Tait

ABSENT: Mrs. Farrah Jenkins, Mrs. Bernadette Russell

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT**

Mayor Tait Read the following statement 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. Please be advised the Borough of Palmyra does hereby notify the public that to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens, and to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19 and its variants, 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 “Virtually” (via computer or phone) but all members of the public participating in the meeting virtually may be muted and their video image disabled. Notice of this meeting was published in the Burlington County Times on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Notice was posted on the Municipal Door, Official Bulletin Board and electronic signs on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Notice was also posted on the Borough of Palmyra Website on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and notice was given to all Council Members.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mayor Tait requested a motion for approval of the October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Regular Council Meeting Minutes.

President Howard made a motion to approve the Regular Council Meeting Minutes from October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with the correction to the spelling of Ms. Caban’s name. Dr. Cloud second the motion.

**At the call of the roll the vote was:**

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

**Against: None**

**Motion Carried**

Mrs. Jenkins joined the meeting at 6:10 pm.

Mrs. Russell joined the meeting at 6:11 pm.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

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

Resignation Letter- Destinee Quintero

Mayor Tait requested a motion to accept Destinee Quintero's letter of resignation. President Howard made a motion to accept Ms. Quintero's letter of resignation. Mr. Allmond second the motion.

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

Letter- Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, Commissioner, NJ Dept of Transportation

**REDEVELOPMENT**

Rt. 73 South Redevelopment Area- Update

Mr. Gural indicated the pre-construction meeting was held last week and site work has begun. Mr. Gural noted they ran into some issues with the installation of the sewer utilities and will have to bring in some clean fill, so they moved to the water pipe install while waiting for other materials to come in. Mr. Gural stated the footings and foundation were scheduled to begin today. Mr. Gural indicated they have paid for some of the building permits in or around the amount of \$40,000.00. Mr. Gural indicated we are expecting additional permit fees in the amount of \$300,000. 00. Mr. Gural indicated that more time will be spent by personally reviewing and inspecting the various items of the project. Mr. Gural we are still in ongoing negotiations with Fair Share Housing regarding the affordable housing component of the project. Mr. Rosenberg stated the negotiations are contentious and we are continuing to press forward. Mr. Rosenberg requested Mr. Brewer or Gural set up a conference call for tomorrow to address some of the recent emails. Mr. Gural indicated the redevelopment agreement for the Fillit property is being fine tuned and is expected to be ready for council consideration in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Gural indicated the pilot application and long-term tax exemption application will also need consideration shortly.

Outlaw Training & Fitness, 620-622 Highland Ave Redevelopment Project – Update

Mr. Brewer indicated the valuation hearing scheduled for October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, has again been rescheduled and not reschedule date has been set. Mr. Brewer indicated he would advise the governing body when the date is set again.

Sea Box/ELM Office LLC, 321 E. Broad Street - Former Knights of Columbus Property- Update

Mr. Gural indicated he had nothing new to report.

**PROFESSIONAL UPDATES**

William Kirchner, ERI

Mr. Kirchner indicated that the contractor has completed the punch list for the 5<sup>th</sup> and Race Street project and the project is essential complete including the liquated damages.

Mr. Kirchner indicated the contractor did complete the repair of the miss installed striping of the Temple Blvd project on Thursday. Mr. Kirchner explained the process. Mr. Kirchner indicated the milling and paving on New Jersey Avenue should begin tomorrow.

Mr. Kirchner indicated the Veterans Memorial Park project has been delayed and you didn't see them working this week, due to an outbreak of Covid-19 noting the contractor's crew has been quarantined.

Mr. Rosenberg stated that he sent a copy of a draft letter for Think pavers the contractor for the 5<sup>th</sup> and Race Street project, for review of the governing body in regard to the stipulated damages for the 5<sup>th</sup> and Race Street project. Mr. Rosenberg requested permission to send the letter to Mr. Berkowitz of Think pavers, regarding the 5<sup>th</sup> and Race Street project. Mr. Gural indicated a copy was included in the agenda packet along with a draft letter regarding the liquated damages on the Temple Blvd. project.

Mr. Rosenberg indicated that currently he does not wish to send to letter for the Temple Blvd project as the project is not yet complete and the final billing has not yet been completed.

Mayor Tait requested a motion to allow Mr. Rosenberg to send a letter about the 5<sup>th</sup> and Race Street project, to Mr. Berkowitz of Think Pavers. President Howard made the motion and Mrs. Russell second the motion.

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

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

We request those participants wishing to have or make a Public comment, email their questions or comments in advance to Municipal Clerk Rita Jackson at [djackson@boroughofpalmyra.com](mailto:djackson@boroughofpalmyra.com). The opportunity to submit comments prior to meeting expired at 12:00 PM on November 1, 2021. All comments will become part of the record and included with the Meeting Minutes. For those choose to "attend" the Virtual Meeting, Mayor Tait opened the meeting to the public for comments. All comments made are part of the record and included with the Meeting Minutes.

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open to the Public for comments.

Mrs. Russell made a motion to open the public portion for comments. President Howard second the motion.

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

Mayor Tait asked if any comments were received before the meeting.

Municipal Clerk, Ms. Jackson indicated one comment was received, and reads as follows:

1)What is the current staffing level of the police department?

- 2) What was the staffing level prior to covid about January 1, 2019?
- 3) Why is the pay lagging other local departments leading to retainment and retention of officers?
- 4) What impact will reduce staffing have on officer and public safety.
- 5) When can we expect in person council meetings to resume and Borough Hall to reopen like most other municipalities and what is the justification for not already being open?

Thank you.

Eric Austin

Mayor Tait indicated that the current staffing of the Police department is 12 officers.

Chief Campbell indicated the level about January 1, 2019, was 18 officers.

Mayor Tait and Mr. Gural indicated the police officers are paid in accordance with the PBA agreement/contract. Mr. Gural noted that the current contract was negotiated which the FOP and the Police department representatives earlier this year and the Borough is currently adhering to the agreement as ratified by the department.

Chief Campbell indicated the less officers which we have the less amount of coverage the department will be able to safely provide. Chief Campbell indicated that currently we have a two man shift and noted that officers are being moved around from the detective bureau and noted the potential of using the SRO to help cover the road shifts. Chief Campbell noted that they did not want to take the SRO out of the schools as he is needed there.

Mayor Tait indicated the opening of the building is determined by the numbers provided by the Department of Health and the Science as reported regarding Covid-19. Mayor Tait indicated that the Borough had 65 cases as of the first week in October. Mr. Gural indicated that currently we have had 96 positive cases and one additional death due to covid in the last two months noting that that does not include another seven cases last week. Mr. Gural noted the website will be updated with the additional information. Mr. Gural stated that currently we are experiencing a greater infection rate, with 75% of Palmyra residents vaccinated, than we were experiencing before anyone was vaccinated.

Mayor Tait asked if there were any comments from those present.

Ms. Still – Veterans Drive – Ms. Still stated she bought her home on Veterans Drive from her parents in 1991. Ms. Still thanked Chief Campbell and the Police department for all their help during the week regarding somethings she needed help with. Ms. Still noted that in July of 2021 she attended a meeting and was not convinced of what was being told to her and how she was treated by the council and Municipal Attorney she promised that she would attend council meeting until she received answers. Ms. Still stated the council feels like it does not have to answer concerns of the residents nor has to address aggregations of systemic racism in the Palmyra School District or nepotism in the administration or the justification of salaries or the hiring of employees of the Borough of Palmyra. Ms. Still stated that because the council meetings are only virtual and are not highly advertised, indicating the advertisement for the meeting was just placed two days ago and the time was changed,

the governing body has become just too comfortable with what's going on and are not answering any questions or concerns that the public has brought to your attention. Mr. Still indicated the American way is the elected public officials serve the people and address the issues of the people. Ms. Still indicated she has received a defamatory email which has been circulated among the community from someone regarding her integrity. Ms. Still stated that holding the elected officials accountable is not being negative. Ms. Still noted that a major issue in our country is our elected officials, systemic corruption in politics and long-term politicians. Ms. Still stated that you do not have to have a title or run for and hold an office to serve to public, noting that she serves the public all the time and it called altruistic service. Ms. Still indicated this administration has nothing to do with serving the residents of Palmyra or addressing their issues of concern. Ms. Still stated that social advocacy, social justice runs in her blood, her late great great grand uncle was the abolitionist, William Still who worked closely with Harriet Tubman to insure liberty and justice for all. Ms. Still indicated the Mayor and Council must be held accountable for their actions. Ms. Still indicated she would continue to attend the meetings and she will continue to fight for liberty and justice for all the Palmyra Proud residents. Ms. Still indicated she had no other comments just Food for thought.

Ms. Thomas – Ms. Thomas indicated she just moved into the neighborhood and wanted to know what the action plan is to keep the kids safe due to the shortage of crossing guards and the possibility of using the SRO outside of the schools.

Mayor Tait indicated that currently we do not have an action plan but will be working with Chief Campbell and the Police this week to develop a plan as we are concerned about the kids and want them to be safe.

No one else from the public wishing to be heard, Mayor Tait asked for a motion to close the public Portion. President Howard made a motion to close the public portion. Mrs. Russell second the motion.

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

## **RESOLUTIONS**

Mayor Tait stated, Resolution 2021-211 thru Resolution 2021-218 would be enacted as a single motion, if any resolution needed additional discussion, it would be removed from the consent agenda and voted on separately. Mayor Tait asked if anything needed to be removed. Noting no one requested additional discussion on any resolutions, Mayor Tait read the following resolutions into the record

**Resolution 2021-211**, Resolution of the Borough of Palmyra's Civil Rights Policy with Respect to all Officials, Appointees, Employees, Prospective Employees, Volunteers, Independent Contractors and Members of the Public that come into Contact with Municipal Employees, Officials and Volunteers

**Resolution 2021-212**, Resolution of Borough of Palmyra County of Burlington Authorizing a Lien be Placed on Blk 48 Lot 12 for Failure to Comply with Obnoxious Growth and Property Maintenance Violations

**Resolution 2021-213**, Resolution of Borough of Palmyra County of Burlington Authorizing a Lien be Placed on Blk 120 Lot 4.01 for Failure to Comply with Obnoxious Growth and Property Maintenance Violations

**Resolution 2021-214**, Resolution of Borough of Palmyra County of Burlington Authorizing a Lien be Placed on Blk 85 Lot 19 for Failure to Comply with Obnoxious Growth and Property Maintenance Violations

**Resolution 2021-215**, Resolution Authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to Make Budget Transfers to the 2021 Budget in the amount of \$76,175.00

**Resolution 2021-216**, Resolution of the Borough of Palmyra Adopting the Revised Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual and the Supervisory Supplement to the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual Dated November 1, 2021 with a new Effective Date of November 1, 2021

**Resolution 2021-217**, Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Execute an Agreement Between the Borough of Palmyra and Virtua Health, Inc./Mobile Grocery Store for one-year term to expire October 31, 2022.

**Resolution 2021-218**, Resolution appointing Duane Wallace as Plumbing Sub-Code Official and Plumbing Inspector, and Co-Electrical, Building and Mechanical Sub-code Officials and Inspectors as necessary for the Rt. 73 S. Redevelopment Project at the combined annual salary of \$25,000 effective November 1, 2021 and for the duration of project.

Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve the consent agenda, Resolutions 2021-211 thru Resolution 2021-218.

President Howard made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Resolution 2021-211 thru Resolution 2021-218. Mr. Allmond 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. Resolutions 2021-211 and Resolution 2021-218 were approved**

## **PUBLIC EVENTS**

Mayor Tait noted the Palmyra Halloween Parade was held on Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Mayor Tait thanked the Halloween Parade Committee for all their efforts with the parade.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Mr. Gural indicated he had nothing new to report regarding Borough Hall staffing/reopening to the public, Legion Field, Community Center, Council Meetings and Covid-19, nothing his update earlier regarding the rising number of positive cases in town. Mr. Gural indicated he would be posting the numbers on the website shortly.

Mayor Tait asked if everyone had the opportunity to read the request of the Palmyra Improvement Association regarding usage of Payton I Flournoy Park for the “Winter Market” on November 27<sup>th</sup>,

2021. Mayor Tait and the governing body agreed to the request for the park usage on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Mr. Gural indicated Mrs. Kilmer and the cleaning company again tried to clean-up, 313 Delaware Avenue, again they were met with resistance from the tenant and were not allowed on the property to remove any items. Mr. Gural indicated we just can not get the property cleaned up as he is the tenant and claims to own everything on the property. Mr. Gural noted that there has been no help from the decedent's family regarding the clean-up of the property. Mr. Gural noted the tenant missed his court date and we will have to seek other legal matters to get the property cleaned up.

Mr. Gural stated the owner of 202 Cinnaminson Avenue did appear in court and agreed to remove the storage container from the property. Mr. Gural indicated the container should be removed by November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Mayor Tait indicated appointed the following to the Mayor's Advisory Board; Loretta Kelly, Ruth Yetter, Carol Vento, Sheryl Butler-White, Kim Robinson, Maureen Barsky and Sandra Purnell.

### **ADMINISTRATORS REPORT**

Mr. Gural indicated we are still advertising for the TACO and Code Enforcement Officer positions, he noted applications will be taken up until December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Mr. Gural stated Mr. Genkins prepared the Outdoor Storage Containers/Accessory Structures Ordinance which Mrs. Kilmer is reviewing and adding some additional information to. Mr. Gural noted it will be updated by Mr. Genkins and ready for council review shortly.

Mr. Gural noted the Best Practices checklist has been submitted and will be reviewed at the November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, council meeting.

Mr. Gural stated the 2022 Budget process is under way, departments have been notified and necessary budget transfers have been requested and were approved earlier tonight.

Mr. Gural stated the Request for Proposals will be posted on the website tomorrow and everyone is free to send it to anyone they wish. Mr. Gural noted the request for proposals are due back December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, by 12:00 Noon.

### **MAYOR / COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS AND COMMENTS**

**Mr. Allmond** – Mr. Allmond indicated the guidelines for the Student Representative positions were developed/updated three years ago. Allmond noted the guidelines were developed with the help of the Superintendent of the Board of Education and the High School principal. Mr. Allmond indicated all decisions regarding the applicants are made by the school, they distribute the applications, accept the applications and essays, make the decisions, and notify the governing body as to whom the representatives are going to be for the given school year. Mr. Allmond noted the program was intentionally designed that way to avoid any questions regarding candidate selection. Mr. Allmond noted the program involves two seniors and two juniors with the intention of allowing the two juniors the ability to take the senior positions, when they become seniors if they desire, hoping to obtain two

new juniors to fill the junior positions. Mr. Allmond stated that the program has had phenomenal students thus far and we are looking forward to appointing two new juniors at reorganization in 2022. Mr. Allmond stated that if anyone has questions regarding the program or how to obtain information regarding the program that can contact him at any time.

**Dr. Cloud**- No comment

**Mrs. Russell** – No comment

**Mrs. Jenkins** – No comment

**Mrs. McCann**- No comment

**President Howard** - No comment

**Mayor Tait** – Mayor Tait thanked the PIA for the “Trunk or Treat” event at the Community Center. Mayor Tait stated that Covid vaccine shots are being given in the Community Center by the N.J. Department of Health on Tuesday November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm noting that 105 shots were given last week.

Mayor Tait asked Mr. Gural and Mr. Rosenberg if there were items for closed session. Mr. Gural and Mr. Rosenberg indicated yes regarding litigation, contracts and negotiations.

**Resolution 2021-219, Resolution** Excluding the Public from Certain Meetings Pursuant To Section 8 of the Open Public Meeting Act C. 231 P. L. 1975 for matters relating to:  
Negotiations, Contracts, Personnel

Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve Resolution 2021-219. Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-219. 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**

Into closed at 6:55pm

Out of closed at 7:57 pm

Mayor Tait requested a motion to open to public. President Howard made a motion to open to the public. Mrs. Russell second the motion.

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

Mr. Rosenberg noted the following Resolution for Council consideration. Resolution to suspend the implementation of the Covid testing policy for a period of two weeks beginning today.



Mayor Tait requested a motion to approve **Resolution 2021-220**, A Resolution to suspend the implementation of the Covid testing policy for a period of two weeks beginning today.

Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolution 2021-220, A Resolution to suspend the implementation of the Covid testing policy for a period of two weeks beginning today. Mr. Allmond second the motion.

**At the call of the roll, the vote was:**

**INFAVOR: Mr. Allmond, Mrs. McCann, President Howard**

**AGAINST: Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Russell**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. 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 8:02 PM

Doretha R. Jackson, RMC

Municipal Clerk

Borough of Palmyra

Approved: November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021