

DRAFT MINUTES

These are the Draft Minutes of the Agenda Conference of the North Plainfield Borough Council held on Monday, 12 July 2021.

Every attempt has been made to make these as comprehensive and conclusive as possible. However, as it is a draft document, it is not to be construed as a formal depiction of the official conduct of business and is subject to revision up to and following the Governing Body's actual approval of same. If changes are necessary, revised minutes will be posted to the website.

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference (virtual) of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Monday, **July 12, 2021** at 7:39 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo
Suzette Given
Steven McIntyre
Everett Merrill, Council Vice President
Keiona R. Miller (absent-excused)
Wendy Schaefer
Frank "Skip" Stabile, Council President (absent-excused)

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
David Hollod, Business Administrator
Phil George, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
Richard K. Phoenix, RMC, Borough Clerk

Mr. Phoenix read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This virtual meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 28, 2020 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

The Pledge to the Flag was led by Council Vice President Merrill who chaired this evening due to President Stabile's absence.

All then joined in a moment of silence for the Men and Women serving in our Armed Forces.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mercedes Mejia, 94 Fairview Avenue, North Plainfield, questioned why Council Meetings remain on Zoom instead of in-person; further, why Borough Hall is still not open to the public, and what is being done to control noise over the weekends? She drew attention to trash buildup in front of Borough Hall. Mr. Merrill replied that open public meetings could possibly resume in August, while Mr. Hollod commented that the offices would re-open to the public after Labor Day. However, plans could be put on hold due to a Covid resurgence from the Delta Variant. Regarding local noise problems, he advised residents to report them to the police who would enforce the noise ordinance. Mayor La Ronde reported on stepped-up trash collection along Somerset Street while Mr. Hollod rejoined that wind-driven trash remains a difficult problem brought on by recent weather events. Ms. Mejia concluded by reporting on an accident on her street at 9:00 at night that apparently arose from speeding.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Amend Vacant Property Ordinance – W.W.S.** Ms. Schaefer commented that the current ordinance stipulating 2/3's vacancy was difficult to enforce. She suggested loosening up that requirement. Mr. George reported on a conference with the Councilwoman and Mr. Capobianco on the subject. The amended ordinance will deal with the number of units as opposed to square footage.
2. **Resolution to Accept Proposal from CTS Group to provide Design Services for Building Improvements to Help Prevent the Spread of Covid-19 Virus – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod requested that their proposal be entertained on tonight's regular meeting agenda. The Borough is approved for \$237,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding for the services to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Services would encompass the Vermeule Mansion, the Community Center and Memorial Library. No federal monies were available on this round for Borough Hall or the Public Works buildings. CTS will improve ventilation and install touchless soap and plumbing fixtures. They will also address outdoor patio design and seating at the Community Center. Associated projects that were capital items will still be funded as originally planned.
3. **Resolution to Approve Change Order/Final Payment/Release of Retainage for Cifelli & Son General Construction, Inc. for Construction of the Grandview Ave. Road Improvement Project – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod explained that the NJ State Dept. of Transportation is paying for the lion's share of the project expressed in the resolution.
4. **Resolution to Insert \$1,114,144.43 in funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 into the 2021 Budget – D.E.H.** Mr. Hollod described it as a direct federal payment to the Borough available for use in the 2022 budget – half of what we will receive from the federal government. It is coming from the first round of Covid-19 funding, and good news for the Borough. Ms. Schaefer commented that it would help to reimburse for the purchase of Covid-19 related equipment.
5. **Ordinance to Enact a Transfer and Use Tax on Cannabis Businesses – D.E.H.** Replying to Mr. Merrill, Mr. Hollod explained that talks regarding this would commence in November, as we are not through the current year as yet. The Vice President asked about state

aid this year, and Mr. Hollod replied that it would stay flat, and would not compensate for inflation. The ordinance would permit the Borough to collect the state-apportioned amount of tax. Mr. George commented that the ordinance had been drafted on the state allowance. The businesses would be exempt from state sales tax while there would be 2% sales tax charges to consumers.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Short Term Rental Ordinance – W.W.S.** Ms. Schaefer advised that the ordinance would be tabled since the latest language was not yet available.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS:

Mr. McIntyre reported on progress regarding the Green Team/Sustainable New Jersey. He will participate in a webinar tomorrow (Tuesday, July 13th). Also, there are mayoral appointments to be considered.

The Councilman advised of progress on the development of an ordinance to help encourage professional film and video production in the Borough. He said that Mr. Phoenix had been researching the matter, and that he had found an ordinance on the books in Montclair, NJ that appeared to be a good fit for North Plainfield. Mr. Phoenix had also suggested that an existing board or committee be tasked with promoting North Plainfield as a desirable location for film and TV production. The Clerk added that it could be a good fit for the Economic Development Committee, and the Councilman added that other stakeholders could also be helpful in the process. Ms. Schaefer volunteered to be part of the body to promote TV and film commerce in town.

Mr. Merrill reported that the Assistant Superintendent of Schools was leaving, and the School Board has spearheaded a search. A wide net is also being cast by the Board of Education for the renovation of Krausche Field. It's turning out to be a rewarding season for recreation in North Plainfield. Even on hot days, there are air-conditioned interior spaces where children can enjoy activities in comfort.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. McIntyre, seconded by Ms. Schaefer and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President