

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **February 6, 2023** at 7:02 p.m.in Room 108.

THIS MEETING IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE “OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT” AS ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY E-MAILING THE ANNUAL SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS TO THE WESTFIELD LEADER, THE UNION COUNTY LOCAL SOURCE, THE STAR LEDGER, AND TAP INTO CRANFORD, BY POSTING SUCH ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE ON A BULLETIN BOARD IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING RESERVED FOR SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE FILING OF SAID NOTICE WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK OF CRANFORD. FORMAL ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AT THIS MEETING.

Present: Mayor Brian Andrews
Deputy Mayor Jason Gareis
Commissioner Terrence Curran
Commissioner Kathleen Miller Prunty
Commissioner Gina Black

Absent: None

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper, Interim Administrator Ryan Greco, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Lavona Patterson, Construction Code Official Frank Genova and Township Clerk Patricia Donahue were present.

Public Comments

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – stated that she had heard that the (Indoor) Pool hours would change. Ms. Brooks stated that the classes provided physical exercise and were good “mentally.” She spoke about the water exercise group called the Aquanutz. Ms. Brooks stated that she did not want the hours changed and inquired why this may occur. Mayor Andrews responded that the Township was under a mandate to have the Pool operate as a “self-sustaining” entity and spoke about seeking at a creative option. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place - stated that the second set of Public Comments had been eliminated at the Official Meetings and stated that this was a disservice to members of the public. Mr. Smith suggested that the second set of Public Comments be added back to the Official Meeting or that the Workshop Meetings move to Council Chambers to allow for filming of the Workshop Meetings.

Ms. Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place – inquired about the number of hours the Westfield YMCA needed from Cranford and inquired about the partnership with the Westfield YMCA. Mayor Andrews said this matter would be discussed at the Workshop Meeting (later that evening).

Ms. Karen Bennett of 38 Herning Avenue – referencing the Pool, Ms. Bennet commented that that shutting down did not look good; suggested that the decision-makers regarding the Pool did not go to the Pool; encouraged people to “check out” the Pool.

Mr. John Hartnett of 16 Elm Street – stated that a lot of decisions seem to be driving revenue; suggested that the Township was not effective in its survey work; requested that decisions be data-driven and further elaborated.

Mr. Joseph Szefinski of 28 Omaha Drive - suggested that the Township do a better job of marketing the Pools.

Ms. Sally Kleeman of 130 N. Lehigh Avenue – stated that she had worked at the Pool for forty (40) years. She stated that she had notice a dip in membership but now thought that the Pool numbers were increasing. Ms. Kleeman stated that the Pool members were very loyal. She noted that the Pool was used in the morning hours. Ms. Kleeman spoke about the members who had paid a membership and would now be angry.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Westfield YMCA and Fitness Center Members

Commissioner Curran spoke about the Pool’s membership decline and the decline in Pool revenue. He spoke about financial matters associated with the Pools including infrastructure needs, the increase in minimum wage and the increased cost of chemicals. Commissioner Curran stated that the Pool membership figures were not improving despite an aggressive marketing campaign. Commissioner Curran then spoke about the proposed partnership with the Westfield YMCA (YMCA). He elaborated about the YMCA’s proposed programming and investment into the Indoor Pool and Fitness Center. Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that the Indoor Pool would close temporarily and the anticipated renovation completion date was October 2023. Commissioner Black noted that CFO Patterson had worked to get the Indoor Pool and Fitness Center members access to the Westfield YMCA. Commissioner Curran spoke about the financial strain facing the Township with rising health care costs and RVSA (Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority) fees. He stated that review of the Township’s support to the Pools should consider that under twenty-five (25) per cent of the Township’s residents belonged to the Pools. Ms. Patterson stated that the Indoor Pool would remain open for the Gators and the High School swim team and briefly elaborated.

Commissioner Miller Prunty spoke about the years-long relationship with the YMCA. She spoke about the previous summer’s YMCA camp (at the Indoor Pool and Fitness Center). A brief discussion ensued regarding whether the YMCA had early morning senior programs. Mayor Andrews spoke about the importance of releasing information regarding upcoming changes at the Indoor Pool and Fitness Center. He stated that this matter would be discussed again at the Township Committee’s next Workshop Meeting. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. John Hartnett of 16 Elm Street – inquired about the success of the Westfield YMCA. Discussion ensued. Mr. Hartnett requested that the Township consider members who were over

thirty (30) years old as well as member who did not have children and whether their needs were being met. He stated that the Pools were a community not-for-profit. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Karen Bennett of 38 Herning Avenue – inquired what the Township’s partnership with the YMCA would give the YMCA. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – stated that the membership fee at the YMCA was three (3) times the fee of the Indoor Pool. A brief discussion ensued.

Discussion then ensued about the outlook for the future-year partnership with the YMCA (i.e., during the next ten (10) years).

Ms. Sally Kleeman of 130 N. Lehigh Avenue – noted that the YMCA was a not-for-profit organization and assisted communities.

Ms. Karen Bennett of 38 Herning Avenue – expressed her concern about the YMCA partnership.

Ms. Nancy Millar of 112 North Avenue W. – inquired about previous-year use of Pool membership revenues.

Ms. Patterson stated that the Indoor Pool was very expensive to operate and administer and noted that it was more expensive to run than the outdoor Pools. Commissioner Black requested that the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet be sent to everyone. Commissioner Curran suggested that one Township email receive all Pool questions.

Sewer Connection Fee

Construction Code Official Frank Genova spoke about a proposed Township Sewer Connection fee. Discussion ensued including discussion as to whether such fee should be added, whether such fee would be charged per unit, whether such fee occurred at the current time (Mr. Genova stated there was not currently a sewer connection fee), the prevalence of such a fee in other communities, a Sewer Connection fee and development at 750 Walnut Avenue, whether the fee should be the same for both residential and commercial units, the financial benefit to the Township with such a fee, attorney review of the proposed fee, how such a fee would be administered for renovation work and the overhead strain this would cause an entity.

Building and Zoning Fee Increase Ordinance

Construction Code Official Frank Genova spoke about proposed Building and Zoning fee increases. He stated that the Township had last enacted fee increases twelve (12) years ago. Mr. Genova suggested that such fees should be increased every three (3) years. Commissioner Black commented about fees which were proposed to change versus fees which were not proposed to change. Mr. Genova spoke about fee increases which mirrored other communities’ fees in Union County. Discussion ensued regarding whether fees should equal the cost of running the Building Department, the current fee schedule, using back-up inspectors due to the busy building activity in the Township and the heavy workload in the Building Department. Mayor Andrews suggested that members of the Township Committee digest and discuss the proposed fee increases at the next Township Committee Meeting.

Township Public Information and Communications

Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that she felt strongly that the Township needed an “information” person in place. She stated that such person would oversee the Township’s website, press releases, social media, Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) documents and newsletters. Mayor Andrews stated that the Township was fortunate that Commissioner Miller Prunty administered the Township’s newsletter. He stated that it was time now to have a person administer this role. Commissioner Black stated that such a role would be fulfilled by the hire of a new Township Administrator. Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that the Township Administrator would have so much on his/her “plate” and would not be able to fulfill this role. Discussion ensued including discussion that the Police Department’s communication was handled by someone who reported to the Police Chief (Deputy Mayor Gareis), waiting until the new Administrator was hired to fulfill such role (Commissioner Curran), the difficulty of managing both the Administrator role and the public information role (Interim Administrator Ryan Greco), concern that such a position could be a “political spin doctor” (Commissioner Black), concern regarding the Township’s finances during the expected difficult budget year (Commissioner Black), being mindful of budget constraints (Commissioner Miller Prunty) and getting facts to the members of the public (Commissioner Miller Prunty).

Mayor Andrews asked the Commissioners for a “temperature check” and straw poll regarding the Township Public Information and Communications matter. Deputy Mayor Gareis stated that it was a tight year and he favored a part-time employee to fulfill the public information and communications role. Commissioner Black inquired about the proposed salary for such role. Commissioner Miller Prunty suggested a salary of twenty-five (\$25) dollars to forty (\$40) dollars to fifty (\$50) dollars an hour. A brief discussion ensued.

Mayor Andrews requested that members of the Township Committee review this matter and provide feedback to the Mayor.

Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS-FEMA) and New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Flood Mitigation and Home Elevation Grant Application Update

Interim Administrator Ryan Greco provided an overview of the Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS-FEMA) and New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Flood Mitigation and Home Elevation Grant and briefly discussed the response deadline.

Township Administrator Report

Commissioner Black inquired about Interim Administrator Greco’s Administrator Report regarding the Victorian Light updates. A brief discussion ensued.

Closed Session Minutes of January 17, 2023

Commissioner Miller Prunty made a motion to adopt the January 17, 2023 Closed Session Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Black seconded the motion. Mayor Andrews, Deputy Mayor Gareis, Commissioners Miller Prunty, Curran and Black voted to approve the Closed Session minutes of January 17, 2023.

Proposed Downtown District Management Corp (DMC) 2023 Budget

Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) Director Caren Demyen presented the DMC Budget. Ms. Demyen provided an overview of the Administrative Operations budget line and noted that previous-year items had been moved to different categories. CFO Patterson stated that the Special Improvement District (SID) valuation had increased a small amount and subsequently, the SID Budget had increased slightly. Commissioner Miller Prunty noted that the SID budget had hardly changed since 2014.

Public Comments

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place - stated that the evening's (Workshop) Meeting included two sets of Public Comments. He requested 1) the Official Meeting contain two (2) sets of Public Comments, or 2) that the Workshop Meeting be televised and be accessible through TV35.

Ms. Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place – stated that Commissioner Miller Prunty's communication work was terrific. She stated that such work should now be administered by Mayor Andrews. Ms. Smith requested clarification about the evening's Pool discussion. Mayor Andrews confirmed that the discussion pertained to the Indoor Pool and Fitness Center and not the outdoor Pools. Further discussion ensued regarding Pool matters.

Ms. Rita LaBrutto of 104 Arlington Road – stated that she had heard that when the Township needed money, they looked to residents for such funding. Ms. LaBrutto requested that the Township concentrate on the Business Park. She stated that the Township's rateables had declined. Ms. LaBrutto spoke about the proposed Construction Code department fees. Discussion ensued.

Ms. LaBrutto stated that the Township Committee had discussed paying someone to handle the Township's communications yet the second Public Comments period in the Official Meeting Agenda had been eliminated. Discussion ensued.

Ms. LaBrutto stated the Township was concerned regarding bike racks and charging stations yet was not concerned about trees.

Mr. William Hulse – inquired about the timing of the Pool's filtration system upgrade and the use of salt water. Ms. Patterson stated that the filtration system would be updated and was expected to cost approximately \$350,000. Mr. Hulse stated that chlorine was "hard" on children.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place - requested that the Official Meeting format continue to include two (2) sets of Public Comments.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Closed Session

On motion of Deputy Mayor Gareis, seconded by Commissioner Black and passed, the following resolution was adopted by roll call vote:

Resolution No. 2023-94.4

BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Committee will go into closed session to discuss the following, the minutes of which will be released at some time in the future at the discretion of the Township Committee:

Legal

- Legal Update

Personnel

- Collective Bargaining Negotiations – Department of Public Works
- Township Administrator
- Electrical Sub-Code Official/Electrical Inspector

Contractual

- Municipal Prosecutor

Minute Review

- Closed Session Minutes of January 17, 2023

Recorded Vote:

Aye: Mayor Brian Andrews, Deputy Mayor Gareis, Commissioners Curran, Miller Prunty and Black

Nay: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Commissioner Black and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at approximately 10:22 p.m.

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Commissioner Black and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 10:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Donahue
Township Clerk

Dated: February 6, 2023