

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 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, April 2, 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 Agrawal, Councilman Armahizer, Councilman Fritzingler, Councilwoman Melitsky, Councilman Patente

Also Present: Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin, Borough Attorney William Robertson, Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan and Borough CFO Paige Elster

Absent:

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Council President Tozzi

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2024-04-069

Entering Executive Session

1. Personnel
Police, Administration, Court
2. Attorney Client
9 West Somerset, Stone Bridge, 145 West End Avenue, 22 First Street, Tillman Street
3. Shared Services
Municipal Court

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-04-069.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

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 7:06 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.

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

PRESENTATION

John McDonough and other representatives of Raritan Mall LLC gave a presentation on their proposed redevelopment plan for the Raritan Mall, which included a mixed-use redevelopment project, consisting of a diversified mix of housing types. Various questions were asked by Council which lead to a brief discussion of topics like site remediation for residential standards, lighting, LSRP, flooding plans, DEP standards/guidelines and expected amenities.

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 an additional Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak to the Raritan Mall LLC developers.

Kevin Cahill, 38 Gaston Avenue: Mr. Cahill stated his opinion that Raritan has been built up over the last ten years and he believes Raritan does not need to grow too much, too fast. He stated that he does not have an objection to the proposed plan but would like to see less units and expressed his concerns about potential increased education fees and increased potential traffic.

Roger Copt, 1120 Route 202 South: Mr. Copt stated that he has lived in Raritan for 78 years and voiced his concern about the previous landfill containing not only household waste but also hazardous materials from the old Mill and methane gas, adding his reservations about the land being able to support a five-story building. He also stated that Raritan does not need any more apartment building in his opinion.

Patrick Dinsmore, 523 Victoria Street: Mr. Dinsmore asked if the developer was pursuing a pilot, to which Mayor Carra answered yes.

Tom Brown, 18 Elmer Street: Mr. Brown stated his opinion that a five-story building cannot be built on top of an old landfill, adding that the pilings would have to go dozens of feet underground. Mr. Brown stated that the Larkin developer was required to provide parking outside of the flood zone and that Raritan Mall LLC will also have to abide by this requirement put in place by the Planning Board. Mr. Brown stated his belief that Raritan needs a grocery store and does not need more apartments or retail space.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty Street: Ms. DeBellis asked if there would be an office public hearing for the Raritan Mall LLC redevelopment plan, Mayor Carra stated that the public hearing will be at the next council meeting, April 16, 2024, and if adopted, there will be an additional hearing and an application to the Planning Board.

Unnamed Speaker: The Unnamed Speaker asked Council what the occupancy data is for all the apartments in Raritan, Mayor replied by saying there are waitlists for the current apartments. The Unnamed Speaker posed the question of how many of those apartments house school-age children.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Boulevard: Mr. Foohey shared his disappointment that the Raritan Mall location did not get an anchor store to attract more businesses, adding that Raritan Mall LLC will face all these posed questions and more when they present to the Planning Board, reiterating that Raritan does not need more apartments.

Erica Landesberg, 21 Meehan Avenue: Mrs. Landesberg asked how far along is the Borough in the whole redevelopment process. Mayor Carra explained the process and stated that the ordinance introduction is on tonight's agenda, public hearing and adoption will be on April 16, 2024, and if the plan is adopted, they will submit an application to the Planning Board. Mrs. Landesberg confirmed if Council is still able to make adjustments to the zoned space, Mayor Carra stated Council would have to reintroduce the plan if there were any subsequent changes and the public hearing would be pushed back.

Unnamed Speaker #2: The Unnamed Speaker #2 presented the issue of elevating the land in question because the runoff will go back into the river and downstream communities, like Manville, will suffer. Borough Attorney William Robertson stated that when a redevelopment plan gets adopted, the Borough's engineers would look into the storm water management plans.

Councilman Armahizer stated that he would like to see the storm water management plan analyzed before anything gets approved there and inquired about how many affordable housing units would be included, to which Raritan Mall LLC responded with 15 percent (42 units).

Borough Attorney William Robertson explained that Ordinance No. 2024-07 on tonight's agenda is to formally adopt the redevelopment plan, which would incorporate uses, dimensions and standards which would allow for the presented type of development but adopting the Ordinance does not approve this presented plan, it simply puts the zoning in place.

Representatives of Raritan Mall LLC stated a final recap of their overall plan and how it complies with all the requirements, also adding that they will be covering the full cost of the remediation.

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

MINUTES

1. March 5, 2024
2. March 19, 2024

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to Approve the March 5, 2024 Minutes.

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve the March 5, 2024 Minutes.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to Approve the March 19, 2024 Minutes.

Mayor Carra stated he had two minor corrections, the start time and price for the evaluation bids.

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve the March 19, 2024 Minutes with the needed changes.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: Patente

Motion Carried: 5-0

COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Armahizer – Councilman Armahizer announced that the Environmental Commission will be holding their second annual Clean Community event on Saturday, April 27, 2024. Councilman Armahizer confirmed with Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan that the tree-removal Ordinance is in the works and will tentatively be on the next Council Meeting agenda.

Councilman Agrawal – Councilman Agrawal stated that the Finance Committee will have their second and final public hearing on the 2024 budget on April 16, 2024.

Councilman Agrawal announced that for the School Board, Wednesday, April 17, 2024, is the last day of the Festival of the Arts, which is held at the Bridgewater-Raritan High School. Councilman Agrawal congratulated and thanked teacher of 23 years, Jacquelyn Ciurleo, who will now be serving as Hillside School's Assistant Principal. Councilman Agrawal stated that the public hearing on the 2024-2025 School Budget will take place at the School Board meeting on April 30, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Councilman Agrawal announced that on April 8, 2024, there will be a Solar Eclipse and viewing glasses will be given away at the library with proof of your Raritan library card.

Mayor Carra – Mayor Carra stated that the Library Board of Trustees asked if they could add an insert to the upcoming tax bill to inform everyone about the library alliance and their partnership with the County Library.

Councilwoman Melitsky – Councilwoman Melitsky reported that for the month of March, the Raritan Borough Fire Department responded to 17 calls, year-to-date, they have responded to 53 calls, adding that anyone interested in becoming a volunteer can stop by the Firehouse any Thursday evening between 6:15 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Councilwoman Melitsky reported that the Police Department will be hosting Operation Takeback New Jersey on Saturday, April 27, 2024, from 10 a.m. through 2 p.m., residents can drop off any unused,

unwanted or expired medications to the Police Department, 20 First Street. Syringes and sharp objects are not accepted and it is recommended to remove all labels and tighten all caps the Councilwoman started.

Council President Tozzi – Council President Tozzi read the Property Maintenance report for March 18 through March 28, 2024, which consisted of 23 inspections, 15 violations and two fines totaling in \$1,625.

Council President Tozzi reported that Recreation is offering a free soccer program for Kindergarten through Second grade, starting April 9, 2024 and over 85 kids have already signed up. Recreation is looking into adding additional kids' soccer fields and an adult soccer field the Council President reported. Council President Tozzi announced that Recreation's Easter Egg Hunt had a big turnout and went really well, DPW is finishing up the work on the pools, Habitat for Humanity painted the pools and a few field houses, and he announced that in May, Recreation will be hosting a cornhole tournament and dodgeball will be offered soon.

Councilman Fritzinger – Councilman Fritzinger read the Public Works report, which consisted of routine maintenance, manhole repairs, sidewalk repairs, Borough Hall Fire alarms were tested and a catch basin inventory was taken, which showed 14 catch basins needing minor repairs and five needing major repairs, they will be repaired by DPW. Councilman Fritzinger stated that the next household bulk pickup date is Thursday, April 11, 2024.

Councilman Fritzinger read the Building Department report for March 14, 2024 through April 2, 2024, which consisted of 25 permits, totaling in \$6,141.

Councilman Fritzinger shared that the Historic and Cultural Committee has an open balance of \$566.04 in the treasury, trust fund has \$1,199. The Councilman encouraged everyone to check out their Facebook page, adding that HCC is looking into creating a Field of Heroes for 2026 – more information to come. HCC had a speaker at their last meeting regarding restoration work for the John Basilone, which they referred that matter over to the Basilone Committee for their review. Councilman Fritzinger stated that HCC member Tim Rack will be doing a presentation at the Somerville Historic Firehouse on April 8, 2024, at 7 p.m.

Councilman Patente – Councilman Patente stated that the Board of Health did not meet, nothing to report.

Councilman Patente stated that he will have the Court report at the next Council meeting, adding a friendly reminder to all that tickets for snow fines need to be paid.

Councilman Patente reported that the Office of Vital Statistics issued four marriage licenses and multiple death certificates.

Councilman Fritzinger – Councilman Fritzinger added kudos to DPW for their work on keeping the athletic fields in shape.

Councilwoman Melitsky – Councilwoman Melitsky added a shout-out to Dawn Wilde for the photographs she recently took of Council and former Mayor Bray, which are displayed in the Courtroom.

Mayor Carra – Mayor Carra stated that he will be attending the annual New Jersey Conference of Mayors next month and will report back any important information at the subsequent Council meeting, adding that he is hoping to gain more knowledge on the new affordable housing law.

OLD BUSINESS

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTION

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to approve a hybrid policy that was discussed in executive session.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve the Hybrid Policy Change.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

NEW BUSINESS

1. Block Party Application – Reimer Street (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin stated that this is an annual request from the residents on Reimer Street, they are requesting Council permission to close Reimer Street on Saturday, August 17, 2024

On a motion by Councilman Armahizer, seconded by Councilman Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve Reimer Street Block Party Application.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

2. 34th Annual Stream Cleanup – Raritan Headwaters Association (EC)

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin stated that Raritan Headwaters Association will host their 34th Annual Stream Cleanup on Saturday, April 20, 2024, and are asking for permission to have Raritan DPW pick-up the garbage bags that will be filled throughout the Borough.

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to Approve DPW Trash Pickup for Steam Cleanup Event.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

3. Washington School Property Maintenance/Cleanup (DT)

Council President Tozzi stated that DPW has been cleaning up the Washington School property, including the backstop, fences, removing rusty bleachers, relocating the dedication signs, the field lights are kept on for football and cheer, adding that the grant company has found a

potential for a \$100,000 development grant which can be utilized at Washington School, adding a big thank you to our DPW for their hard work.

4. Introduction to Rent Stabilization Ordinance (AA)

Councilman Armahizer stated that he recently proposed the introduction implementation for a rent stabilization ordinance, the proposal includes an introduction of rent stabilization and rent control from municipal comparison of more than a hundred other New Jersey towns. Councilman Armahizer explained that the ordinance will outline three major components, price stabilization, eviction control measures/tenant protections and general control measures, adding that by the end of 2025, Raritan is estimated to have more renters than homeowners for the first time. Councilman Armahizer stated that the introduction of a rent stabilization ordinance will allow the Borough to better ensure the affordability of housing for incoming residents, will meet tenant protections for all existing renting residents and help the Borough price stabilize the fast-growing rental market. The Councilman directed anyone with questions to the 53-page proposal that was recently published by his office.

ORDINANCE – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

Ordinance No. 2024-05

An Ordinance of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, Adopting a Redevelopment Plan for an Area in Need of Redevelopment Consisting of Block 53, Lots 1 & 2, in Accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1, et seq.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to adopt a redevelopment plan for an area located on Tillman Street.

Mayor Carra reiterated that this ordinance will be in compliance with the Fair Share Housing plan, adding that there is no developer and Raritan's only obligation legally is to put a plan together and have it passed, adding that the current concept is not binding.

Councilman Patente asked Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan to explain what the State is asking the Borough to do with the various vacant lots in correlation with the need for affordable housing.

Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan explained the Fair Share Housing Plan and a brief discussion took place between, Mayor and Council, Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan and Borough Attorney William Robertson, which covered State requirements, resident feedback, deadlines and affordable housing.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Open Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2024-05.

Recorded Vote

All in Favor

Motion Carried: 6-0

The Mayor opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak on Ordinance No. 2024-05.

Tom Brown, 18 Elmer Street: Mr. Brown stated that the Tillman property is privately owned and ramifications would have to come from the estate owner. A brief conversation took place amongst Council about which lots were included in the Tillman property.

Roger Copt, 1120 Route 202 South: Mr. Copt asked how the State can make the Borough redevelop that property if there is an existing business on it.

Neither seeing nor hearing any member of the Public, Mayor Carra closed the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2024-05.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to Adopt Ordinance No. 2024-05.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: Agrawal, Armahizer

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 4-2

ORDINANCE – INTRODUCTION

Ordinance No. 2024-06

A Bond Ordinance of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, Providing for the Construction of a New Municipal Building and Reconstruction of the Existing Municipal Building for Use by the Borough Police Department

The purpose of this Ordinance is to allow for funding of the 22 First Street and 9 West Somerset Street construction projects.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance No. 2024-06.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Ordinance No. 2024-07

An Ordinance of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, Adopting a Redevelopment Plan for an Area in Need of Redevelopment Consisting of Block 116.01, Lot 11.01, in Accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1, et seq.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to introduce a redevelopment plan for the area at the Raritan Mall.

Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan stated that there was a slight revision made to what was originally circulated, adding that the comments were minor and do not change anything.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance No. 2024-07.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Fritzingler, Melitsky

Nay: Armahizer, Patente

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 4-2

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2024-04-070 through Resolution No. 2024-04-071)

Resolution No. 2024-04-070

Authoring Appointment – Acting Clerk

Resolution No. 2024-04-071

Approving Towing Application – Rich’s Offroad

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-04-070 through Resolutions No. 2024-04-071 – Consent Agenda.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

BILL LIST

Resolution No. 2024-04-072

Approving Bill List

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Agrawal, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2024-04-072 – Approving Bill List.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Bridgewater Resources, Inc. – \$15,538.15 – February Dumping Fees
2. Van Cleef Engineering – \$37,436.50 – Various Engineering Services

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

On a motion by Councilman Fritzinger, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Approve February Dumping Fees & Various Engineering Services.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

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.

Roger Copt, 1120 Route 202 South: Mr. Copt stated that he believes the Raritan Mall site should stay commercial and not be changed over to residential, adding that he would like to see a grocery store or other businesses there. Mr. Copt also shared his opinion that there may be issues with flooding and the leftover effects of the site being a landfill in the past.

Councilwoman Melitsky stated that she had reached out to multiple different grocery stores about going into the Raritan Mall and none of them wanted to go into that property.

Erica Landesberg, 21 Meehan Avenue: Urged Mayor and Council to be cautious when making their decision for the proposed Raritan Mall plan with the current developer, adding that this developer has owned this site for a few years and let it get to this current state in need of redevelopment.

Dave Marder, 830 Old York Road: Mr. Marder asked what criteria qualifies a property for a pilot program and voiced his opinion that unless restricted, there is no way to stop children from living in the apartments.

Borough Attorney William Robertson briefly explained pilot program criteria.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Boulevard: Mr. Foohey asked if the Planning Board had the final say on passing this proposed redevelopment plan if Mayor and Council passed it.

Borough Attorney William Robertson explained the steps of the Planning Board designating a property as an area in need of redevelopment before presenting it to Mayor and Council.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Boulevard: Mr. Foohey confirmed that the Raritan Mall project may or may not be passed, but the site has already been designated as an area in need of redevelopment and Council is looking to change the zoning from business to multi-use.

Roger Copt, 1120 Route 202 South: Mr. Copt shared his concerns about the Planning Board passing plans that he believes should not be passed and he voiced his concerns again about flooding at the Raritan Mall site and keeping it commercial.

Tom Brown, 18 Elmer Street: Mr. Brown stated he was on the Planning Board for 16 years and he voiced his concern that all incoming applications over the past few years have been passed by the Planning Board without any refusals. Mr. Brown stated that the Borough runs the risk of being sued if the plan is voted against after the area has already been designating a property as an area in need of redevelopment. Mr. Brown stated that the Borough will be receiving taxes off this property, but as a pilot program, the schools will get none and he voiced his concerns about more school age children inevitably living in the apartments.

Neither seeing nor hearing any additional 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 Councilman Fritzinger, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion Passed: 6-0

The Mayor announced the next Council Meeting will be held on April 16, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Alyssa Cornella
Deputy Clerk/Assistant to the Borough Administrator
Deputy Registrar/BOH Representative

Approved: _____
Eric M. Colvin
Borough Clerk/Administrator

Date: _____