

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **March 20, 2023** at 7:00 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 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 – suggested that the Township Committee be creative with challenges the Township faced (i.e., the need for lifeguards).

Ms. Elisabeth Allcock of 5 Cayuga Road – inquired if members of the Township Committee had visited the Indoor Pool. She requested that the Indoor Pool remain open for another two (2) months.

Ms. Clarisse Kent of 31 Rutgers Road - requested that the Indoor Pool remain open for another two (2) months and briefly elaborated about her need for the Pool.

Ms. Loretta Smith of 21 Oneida Place - inquired about the Hanson House improvements. Mayor Andrews and Commissioner Black responded.

Mr. Pat Kaskiw of 17 Princeton Road – spoke about the North Avenue Redevelopment Request for Proposal (RFP) and stated that a real discussion about the Redevelopment had not occurred between community leaders and residents.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place – provided feedback about the Indoor Pool operations and inquired if any of the members were qualified to serve as lifeguards.

Ms. Elisabeth Allcock of 5 Cayuga Road – stated that she would volunteer to work at the front desk.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place – suggested that the experienced swimmers serve as lifeguards.

Mr. John Schmidt of 431 Denman Road – spoke about the Pool remaining open for certain groups.

Mr. Peter Taylor of 8 Claremont Place – stated that he was a member of the Planning Board. He inquired if he could speak in light of his position on the Planning Board. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper stated that he could comment. Mr. Taylor stated that redevelopment plans are written in favor of the developer and elaborated. He encouraged the Township Committee to work to create redevelopment plans that favor Cranford and elaborated.

Discussion then ensued regarding the Indoor Pool expenses and the amount of staff needed to operate the Indoor Pool.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – spoke about the Indoor Pool remaining open (for certain groups). Commissioner Curran spoke about the use of the Westfield YMCA. Ms. Buchanan stated that only two (2) lifeguards were needed for the swim time. Mayor Andrews stated that while he was in favor of keeping the Indoor Pool open, there was a lot of money associated with doing so.

Commissioner Curran inquired about the requested open hours for the Indoor Pool.

Ms. Elisabeth Allcock of 5 Cayuga Road – stated that the requested Indoor Pool hours were 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Commissioner Black stated that it was necessary to obtain the associated lifeguard costs. She noted that she was now aware about parking lot issues at the Westfield YMCA.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – stated that the swim lanes were always full early in the day

Ms. Elisabeth Allcock of 5 Cayuga Road – stated that closing the Indoor Pool at 12 noon might be too early.

Commissioner Curran stated that the Township Committee would review these issues.

Ms. Elisabeth Allcock of 5 Cayuga Road – stated that a swimmer who lived outside of Cranford had given a letter to read aloud stating that she could not handle the walk to the Westfield YMCA (from the parking area).

Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that the members of the Township Committee were still reviewing the Indoor Pool operations and briefly elaborated.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – inquired if the Township Committee would know about the closing of the Indoor Pool by April 1st. A brief discussion ensued with Mayor Andrews and Commissioner Curran. Ms. Brooks stated that the Township planned to keep the Indoor Pool open for other groups.

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

North Avenue Redevelopment Area

Mayor Andrews spoke about Redevelopment and the challenging nature of Redevelopment matters. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper stated that the following evening's Official Meeting Agenda included a resolution pertaining to the authorization of the Township Clerk to advertise for the solicitation of RFP's for the redevelopment of the North Avenue Gateway Redevelopment Area (Area). He elaborated about the Township's work with this Area, i.e., in-person surveys, online surveys and multiple public meetings.

Discussion then ensued with Mr. Taylor and Mr. Cooper regarding what the Township had negotiated with previous Redevelopment Plans. Further discussion ensued. Mr. Taylor expressed his discontent with 1) receiving information the day before a Planning Board Meeting and 2) the binding nature of the Redevelopment Plan, i.e., matters before the Planning Board were often referred to the associated Redevelopment Plan. Discussion ensued.

Township Communications Staff

Mayor Andrews stated that a Communications person would be an asset to the Township. Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that she agreed with the Mayor. Commissioner Black stated that she was not "sold" on the (necessity of) this position. She stated that with a good Administrator in place, such a position may not be necessary. Commissioner Black suggested working with Kean University or Union College on this matter. Commissioner Miller Prunty

spoke about the heavy demands required of an Administrator and stated that she had concerns about the utilization of an intern (for the Communications role). She noted that an intern would be good for support. Both Deputy Mayor Gareis and Commissioner Curran recommended waiting on moving forward with this matter.

Revision to the Police Department Rules and Regulation (pertaining to Cannabis)

Interim Administrator Ryan Greco spoke about a proposed ordinance for the Township Committee's consideration pertaining to amending the Police Departments Rules and Regulations regarding cannabis use in light of the legalization of cannabis. Police Chief Greco stated that he would work with Township Attorney Ryan Cooper on the preparation of such ordinance.

Proposed acquisition of digital sign for the Municipal Building Front Lawn

Commissioner Gina Black spoke about the proposed acquisition of a digital sign for the front lawn of the Municipal Building. She noted that both the Downtown Management Corporation and the Fire Department had expressed interest in use of this proposal. Commissioner Black spoke about the digital sign's use and the use of social media (i.e., The Township should not rely just on social media). Deputy Mayor Gareis spoke about the ongoing pedestrian safety concerns associated with a digital sign installation. Interim Administrator Greco suggested that the digital sign placement could be moved to the other side of the lawn (where the traffic backed up). Commissioner Black noted that a power source had to be considered. Commissioner Curran noted that the money for the digital sign had been designated in 2019. He inquired about the funding if it wasn't utilized. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Curran stated that he was not in favor of a digital sign installation. He suggested utilizing the funding for the Township's website. Commissioner Miller Prunty and Deputy Mayor Gareis spoke about the ongoing Streetscape study and suggested waiting on the digital sign installation. Commissioner Miller Prunty suggested consideration of a sign which was not digital. Mayor Andrews stated that this matter should be reconsidered. Township Clerk Patricia Donahue inquired if she should put this matter on the Meeting "tickler" list. Mayor Andrews agreed.

Hanson House Improvements

Interim Administrator Ryan Greco spoke about Hanson House improvements which encompassed work on its foundation, the roof, asbestos in the basement, the patio and the basement's boiler. He stated that the proposed work's quote was over \$140,000. Chief Greco suggested viewing the needed improvements as a whole package and not in a piecemeal fashion.

Commissioner Curran inquired about the timing of the previous Hanson House improvements. Ms. Ellen McHenry stated that the Hanson House had been donated to the Township by Dr. Hanson. She spoke about the Hanson Park Conservancy, events at Hanson House and the integral part the patio played to the Hanson House. Ms. Murray spoke about the need for improvements and the patio hazards.

Discussion ensued including discussion regarding the Historical Society and the Hanson Park Conservancy and their respective areas of responsibility, seeking grants and patio work.

Proposed Tree Ordinance and Review of Cranford's Community Forestry Management Plan

Commissioner Curran spoke about the Township's Forestry Management Plan. He inquired about the Township's tracking. Commissioner Curran proposed a review of this matter and spoke about the benefits of trees to a community. He spoke about the Township obtaining certification and the State of New Jersey's interest in assisting municipalities. Discussion ensued regarding the role that trees played in stormwater management as well as specific figures associated with Township tree plantings and the cutting down of trees since 2000.

Further discussion ensued regarding activating the Township's "Tree Commission", updating the Township's Code references to a "Tree Commission" and whether the Township should legislate for no further tree loss or draft a Tree Commission ordinance. Mr. Ben Cohen suggested that the Township act quickly to replace trees and develop a street-by-street plan for tree plantings.

Further discussion ensued about drafting bullet points for a proposed ordinance, utilizing a State of New Jersey proposed tree ordinance, re-starting a Shade Tree Committee, working towards zero-tree loss, engaging the Department of Public Works (DPW) in this matter including obtaining feedback from the DPW regarding appropriate trees to cut down, drafting a policy regarding what constitutes a cut-down of trees (Ms. Donna Bacich) and initiating DPW tree tracking. CFO Patterson stated that the DPW did receive Union County grant money to replace trees. Ms. Vogler stated that trees should be native.

Capital Budget Workshop Meeting Follow-up

CFO Lavona Patterson stated that a meeting had been held with the Township Consulting Engineers and reductions had been made to the proposed Capital Budget. Ms. Patterson spoke about the proposed total 2023 Capital Budget amount. Interim Administrator Ryan Greco spoke about his discussion with the Fire Department as to whether their Fire Engine and Rescue truck request could be reduced. Ms. Patterson spoke about the timeline for 1) Budget adoption (proposed date of April 18th) and 2) the drafting of the bond ordinance. Commissioner Black inquired about the proposed DPW sweeper purchase. Commissioner Miller Prunty inquired whether the Municipal Digital Sign funding could be re-purposed for the cost of the speed alert signs. Interim Administrator Ryan Greco suggested that Ms. Patterson and he reach out to the departments on recommendations to reduce the Capital Budget. He asked the members of the Township Committee to email him their recommendations on proposed Capital Budget reductions. A brief discussion ensued.

North Avenue Redevelopment Area

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper spoke about the draft Request for Proposal for the North Avenue Redevelopment Area (Area). He provided background on the process which had led to the drafting of the RFP and expected next steps. Commissioner Black inquired whether consideration of the North Avenue Redevelopment Area (resolution) could wait another two (2) weeks. She stated that she was not in favor of a four (4) story building in the Area. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Curran stated that he would prefer Colonial architecture instead of the Victorian architecture. Commissioner Black stated that pictures for the Area were “everywhere”. Mr. Cooper stated that such pictures would not be at the Area’s RFP Conference meeting. Commissioner Black inquired about expected changes to the Area’s Redevelopment Plan. Discussion ensued. Referring to page four (4) of the RFP, Commissioner Curran inquired about the “issuer”. Discussion then ensued regarding whether the financial analysis was ready, the Township’s Affordable Housing obligation, date the project had to begin (July 2025) and the possibility that 1) no developer would show interest 2) the responses were not acceptable. Commissioner Black spoke about the forty (40) unit specification. Discussion ensued regarding the specification for the number of floors, whether the Affordable Housing units could be specified, i.e., for veterans, and building height. Mr. Cooper stated that the resolution for consideration at the Official Meeting pertained to just authorizing the Township Clerk to advertise for the solicitation of Request for Proposals (RFP’s) for redevelopment of the North Avenue Gateway Redevelopment Area and briefly elaborated.

Commissioner Comments

Mayor Andrews inquired about the Cranford Truck Parade. Deputy Mayor Gareis responded that the Truck Parade was scheduled for the upcoming Sunday (March 26th) at 11 a.m. and briefly elaborated.

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 amount of needed monies for the Hanson House renovations. She stated that the DPW assists with tree matters and noted that Superintendent Erik Hastrup closely inspects tree matters. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Cindy Capodice of 312 Retford Avenue – inquired whether developers were obligated to plant trees. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Mark Spencer of 101 Forest Avenue – commented about the North Avenue Redevelopment. He requested that the project team include a resident.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place – commented about the North Avenue Redevelopment.

Discussion then ensued about utilizing salt water for the Pools.

Ms. Rita LaBrutto of 104 Arlington Road – inquired about the South Avenue project being considered by the Planning Board. She spoke about plantings and the placement of the Affordable Housing units.

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

Closed Session

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

Resolution No. 2023-94.7

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
- North Avenue Redevelopment Area

Personnel

- Cranford Prevention and Wellness Alliance
- Department of Public Works – Collective Bargaining Negotiations
- Township Administrator
- Assistant Chief Financial Officer

Contractual

- Library

Recorded Vote:

Aye: Mayor Andrews, Deputy Mayor Gareis, Commissioners Curran, Miller Prunty & Black
Nay: None
Abstained: None
Absent: None

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Commissioner Miller Prunty and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 10:32 p.m.

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Commissioner Miller Prunty and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Donahue
Township Clerk

Dated: March 20, 2023