

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **March 19, 2024** 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 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. Recreation Director Steve Robertazzi, Police Chief Ryan Greco and Police Lieutenant Chris Polito were present.

Public Comments

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

Most of the following residents spoke about the construction activity at 750 Walnut Avenue:

Mr. George Collins of 5 Behnert Place - elaborated about the dust at the construction site at 750 Walnut Avenue and its effect on Behnert Place, stated his concerns regarding the traffic activity at 750 Walnut Avenue, specifically the amount of traffic, the truck and tractor traffic, the use of Behnert Place as a pathway road, a proposal to convert Behnert Place to a dead-end street and the hazards experienced because of the traffic activity.

Ms. Christine Esposito of 11 Behnert Place - stated that she had letters from all of the residents on Behnert Place; stated that she appreciated the time that had already been put in to this situation; stated that she hoped the Members of the Township Committee would “take” their requests.

Mr. Carlos Trujillo of 4 Braemar Circle – spoke about the nearby mountain of dirt; stated 1) that he could not sit in his backyard, 2) trees had been knocked down, 3) he used to not hear the nearby trains and now he could hear the trains, 4) the nearby area was an eyesore; 5) the expected use of the 750 Walnut Avenue area, i.e., Amazon and Whole Foods delivery locations, and 6) he would like trees planted.

Mayor Andrews responded that the destruction of trees was unacceptable. He stated that Hartz’ Mountain Industries Inc.’s (Hartz) response was due on the upcoming Thursday.

Ms. Jesenia Rodriguez of 4 Braemar Circle – inquired about the mountain of dirt.

Deputy Mayor Curran stated that he would be meeting with Hartz on the upcoming Friday and would inquire about the mountain of dirt. Various residents spoke about the mountains of dirt.

Ms. Jodi Wilhelm of 3 Behnert Place - stated that she agreed with the previous residents’ comments regarding the dirt situation at 750 Walnut Avenue; noted that the residents in the area all had coughs (because of the dirt proximity); spoke about the wetting down of the area and noted that it had just started; stated that she could not enjoy the outdoors and dirt was being brought into her home; noted that she worked on the north side of Cranford and her colleagues were unaware of the situation near 750 Walnut Avenue; spoke about the detrimental effects of

the situation for a neighbor who was 94 (ninety-four) years old and his wife who had COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).

Ms. Angela Leary of 4 Behnert Place – stated that 1) in addition to the dust, there was more dirt closer to the street, 2) there was bad management of truck traffic, 3) someone was going to get hurt, 4) neighbors could not back out of their driveway, 5) there were cars driving quickly down Behnert Place and 6) there was not enough room for two (2)-way traffic on the street.

A resident at 1 Behnert Place - stated that 1) he had lived in Cranford since 1980, 2) the whole project was a ‘nightmare’, 3) there was dirt inside the windowsills of his home, 4) he had difficulty in getting into his driveway, 5) there were a large number of truck bays, 6) there was an early arrival of the trucks (i.e., at 6 a.m.), 7) there was an idling of the trucks and 8) there was blocking of his driveway by trucks.

Ms. Dawn Beresford of 706 Lexington Avenue - spoke about a member’s of the Planning Board comments that the buildings would be set far back; stated that the Planning Board did not address the landscaping and trees matter; spoke about the traffic on Lexington Avenue; suggested that a dead end on Behnert Place would assist traffic on Lexington Avenue; stated that she did not see the Police in the area; inquired when signage for the area would arrive; stated that she joined the Cranford YMCA and it was fantastic.

Mayor Andrews stated that the members of the Township Committee took the 750 Walnut Avenue issues seriously. He stated that the name calling, misinformation and blocking out of their voices was not helpful. Mayor Andrews stated that none of the current members of the Township Committee had voted for the 750 Walnut Avenue development.

Ms. Laura Tarulli of 206 Manor Avenue – stated that there was too much building occurring in the Township; elaborated about a leak outside of her home in December 2023; spoke about attending meetings during the Birchwood development planning and concerns which were raised; spoke about 1) the building of condominiums and 2) the increased concern with rain activity.

Mayor Andrews and Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson responded to Ms. Tarulli’s remarks. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Thilly of Bloomingdale Avenue – stated that the Township Committee should have said “no” to the development at 750 Walnut Avenue; elaborated about development and developers throughout New Jersey, specifically noting that they bullied governing bodies; urged the members of the Township Committee to be tough; stated that the soil (at 750 Walnut Avenue) was toxic and a stop order should be issued.

Ms. Wilhelm stated that the Mayor Andrews and the Deputy Mayor Curran had been very helpful.

Deputy Mayor Curran stated that he spoke to representatives of the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District every day. He spoke about the difficult situation and the unsatisfactory traffic situation in the area at 750 Walnut Avenue.

Mr. Carlos Trujillo of 4 Braemar Circle – stated that mature trees were needed (for planting).

Deputy Mayor Curran spoke briefly about the current litigation with Hartz regarding 750 Walnut Avenue.

Ms. Angela Leary of 4 Behnert Place – suggested that the issues be presented to a higher authority (than the Township Committee and the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District).

Deputy Mayor Curran stated that he had reached out to the County of Union (County) regarding this matter and was waiting to hear back from the County. Mayor Andrews spoke about recent Affordable Housing legislation activity (in the New Jersey State Legislature) which was not promising. Mayor Andrews encouraged the residents to share their videos (of the activity at 750 Walnut Avenue) with them.

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

Closed Session

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

Resolution No. 2024-95.7

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
- Business (Office) Park Zoning

Personnel

- Building Department
- Police Department

Minute Review

- Closed Session Meeting Minutes – March 4th and March 5, 2024

Recorded Vote:

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

Nay: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

On motion of Commissioner Miller Prunty, seconded by Commissioner Black and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 8:01 p.m.

On motion of Deputy Mayor Curran, seconded by Commissioner Gallo and passed, the Township Committee adjourned the Workshop Meeting to begin the Official Meeting at 8:01 p.m.

On motion of Commissioner Miller Prunty, seconded by Deputy Mayor Curran and passed, the Township Committee adjourned the Official Meeting and then returned to the Workshop session at 9:53 p.m.

Cranford Aquatic Facility Assessment

Deputy Mayor Curran spoke about vendor information regarding assessing the Cranford Pools. He stated that the initial quote for the assessment was very expensive (approximately \$43,000) and that the Township could narrow the scope to reduce the audit expense. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed vendor and going out to bid (i.e., Request for Proposal) for this type of facility assessment.

Deputy Mayor Curran stated that the Cranford YMCA would be mailing (marketing) cards pertaining to the Indoor Pool and suggested that Outdoor Pools' information be included in the mailing.

Cranford Pools Update

Deputy Mayor Curran provided membership figures for the Cranford Pools. Ms. Patterson spoke about the increase in membership numbers for the Indoor Pool between the period of January 2024 to March 2024. A brief discussion ensued regarding the opening date for the Indoor Pools.

Budget and Capital Budget Planning

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about financing a proposed capital budget item, specifically the Fire Apparatus. She stated that the Township would seek to finance this

purchase through the Union County Improvement Authority or through a separate ordinance and elaborated.

750 Walnut Avenue Update

A brief discussion ensued regarding a proposed road closure on Behnert Place. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper spoke about the need to notify the New Jersey Department of Transportation regarding road closures which were expected to occur for more than forty-eight (48) hours. Further discussion ensued regarding road signage, conducting a traffic study and construction enforcement.

Review Official Meeting Agenda

Mayor Andrews noted that the “Review of the Official Meeting Agenda” topic was not pertinent as the Official Meeting had just occurred.

Closed Session Minutes – March 4th and March 5, 2024

Commissioner Miller Prunty made a motion to adopt the March 4th and March 5, 2024 Closed Session Meeting Minutes. Deputy Mayor Curran seconded the motion. Mayor Andrews, Deputy Mayor Curran, Commissioner Gallo, Commissioner Miller Prunty and Commissioner Black voted to approve the Closed Session Meeting Minutes of March 4th and March 5, 2024.

Business Administrator/CFO Report

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

- The proposed Guy Borges street sign for the road leading to the Orange Avenue Pool;
- Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority (RVSA) matters including 1) a recent Township audit regarding sewer connections and 2) flow data;
- Street closure activity on Walnut Avenue.

Public Comments

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing no comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Closed Session

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

Resolution No. 2024-95.7

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
- Business (Office) Park Zoning

Personnel

- Building Department
- Police Department

Minute Review

- Closed Session Meeting Minutes – March 4th and March 5, 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 Gallo and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 10:59 p.m.

On motion of Commissioner Miller Prunty, seconded by Commissioner Gallo and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 10:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 19, 2024

Patricia Donahue
Township Clerk