

This Regular Meeting of the Borough of Raritan Governing Body was called to order by Mayor Zachary Bray utilizing the Zoom virtual platform, as a result of the COVID-19 health pandemic, on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at 6p.m.

The Mayor announced this Regular Meeting was called pursuant to applicable portions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was communicated to *The Courier news*, *The Star Ledger*, and *The Breeze* on April 22, 2021, posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building and on the Borough website.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President Carra, Councilman Giraldi, Councilwoman Harris, Councilwoman Melitsky, Councilman Orozco, Councilman Patente
Also Present: Mayor Bray, Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin, Borough Attorney Robertson, Borough Engineer Schreck

Absent: None

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Councilman Orozco

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2021-04-084

Entering Executive Session

1. Personnel
Construction, Recreation, Public Works, Administration
2. Contract Negotiations
Orlando Heights Project Financial Agreement
3. Attorney Client
Joint License Agreement

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Reconvene in Regular Session.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain:

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Council exited Executive Session and resumed Regular Session at 6:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joe Kempe (114 Sherman Avenue)- Mr. Kempe said he would like to know if the Borough has plans to review the Borough Code regarding bicycle speed limits and registration of bicycles.

PRESENTATION

1. LaGrange Street LLC

James Stahl gave the presentation on behalf of LaGrange Street LLC.

Mr. Stahl said LaGrange Street LLC is requesting a vacation of a portion of Reimer Street. He said the project would include 3 buildings with 5 units in each building for a total of 15 units. In addition to the units, Mr. Stahl said there would be a grass and shrub area which would be utilized as an added amenity for the residents of the units.

Borough Engineer Schrek said the Planning Board is in the process of reviewing the proposed redevelopment plan and that the focus of the presentation is strictly in regards to the vacation of Reimer Street.

Councilman Orozco asked Borough Engineer Schrek for clarification regarding the vacation, particularly regarding whether the neighboring property owner would incur any costs associated with the project.

Borough Attorney Robertson said the property owner would not incur any additional costs directly connected to the vacation however, he said if the vacation is granted, the right of way would be divided evenly down the middle with one portion being owned by LaGrange Street LLC and the other portion being owned by the neighboring property. Borough Attorney Robertson said he could not speculate as to whether the addition of property would affect property tax assessments.

Mayor Bray asked if any other member of Council had any questions or comments.

Councilman Patente commented on the number of units being proposed by LaGrange Street LLC and asked if it would be the job of the Planning Board to review that information.

Borough Engineer Schrek said the Planning Board will be reviewing the proposed plans.

Mr. Stahl asked for an indication regarding whether Mayor and Council is positively thinking about the vacation.

Mayor Bray asked for the opinion of each member of Council.

Council President Carra recused himself from the discussion.

Councilwoman Harris said she supports the vacation.

Councilwoman Melitsky said she supports the vacation as well.

Councilman Orozco said he supports the vacation.

Councilman Patente said keeping in mind Borough Engineer Schreck's comments, he supports the vacation as well.

MINUTES

1. March 23, 2021

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to Approve the Minutes for March 23, 2021 Regular Session.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

2. April 13, 2021

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Approve the Minutes for April 13, 2021 Regular Session.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

OLD BUISNESS

1. Recreational Cannabis (NC)

Council President Carra said he would like to continue the conversation about Recreational Cannabis that began at the previous meeting.

Councilman Orozco said he would like to hold this conversation until the new Council person is elected.

A discussion ensued between Mayor and Council after which it was agreed upon that an Ordinance allowing for the sale of marijuana for medicinal use only is the best place to start given the time restraint. Borough Attorney Robertson was asked to have a document prepared for the next meeting.

2. Little Food Pantry (MP)

Councilman Patente said after reviewing the project, the Board of Health has approved the Little Food Pantry. The Councilman said he would like to seek final approval from Council so they can begin to get the pantry up and running. He said the materials to build the pantry itself have been donated however DPW would be needed to secure it into the ground.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Authorize the Installment of the Little Food Pantry.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

NEW BUISNESS

1. Block Party (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin said the Borough received an application for a block party from the residents of Reimer Street. He said Chief Nolte reviewed the application and had no objections. Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin said the block party will be held on August 28 with a rain date of September 12.

Councilman Orozco said all COVID-19 guidelines will be followed.

2. Basilone 5k (ZB)

Mayor Bray said the Basilone Memorial Foundation is seeking authorization from Council to hold their annual 5k race in September. The Mayor said he referred to the New Jersey State website to verify that races are permitted and found they are, provided the participants and spectators are following the COVID-19 guidelines. Mayor Bray asked for the opinion of Council. Members of Council all agreed to authorize the race.

3. Temple Signage Removal Request (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk said a request from was received from the Temple on Main Street to remove the public parking sign that is placed on the street outside of the building. He said there will be no action taken tonight and that Borough Engineer Schrek and Borough Attorney Robertson are looking into the matter.

4. Kindness Rock Garden (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin said he received a request from Loring Nagle-Andresen to start a kindness rock garden that would be placed near the Raritan Canal Path and Greenway Bridge. He said he is seeking permission from Council on behalf of the group to move forward with the project. Borough Administrator/Clerk said he if there were no objection, there would need to be a motion to authorize this project.

On a motion by Councilman Orozco, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Authorize the Kindness Rock Garden Project.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Melitsky, Orozco, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

ENGINEER'S REPORT

NJTPA/NJDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

NV5 is continuing to work on the Preliminary Design Drawings for the Thompson/Anderson pedestrian routes from the NJ Transit Station to the Riverfront. Project coordination between, NV5, VCEA and NJDOT will continue throughout this process. **Update:** Project is advancing through environmental review. Based on NJDOT schedule, this project will not be in construction in 2021.

Orlando Drive/Somerset County Transfer

The county has requested extensive files/information/data pertaining to all recent work and improvements to Orlando Drive. All requested documentation has been submitted. Follow up documents have been requested and have been submitted. Additionally, we are preparing a preliminary design for a new DPW building to be located at the county yard in Hillsborough. **Update:** Awaiting approval of new location and direction from Mayor and Council.

2019 CDBG – Canal Street Sidewalk Improvements

The grant is related to the installation of ADA ramps and sidewalk at the intersections of Loomis and Doughty Streets. The Bid Opening was held November 19th. Of 10 bids received, Your Way Construction of Irvington, is the lowest responsible bidder with a total base bid of \$46,743.06. The project is scheduled to begin construction.

2020 CDBG

The subgrant agreement has been completed and returned to Somerset County for execution. The \$77,442 grant will be utilized for sanitary sewer investigation and repairs. Proceeding with design/specs, based on repairs know on Bell Avenue.

2021 CDBG Applications

We are recommending that the Borough submit an application for sanitary sewer and storm sewer repairs and maintenance within the CDBG designated areas. **Update**; Grant has been awarded.

2021 NJDOT – Meehan and Helene

The Borough has been awarded both Priority 1 and Priority 2 grants for 2021 totaling \$750,000. We will be proceeding with survey and design subject to revisions to the capital ordinance adding \$100,000 for the anticipated Borough's share. We are proceeding with survey and base mapping.

Bell Avenue

We are soliciting quotes for the installation of access manholes on the box culvert crossing Bell Avenue. **Update**: Project completed.

LaGrange Street Redevelopment

The property/project owner has formally requested the vacation of Reimer Street and will be presenting the request to the Mayor and Council. **Update**: the developer will be presenting an amended plan at 04-27-2021 meeting.

Block 81

VCEA has reviewed work required to winterize both Second Avenue and Third Street which includes asphalt repairs along the existing curb. Contractor is working with the Project Engineer to finalize construction drawings related to the pedestrian walkway from Second Avenue to NJ Transit. The owner has requested a bond reduction. We will make a recommendation for a percentage reduction once inspections are completed. **Update**: inspections are continuing. **The Borough must finalize an amended lease agreement, with NJ Transit, to enable the construction of the pedestrian connection between the project and the NJ Transit parking lot. Construction of the connection is a condition of final approval.**

LabCorp

Sitework is progressing.

J&J

Sitework is progressing.

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution Nos. 2021-04-085 – 2021-04-089)

Resolution No. 2021-04-085

Opposing NJ State Assembly & Senate
Forest Management Bills

Resolution No. 2021-04-086	Authorizing Block Party & Associated Road Closures
Resolution No. 2021-04-087	Appointing Christopher Wren to Sergeant
Resolution No. 2021-04-088	Authorizing Submission of the 2021-2022 Refunding Tax Overpayment – B100 L31
Resolution No. 2021-04-089	Appointing Risk Management Consultant
Resolution No. 2021-04-090	Approving Tower/Wrecker Licenses

Mayor Bray said he would like to provide some background about Resolution No. 2021-04-085 for members of the public who are not+ familiar.

Council President Carra said this resolution has been passed by many towns in New Jersey and is in response to several bills that have been moved out of legislative committees. He said the concern is that these bills will take powers away from the Municipalities when it comes to how they can use their land. The Council President said this resolution is an effort to combat state overreach.

Councilman Orozco said he agrees with Council President Carra and said the effort by the state to limit the powers of the Municipalities is cause for concern.

Mayor Bray asked if anyone would like to pull any Resolution on the Consent Agenda to discuss separately.

Councilman Orozco asked that Resolution No. 2021-04-085 be pulled from the Consent Agenda to be voted on separately.

On a motion by Councilman Orozco, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Approve Resolution 2021-04-085.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Melitsky, Orozco, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Mayor Bray asked if anyone would like to pull any other Resolution on the Consent Agenda to discuss separately.

Hearing none, Mayor Bray asked for a motion to approve Resolutions 2021-04-086 through 2021-04-090

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilman Giraldi, Council moved to Approve Resolutions 2021-04-086 Through 2021-04-090

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Melitsky, Orozco, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain:

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

BILL LIST

Resolution No. 2021-04-091

Approving Bill List

Mayor Bray asked if any members of the Council had any questions. Neither seeing nor hearing any member of Council, Mayor Bray asked for a motion to approve the bill.

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman President Carra, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-04-091.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Mayor Bray said there are two resolutions that are being added. He explained these Resolutions stemmed out of Executive Session.

1. Resolution No. 2021-04-092 AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH OF RARITAN PLANNING BOARD TO UNDERTAKE A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 4.13 ACRES OF LAND KNOWN AS BLOCK 116, LOTS 13 AND 14, AND BLOCK 108, LOTS 1, 2, and 4 THROUGH 9, AS SHOWN ON THE BOROUGH OF RARITAN TAX MAP

2. Resolution No. 2021-04-093 FUNDING AGREEMENT ORLANDO HEIGHTS REALTY

On a motion by Councilman Orozco, seconded by Council President Carra, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-04-092

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky
Nay: Patente
Abstain: x
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 5-1

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Council President Carra, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-04-093

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky
Nay: Patente
Abstain: x
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 5-1

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Lavery, Selvaggi & Abromitis - \$7,908.96 – Legal Services

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman Orozco, Council moved to approve Purchase Order No. 1

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Abstain: x
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

2. National Water Main Cleaning - \$9,487.50 – Televising Storm Sewer System

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to approve Purchase Order No. 2

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Abstain: x
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

Council President Carra – Council President Carra said the Planning Board will meet on April 28 at 6:30 on Zoom. He said the Board of Health discussed the Little Food Pantry as well as the Raritan Food Pantry at their last meeting. The Council President said the Raritan Food Pantry has been doing well and has been receiving several donations. He said the Somerset County Health Department has reported the number of COVID-19 vaccines has increased from around 700 to between 900-1000.

Councilman Giraldi – Councilman Giraldi said Public Works have been working on a sewer project on Raritan Avenue. He said DPW has also painted the pool house as well as the bathrooms at Frelinghuysen Park. Councilman Giraldi said there was a Basilone Parade Committee meeting last week and it was determined that the committee would hold off on deciding whether they would have a traditional parade or a motorcade and said the determination would be made depending on state guidelines.

Councilwoman Harris – Councilwoman Harris said the Environmental Commission had a seedling campaign in which they gave away nearly 1000 seedlings. She said they still have around 75-100 left and urged members of the public to refer to their Facebook page for upcoming events. Councilwoman Harris said the Environmental Commissions next meeting will be held on May 20 at 7pm.

Councilwoman Melitsky – Councilwoman Melitsky said she wanted to thank Councilwoman Harris for her time served on the Council. She said she would also like to congratulate Christopher Wren on his promotion to Sergeant. The Councilwoman said she was also a part of the interviewing process for the hiring of a new Police Officer and is confident the right decision was made. For the Building Department, Councilwoman Melitsky said there were 17 certificates issued, \$411,629.00 were collected in construction costs, \$275.00 were collected in certificate fees and 132 inspections were conducted.

Mayor Bray thanked Councilwoman Melitsky and everyone else that assisted in the vaccine clinic.

Councilman Orozco – Councilman Orozco said for the Board of Education, there is a tutoring and extracurricular program available through the library called Brain Fuse. The Councilman said he was asked if the Borough Council meetings could be moved to off days from the BOE so residents could attend both meetings and not have to choose between one of the other. Councilman Orozco said he explained that the meeting dates are set on the first of the year but said it might be something to think about for next year. The Councilman also said he would like to extend a personal thank you to Councilwoman Harris for all her hard work.

Councilman Patente – Councilman Patente said he would also like to wish Councilwoman Harris the best of luck. He said the Economic Development Committee has a number of ribbon cutting ceremonies coming up in May and they have also been discussing the Little Food Pantry. He said Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin had new keys made for the kiosk downtown so that the board can be updated, and he also said the EDC is working on their “Discover Raritan” event. For the Historical Committee, the Councilman said they are continuing their work on the bench

project and they have appointed a new member. Councilman Patente said the committee will also be holding an Know-Porter event on July 10 and on September 4, the committee will be holding a Civil War Uniform discussion at the library. He also said it was discovered that the Borough had a trolley car in the 1920's and there may be a presentation about it at a future meeting.

Mayor Bray – Mayor Bray said he would like to thank Councilwoman Harris for her hard work and dedication to the Borough over the past 4 months.

Councilwoman Harris said she would like to thank everyone for their support. She said she had a wonderful experience working side by side with Councilwoman Melitsky, she thanked Councilman Orozco for being a wonderful mentor and friend, and thanked Borough Administrator/Clerk for being accommodating and helpful. Councilwoman Harris said she loves Raritan and is sad to go.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(In accordance with Section 29-1 of the Code of the Borough of Raritan, there shall be a five-minute limit per speaker)

Mayor Bray opened Public Comment for any member of the Public wishing to be heard. Councilman Orozco said the Board of Education Representative Lucy Sandler is asking that the Borough Council meetings be moved to a different date and time so that they do not conflict with the Board of Ed meetings. Ms. Sandler requested it be noted that she is making this request as a private citizen.

Mayor Bray asked if any other member of the Public would like to be heard.

Neither seeing nor hearing any member of the Public, Mayor Bray closed Public Comment Session.

Mayor Bray announced the Governing Body would enter back into executive session and formal action may be taken upon re-entering public session.

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilwoman Harris, Council moved to Re-enter Executive Session.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Council, Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Reconvene in Regular Session.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Harris, Orozco Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x
Abstain:
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

Stemming out of executive session a vote was taken to appoint a part-time Recreation Director.

On a motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Council, Council President Carra, Council moved to Appoint Andrew Sibia as Part Time Recreation Director.

Recorded Vote:

Yea: Carra, Giraldi, Orozco Melitsky,
Nay: Harris, Patente
Abstain: x
Absent: x
Motion Carried: 4-2

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councilman Patente seconded by Council President Carra, Council moved to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor
Motion Passed: 6-0
Regular Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm

Ashley Kurbanoglu,
Deputy Clerk

Approved: _____