

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2024
6:30 P.M. – EXECUTIVE SESSION
7:00 P.M – REGULAR SESSION

This Regular Meeting of the Governing Body of the Borough of Raritan was called to order by Mayor Carra in the Meeting Room of the Raritan Municipal Building, 22 First Street, Raritan, NJ 08869 at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

Mayor Carra announced the Regular Meeting was called pursuant to applicable portions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate Notice of this Regular Meeting was posted in Borough Hall, on the Borough website and communicated to *The Courier News*, *The Star Ledger* and *The Breeze* on January 3, 2024.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President Tozzi, Councilman Armahizer, Councilman Fritzingler, Councilwoman Melitsky (via telephone), Councilman Patente
Also Present: Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin, Borough Attorney William Robertson and Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan
Absent: Councilman Agrawal

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Councilwoman Melitsky

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2024-03-054

Entering Executive Session

1. Personnel
Police, Administration
2. Attorney Client
Brielle Capital, West End Appraisal

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-03-054.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT

Council moved to Reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

Council exited Executive Session, and resumed Regular Session at 7:00 p.m.

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 Carra opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty Street: Stated that she noticed a few things around town; QuickChek's (76 W. Somerset) parking lot is full of potholes and their public garbage was blowing all over the place, the Raritan Library's sidewalk has a few flitted and broken bricks and she stated that the ramp at Borough Hall should have a railing all the way along it to the parking lot, adding a light on either side would also be appreciated.

Joann Liptak, 2 West Somerset Street: Voiced how upset she was over reading comments on Facebook about the John Basilone statue having the wrong metal of honor, adding that she remembers when it was unveiled in 1947. A conversation ensued between Former Mayor Liptak and Councilman Armahizer regarding their opinions about the metal of honor on the Basilone Statue and how it should be rectified. Council President Tozzi confirmed that the Basilone family has been notified and a solution is being sought after.

Jen Loughran, Bridgewater: Congratulated Mayor Carra and went on to state that she runs a skateboard program in Bradley Gardens, adding that Raritan was the first town to let her run a skate event. Ms. Loughran shared a few words about her program, adding that it breaks her heart that Raritan kids are charged more to take her program, stating that she encouraged Council to consider recreational activities in future planning. Council President Tozzi asked if Ms. Loughran is looking for a permanent structure or something temporary, Ms. Loughran stated that she would love to see a permanent multiuse space.

Neither seeing nor hearing any additional member of the public, the Mayor closed Public Comment.

MINUTES

None

OLD BUSINESS

1. Main Street Tree Trimming (DT)
Council President Tozzi updated everyone that the trees along both sides of Somerset Street have been trimmed by DPW, saving taxpayers roughly \$12,000.
2. Fifth and Farrand Streets (EC)
Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin stated that there has been talk about altering the traffic pattern from Fifth Street and Farrand Street onto First Avenue, adding that Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan has been working on proposals. Borough Engineer Brosnan shared an update from County and stated that he has a preliminary draft and once finalized will formally submit it to County.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Agenda Structure (NC)

Mayor Carra stated that after speaking with a few residents and reviewing Robert's Rules of Order, he will be changing around the agenda structure to better follow Robert's Rules of Order. He stated these changes will be put into place by the next meeting, March 19, 2024, adding that he really wants to utilize the standing committees.

Councilman Patente stated that the agenda will also be made more comprehensive for Council and public alike.

2. Christmas Tree Dedication (AA)

Councilman Armahizer stated that he would like the proposed Christmas Tree lighting on Nevius Street Bridge to be dedicated to a Raritan residents who saved Joseph S. Frelinghuysen Jr. during WWII in Italy, as a thank you and to show appreciation for their selfless bravery. The Councilman added that Joseph S. Frelinghuysen Jr. later helped the couple migrate to Raritan and they have been Raritan residents for over 50 years.

3. DPW Relocation (AA)

Councilman Armahizer asked for a motion to begin investigating alternate locations for the Department of Public Works, adding that the current location is in a flood zone and a location out of Raritan would not be sufficient long term. A brief conversation took place between Mayor and Council which resulted in the motion not being seconded.

4. Removal of League of Municipalities Conference (AA)

Councilman Armahizer stated that he would like to reduce the attendance for future League of Municipalities Conferences to include only four to six essential personnel, saving taxpayers roughly \$10,000 annually. Councilman Patente agreed with limiting but not eliminating entirely. Mayor Carra shared the benefits he gained by attending last year as an elected official and stated that employees who need certification credits should continue to attend. Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin will gather the names of attendees of 2023 and report back next meeting.

5. Additional Daily Parking (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin reported that since COVID there has been an increase in a daily commuters and a decrease of monthly pass holders, he stated that an additional 30 spots will be converted to daily spots. He also reached out to NJ Transit, who authorized a \$2 increase for daily parking fees, taking it from \$3 to \$5 if Council would like to do so, adding that the ordinance would need to be updated.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler. Council moved to Increase the Daily Train Parking Fees to \$5.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

- ADDITIONAL ITEM
- Bid Opening

Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan updated everyone that the pre-bid walk-through was completed last week at 9 West Somerset, the first bid agenda was issued and the bid opening is set for March 20, 2024.

ORDINANCES – INTRODUCTION

None

ORDINANCE – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

Ordinance No. 2024-04

An Ordinance of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey Exceeding the CY2024 Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and Establishing a Cap Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)

Mayor Carra explained the local government cap law is set at 2.5 percent above the previous year’s appropriations, passing this Ordinance would allow Raritan to increase the cap up to 3.5 percent and if the additional 1 percent is not spent, it will be saved and can be used to help offset appropriations in the next two budget cycles.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Open Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2024-04.

Recorded Vote

All in Favor

Motion Carried: 5-0

The Mayor opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak on Ordinance No. 2024-04.

Neither seeing nor hearing any member of the Public, Mayor Carra closed the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2024-04.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to Adopt Ordinance No. 2024-04.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2024-03-055 through 2024-03-058)

Resolution No. 2024-03-055

Resolution No. 2024-03-056

Resolution No. 2024-03-057

Resolution No. 2024-03-058

Authorizing Hiring of Part-Time, Seasonal DPW Laborer
Authorizing the Drafting of Designating Resolutions and Ordinance Introductions – Tillman Street and Raritan Mall
Approving Certain 2024 Tower/Wrecker Licenses
Authorizing the Disposal of Surplus Police Equipment

Councilman Patente informed the public that anyone who would like more information on redevelopment resolutions can attend the Zoning Board meetings so their input can be heard.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-03-055 through Resolutions No. 2024-03-058 – Consent Agenda.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

BILL LIST

Resolution No. 2024-03-059

Approving Bill List

On a motion by Councilman Armahizer, seconded by Councilman Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-03-059 – Approving Bill List.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: Patente

Motion Carried: 4-0

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Santander Bank – \$29,360.65 – Lease Payment for Police vehicle
2. Hidden Pond HOA – \$15,872.60 – Fire Hydrant & Street Light Charges 2020-2023
3. Borough of Somerville – \$20,000.00 – Q1 CFO Shared Services

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to approve the certification of funds together.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve the Certification of Funds – Lease Payment for Police Vehicle, Fire Hydrant & Street Light Charges & Q1 CFO Shared Services.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Patente – Councilman Patente commented on the great job that DPW did on trimming the trees along Somerset Street.

Councilman Patente read the Municipal Court report for February, which totaled in 477 cases, with 373 cases disposed, and \$20,871.00 in fees collected, with \$10,641.00 going to the Borough.

Councilman Fritzing – Councilman Fritzing stated that DPW did a fantastic job trimming the trees, adding that they also took down large trees on Thompson Avenue and First Avenue. Councilman Fritzing reminded everyone that bulk pickup will start on March 14, 2024, for household bulk items only and the Recycle Coach app is up and running through County. Anyone who would like to report a pothole can reach DPW at 908-725-1715 the Councilman said.

Councilman Fritzing stated that Historic and Cultural Committee met on February 21, 2024, their temporary budget is still good, they collected \$187 from ornament and booklet sales, the Washington School sign was erected.

Mayor Carra – Stated that Council needs to make a motion to accept the Chief of Police’s resignation and a motion to hire a police officer.

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to accept the Chief of Police’s resignation.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Accept Chief of Police Raymond Nolte’s Resignation.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Fritzing, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: Armahizer

Motion Carried: 4-0

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to advertise for a new police officer hire.

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve Advertising for a New Police Officer Hire.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, Fritzing, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: Agrawal

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

Council President Tozzi – Council President Tozzi read the Property Maintenance report, which totaled in 20 violations and two fines totaling in \$300.

The Councilman reported that Recreation will be hosting an Easter egg hunt for ages one through 12 on Saturday, March 23, 2024. Recreation encourages everyone to check their Facebook and Instagram to find out about upcoming soccer and dodge ball Council President Tozzi stated.

Council President Tozzi shared that he met with EDC, providing structure and guidance, adding that he is doing everything he can to have the EDC help better Raritan. Downtown Raritan will keep up

with trimming the trees, signage and pressure washing sidewalks and EDC, Downtown Raritan and Recreation will be working together on events the Council President stated.

Council President Tozzi stated that Downtown Raritan will be continuing to trim trees and next he will be looking into power washing the pavers every three to four months, adding that he wants to have all the building signage look uniform throughout Raritan.

Mayor Carra – Mayor Carra stated that EDC needs a chair to be appointed by the Mayor and asked the present members of EDC if they would like to be appointed. The members asked to wait until public comment.

Councilwoman Melitsky – Councilwoman Melitsky reported that Fire Chief Brian Kredatus, Council President Tozzi and herself met to discuss the possible construction of a new Fire Department building, adding that many good ideas were shared and Fire Chief Kredatus will be doing more research before they meet again.

The Police Department reported that a distracted driver grant will be reimbursed by Somerset County and two officers read to the students at JFK for Read Across America week the Councilwoman stated.

Councilman Agrawal – Absent

Councilman Armahizer – Councilman Armahizer announced that the Environmental Commission is having their Spring Community Cleanup event on April 27, 2024, rain date May 4, 2024. Environmental Commission has requested a new Planning Board liaison be assigned to them the Councilman reported, adding that their next meeting is March 21, 2024 at the municipal building.

Mayor Carra – Mayor Carra stated that Environmental Commission does not have a liaison, adding that a member of the Planning Board needs to be a member of the Planning Board, which is Michael DeCicco. Mayor Carra stated that he would reach out to Mr. DeCicco.

Mayor Carra stated that he attended an unveiling of a portrait of Joseph Wang at the Somerville Elks, painted by the same artist who painted the John Basilone portrait.

Mayor Carra stated that he also attended and read books at JFK for Read Across America, adding that the third graders are very excited for their field trip to the Municipal Building in late May.

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 Carra opened the second Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak.

Dave Marder, 830 Old York Road: Mr. Marder thanked Council President Tozzi and Councilman Fritzingler for attending the last EDC meeting and thanked Mayor Carra for his detailed email. Mr. Marder commented on how the current EDC Ordinance requires certain tasks that the volunteer members may not be qualified to do, and they are still without a budget. Mr. Marder voiced his opinion that Mayor and Council need to let EDC know what is wanted out of the committee before the current members can decide if they want to remain a part of EDC or not.

Councilman Patente asked Mr. Marder if there were items in that Ordinance that EDC liked doing and was there anything EDC liked doing that wasn't written in the Ordinance.

Fabiana LoPiccolo-Stewart, 707 Rhine Boulevard: Ms. LoPiccolo-Stewart stated that the EDC's 2024 business plan is very event oriented, but that is not the EDC's intended purpose when looking at the Ordinance.

A brief conversation ensued amongst Mayor, Council, Mr. Marder and Ms. LoPiccolo-Stewart which resulted in the EDC's purpose being evaluated and rebuilt. Council President Tozzi confirmed that the EDC will meet with him again on March 12, 2024, at 7 p.m.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty Street: Mrs. DeBellis asked Mayor Carra if he attends the EDC meetings, Mayor Carra stated he will be at future EDC meetings. Mrs. DeBellis voiced her concern that the EDC meetings lack structure and leadership, adding that the current Ordinance needs to be updated.

Dave Marder, 830 Old York Road: Mr. Marder stated that he would like Mayor Carra to attend the next EDC meeting, a brief discussion took place which resulted in the next EDC meeting being moved to Monday, March 18, 2024.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty Street: Mrs. DeBellis asked if Councilman Armahizer could be the EDC Chair, Mayor Carra stated as a Council member, Councilman Armahizer could not be the Chair according to the current ordinance.

Dave Marder, 830 Old York Road: Mr. Marder stated that a Chair should be picked at the next EDC meeting.

Mayor Carra instructed Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin to advertise the next EDC meeting to be on Monday, March 18, 2024, at 7 p.m.

Neither seeing nor hearing any members of the public, the Mayor closed Public Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Carra entertained for a motion to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion Passed: 5-0

Alyssa Cornella
Deputy Clerk/Assistant to the Borough Administrator

Approved: _____
Eric M. Colvin
Borough Clerk/Administrator

Date: _____