

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **April 17, 2023** at 7:01 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

*Commissioner Black arrived to the Workshop Meeting at 7:07 p.m.

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper, Interim Township Administrator Ryan Greco and Deputy Township Clerk Ashley Kurbanoglu were present.

Public Comments

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

Greg Carey, 25 Locust Drive – requested that an independent audit be conducted to assess the environmental impact of 5G Cell Towers.

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

Orange Avenue Pool Pickleball

Commissioner Curran reported that Recreation and Parks Director Steve Robertazzi and Superintendent of Public Works Erik Hastrup would collaborate efforts to create pickleball courts at Orange Avenue Pool. He explained that Mr. Robertazzi would enlist the help of volunteers to paint the lines while the Department of Public Works would handle the resurfacing of the already existing (tennis) court. Discussion ensued regarding access to the court (i.e., would it be open to the public at all times or would the court only be accessible to those individuals with a pool membership), cost and fees. Township Committee consensus was reached to move forward with the project.

Township Emergency Operations Plan

Emergency Management Coordinator and Fire Battalion Chief Matthew Lubin provided an overview of the process that guides the Township’s Emergency Operations Plan (Plan) including requirements, regulations and periodic review. He detailed the contents of the Plan that had been submitted to the Township Committee for their review and highlighted a number of changes that had been incorporated including the addition of context for pipeline and river flooding, flash flood threats and large-scale special events. Battalion Chief Lubin also stated that sections had been added to include pandemic epidemic impacts, cyber security and support annexes that serve specific functions and elaborated. He then provided a breakdown of “next steps”. A brief discussion ensued.

Public Arts Commission

Mayor Andrews spoke about a draft ordinance which was provided to the Township Committee pertaining to the establishment of a Public Arts Commission (Commission) and elaborated. He stated that such a Commission would assist in allowing for more public input and would

encourage more public art throughout the Township. Commissioner Black inquired if there would be any legal implications associated with this initiative and whether such a body would be a commission versus a committee. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper stated that he would investigate the matter.

Short-term Rental Ordinance

Commissioner Black discussed the need for the Township to adopt a short-term rental policy. She explained that there was an ongoing issue involving an Airbnb rental in a residential neighborhood in the area of Columbia Avenue and provided context. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper provided a definition of short-term rentals and asked for clarification from Commissioner Black on what she would like the ordinance to achieve. Commissioner Black suggested that the proposed ordinance would define a short-term rental, outline what was allowed and define a permitting process. Discussion ensued. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper stated that he would revisit the draft short-term rental ordinance from a previous year.

Capital Budget Bond Ordinance Follow-up

Chief Financial Officer Lavona Patterson stated that the adoption of the 2023 Municipal Budget and User-Friendly Budget, Swim Pool Utility Budget, and Downtown District Management Budget were on the following evening's Official Meeting Agenda for the Township Committee's consideration. She stated that the introduction of the 2023 Capital Budget Ordinance would also be considered. Ms. Patterson informed the Township Committee that there had been no recent changes to the Township Budget and provided some overview figures. Commissioner Curran commended Ms. Patterson for her hard work and achievement in keeping the Township debt low.

Review Official Meeting Agenda

Mayor Andrews provided an update on the reading of the Holocaust Remembrance Proclamation (which was on the following evening's Official Meeting Agenda). He stated that Resolution No. 2023-168, pertaining to the adoption of the Township's Emergency Operations Plan, would be removed from the following evening's Official Meeting Agenda.

Township Administrator Reports

No Report

Commissioner Report

Commissioner Curran stated that he had circulated the most recent Swim Pool Utility Advisory Board Meeting Minutes and asked that the Township Committee review them. He briefly discussed the Pool's hours of operations and the hiring of lifeguards, and specifically highlighted the issue of a lifeguard shortage.

Public Comments

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

Walt Felegi of 26 Columbia Avenue – thanked the Township Committee for addressing the issue of short-term rentals.

Steve Andelfinger of 31 Columbia Avenue – spoke about the ongoing problem involving a property owner who was using their residence as an Airbnb rental on Columbia Avenue. He spoke about this rental as it related to 1) the installation of flood lights and light pollution, 2) raccoons associated with no garbage pickup and 3) U-Haul and other truck activity throughout the night.

Melissa Ricci of 30 Columbia Avenue – thanked the Township Committee for listening to residents' concerns regarding the issue of the Airbnb rental on Columbia Avenue and discussed the seriousness of the problem. She communicated her stress and fears. Ms. Ricci stated that that

she 1) contacted the Cranford Police Department after receiving threats from the property owner and 2) had attempted to reach out to Airbnb and Vrbo to address this issue.

Kelly Gorman of 508 Orange Avenue – expressed appreciation to the Township Committee for their attention to the short-term rental issue. Ms. Gorman spoke about her concerns regarding the Airbnb on Columbia Avenue, which included 1) cameras on the premises, 2) the lack of vetting by Airbnb, 3) threats being received from the homeowner and 4) the potential of property value decline. Ms. Gorman requested that the Township Committee consider adopting a policy to ban or restrict the operation of short-term rentals within the Township.

John Iosso of 36 Columbia Avenue – stated that he had resided on Columbia Avenue for the past twenty (20) years and explained that since Airbnb situation began, the neighborhood was starting to feel unsafe. He spoke about his concerns regarding the “coming and going” of renters.

Christine Felegi of 26 Columbia Avenue – informed the Township Committee that she had been a resident of Columbia Avenue for forty-one (41) years and this was the first time she felt uncomfortable. Ms. Felegi noted that Airbnb renters are permitted to check in anytime between 3 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Walt Felegi of 26 Columbia Avenue – inquired about fines that could be issued to the homeowner of the Airbnb rental on Columbia Avenue. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper explained that such fines would be set by the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code.

Stephanie Gannon of 19 Locust Drive – expressed her concerns regarding the Airbnb rental on Columbia Avenue. Ms. Gannon stated that she felt uncomfortable because renters can see directly into her backyard. She spoke about a problem with mosquitos due to the lack of upkeep on the Airbnb home during its renovation period.

Michael Jones of 14 Columbia Avenue – thanked the Township Committee for taking residents’ concerns seriously regarding the Airbnb rental on Columbia Avenue. He inquired about the type of fines that would be issued to the homeowner. Mr. Jones inquired if the term “short-term rental” had been defined. Mr. Jones then spoke about his concerns with the property being less than one mile from a school and elaborated.

Graham McNamara of 17 Columbia Avenue – asked for clarification regarding whether hotels, rentals, and bed and breakfasts were permitted within a residential neighborhood. Township Attorney Ryan Cooper responded to Mr. McNamara.

Joe Ryan of 23 Columbia Avenue – spoke about the type of threats that residents of Columbia Avenue were receiving from the owner of the Airbnb property. He informed the Township Committee that he had invited the Airbnb homeowner to the Workshop Meeting. Mr. Ryan also provided feedback about the lifeguard shortage.

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

Closed Session

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

Resolution No. 2023-94.10

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

- Township Administrator
- Cranford Prevention and Wellness Alliance (Municipal Alliance)

Recorded vote:

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

Nay: None

Abstained: None

Absent: None

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Deputy Mayor Gareis and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 8:43 p.m.

On motion of Commissioner Curran, seconded by Deputy Mayor Gareis and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Kurbanoglu
Deputy Township Clerk

Dated: April 17, 2023