

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **March 4, 2024** at 7:07 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 Terrence Curran
Commissioner Paul A. Gallo
Commissioner Kathleen Miller Prunty
Commissioner Gina Black

Absent: None

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper, Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson 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.

Mr. Jeffrey Pistol of 243 Hillside Avenue and Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place - thanked Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson and Purchasing Agent/Financial Specialist Mike Robinson for their recent assistance with the 150th Anniversary Board’s procurement and installation work.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place – spoke about the “bad” shape of a road in the Downtown area (in the vicinity underneath the railroad).

Ms. Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place – provided both an inquiry and comments about proposed Resolution No. 2024-149 (pertaining to the opposition of Assembly Bill No. 4 and Senate Bill No. 50 which proposes to overhaul the Fair Housing Act (“FHA”))

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

Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA)

RVSA representatives John Buonocore (Executive Director/Chief Engineer), Karen Musialowicz, (Secretary – Treasurer), Janet Thevenin (Manager of Regulatory Compliance) and Cranford RVSA Commissioner Christopher Kolibas were present.

Commissioner Black and RVSA Commissioner Christopher introduced the RVSA representatives.

Mr. Buonocore stated that the RVSA Budget had increased by eight (8) per cent. He spoke about specific increased costs and the delays in receiving supplies. Mr. Buonocore spoke about the calculation of assessments. He spoke about the debt service proportion of the RVSA Budget, revenue streams for the RVSA and ways that the RVSA works to save money. Mr. Buonocore spoke about the significant capital costs at the RVSA. Mr. Buonocore then spoke about the RVSA fees paid by Cranford, noting that Cranford’s fees could be attributed to Inflow and Infiltration (I and I) matters and the increased building in the Township. Discussion then ensued regarding the cyclical usage (i.e., first and second quarters have higher usage), how to improve I and I, whether Cranford was assigned a larger proportion of RVSA debt, sewer hook-ups and possible bypasses, whether the Township’s sewer fees matched the RVSA fees, whether the cleanliness of Cranford’s water could be assessed, capital upgrades at RVSA and the ensuing

costs for Cranford, eliminating illegal sewer connections. Mr. Buonocore encouraged members of the Township Committee to visit the RVSA facility.

Proposed Sewer Fees Ordinance

Referencing a RVSA Expense handout, Commissioner Black spoke about anticipated sewer tax collection and RVSA billing. She stated that the RVSA expenses were greater than the sewer fees collected. Discussion ensued including discussion regarding 1) sewer connections which were not being charged fees, 2) Inflow and Infiltration problems, 3) administering a sewer fee audit and 4) increasing sewer fees.

Regulations for Distributing Unsolicited Advertising Circulars and Newspapers on Private Property

Deputy Mayor Terrence Curran requested that this Agenda item be moved to the next Workshop Meeting (on March 19th).

Rails to Trails – Union County Connect

Mayor Andrews spoke about a proposed “Union County Connects” Rails to Trails resolution which would express support for connecting “underutilized railroad Right of Way’s, biking and walking trails and parks”. Committee consensus was to be reached to consider this resolution at the March 19th Township Committee Official Meeting.

Cranford Pools (Cranford YMCA and Outdoor Pools) Update

Deputy Mayor Curran reviewed the figures associated with the Pool Budget (which had been previously distributed to the Township Committee). Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson reviewed the matter of permanent financing for the Pools. Other than the deficit and chemical supplies (chlorine) budget lines, Ms. Patterson spoke about the Pool’s decreased budget lines. Mayor Andrews stated that the 2019 and 2024 Pool Budget requests both totalled approximately \$ 1.6 million (one million six hundred thousand dollars). Discussion ensued including discussion regarding the budget decrease for the Indoor Pool. Deputy Mayor Curran reviewed the proposed 2024 Summer Membership Fee Schedule. Mayor Andrews spoke about his concerns regarding the increased Pool fees. Further discussion ensued including discussion regarding swim lesson administration. Committee consensus was reached to move forward with the proposed 2024 Swim Pool membership fees.

Budget and Capital Budget Planning

Ms. Patterson reviewed the Operating Budget (2023 and 2024) figures which were previously distributed to the Township Committee. She spoke about the expected 2024 RVSA and Terminal Pay figures. Discussion ensued regarding “Reserve for Uncollected Taxes”, Terminal Pay and Retired Health Benefits budget lines.

The members of the Township Committee discussed the use of the Township’s Surplus and the proposed 2024 Tax Rate (referencing Surplus and Tax Rate information which had been previously distributed to the Township Committee). Mayor Andrews requested that this matter be placed on the following evening’s Conference Agenda.

The members of the Township Committee discussed the updated proposed 2024 Capital Budget requests which had been previously distributed to the Commissioners. Mayor Andrews spoke about efforts to utilize outside funding to underwrite the Fire Apparatus funding. Ms. Patterson noted that some of the Capital Budget requests had been eliminated (and were marked in red on the Capital Budget summary). She then reviewed the remaining 2024 Capital Budget requests. Discussion ensued regarding the 2024 NJDOT Partially Funded Road projects (Engineering), the Murphy Bed Replacements (Fire) and the LUCAS Device Chest Compression System (Fire).

Ms. Patterson then reviewed the 2024 Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) Capital Budget requests which had been previously distributed to the Township Committee. Discussion ensued regarding the Streetscape study, splitting expected debt between the Township and the

Special Improvement District (through a sixty (60) and forty (40) per cent split), the DMC Capital Budget's total request of \$360,000 to the Township for 2024 and working to obtain outside funding and grant awards. Commissioner Black stated her preference to move forward with the DMC request if the Township could obtain outside funding for the Fire Apparatus (otherwise, she preferred such funding be used to fund roads).

Township Property Inventory

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper spoke about an inventory of Township-owned properties which would be discussed during the Closed Session later that evening. He provided an overview of the Township's property inventory noting that the properties generally fell into two (2) types of categories, specifically "left-over" properties or "one-offs". Mr. Cooper described these two classifications. Discussion ensued. Ms. Cheryl Riporti of 14 Holly Street requested to purchase Township property at the corner of Holly Street and Orchard Street. Discussion ensued.

750 Walnut Avenue Update

Mayor Andrews spoke about the Township's advocacy and oversight efforts pertaining to construction at 750 Walnut Avenue. He spoke about the dust problem at the property. Ms. Patterson and Deputy Mayor Curran provided further updates. Discussion ensued including discussion that the Township had received a verbal notification that the County of Union would authorize a speed reduction on Walnut Avenue to 25 (twenty-five) miles per hour.

Township Annual Statement of Taxes

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson reviewed the Township's Annual Statement of Taxes and provided an overview of the tax levy and tax collection figures.

Election Administration – Polling Place Changes at the Municipal Building

Township Clerk Patricia Donahue spoke about the proposed move of Election districts from the Municipal Building to the High School (District 7) and Bloomingdale School (District 3). Discussion ensued including discussion that both the Republicans and the Democrats requested that if such move occur, it would take place by the June Primary and that the voters were properly noticed of such polling place changes.

Review Official Meeting Agenda

Township Clerk Patricia Donahue stated that the motion procedures associated with amended Ordinance No. 2024 -05 would be distributed to the Commissioners on the following day.

Sustainable Jersey Grant Application Funded by PSE&G

Deputy Mayor Terrence Curran spoke about proposed Resolution No. 2024-150 pertaining to the authorization of a Township Sustainable Jersey Grant application funded by PSE&G. He stated that the governing body's approval was needed by March 15th and recommended the adoption of Resolution No. 2024-150.

Closed Session Minutes – February 20, 2024

Commissioner Black made a motion to adopt the February 20, 2024 Closed Session Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Gallo seconded the motion. Mayor Andrews, Deputy Mayor Curran, Commissioner Gallo, Commissioner Miller Prunty and Commissioner Black voted to approve the Closed Session Minutes of February 20, 2024.

Review Official Meeting Agenda (continued)

Mayor Brian Andrews spoke about the proclamation which would be read at the following evening's Official Meeting pertaining to colorectal cancer

Business Administrator/CFO Report

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson provided updates on these matters:

- The Annual Debt Statement (completed)
- The Annual Financial Statement (would be sent to the State by March 10th)

Commissioner Report

Commissioner Miller Prunty spoke briefly regarding feedback received pertaining to the idea of allowing builders to rent space at the Conservation Center.

Public Comments

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

Ms. Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place – inquired about the Township’s surplus; provided comments about Cranford’s two (2) outdoor pools (i.e., the Township’s good fortune); inquired about the start date for pool membership purchases; spoke about the advantages the Pools bring to the community.

Ms. Rita LaBrutto of 114 Arlington Road – provided comments about proposed Resolution No. 2024-149 and land use matters; provided comments about the potential large source of revenue associated with Cranford’s Business Park.

Justin Quinn of 316 Walnut Avenue – requested that the Township Committee consider the sale of Township property near his home, specifically a “paper street” at the end of Denman Road.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place – provided comments about the RVSA presentation; inquired whether a premium sewer tax could be assigned to large complexes; inquired about the start date to purchase pool memberships.

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

Closed Session

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

Resolution No. 2024-95.5

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
- Cell Tower Litigation

Personnel

- Emergency Management Council
- Building Department
- Department of Public Works

Contractual

- Cranford Pools (Cranford YMCA and Outdoor Pools)
- Township Property Inventory

Minute Review

- Closed Session Meeting Minutes – February 20, 2024

Recorded Vote:

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

Nay: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

On motion of Deputy Mayor Curran, seconded by Commissioner Miller Prunty and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 11:17 p.m.

On motion of Deputy Mayor Curran, seconded by Commissioner Miller Prunty and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 11:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 4, 2024

Patricia Donahue
Township Clerk