

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD ANNUAL REORGANIZATION
JANUARY 2, 2024**

At 5:59pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk Mary Canesi, who welcomed the audience. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on December 9, 2023, and in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

Roll Call: Mrs. Bucci – yes; Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees- yes; Mr. Leeds – yes; Mr. Notaro - yes, Mr. Polistina – yes; Mr. Smith – yes.

Mayor Chau and Chief VonColln were also in attendance; Solicitor Facenda was present via Zoom.

CEREMONIAL OATH OF OFFICE TO MAYOR CHAU

Administered by Deputy Clerk Shannon Campbell

Mayor Chau was accompanied by his family, including his sister Alica, brother-in-law Bill, his niece Jennifer, her husband John, and their children Emma and Johnny.

Deputy Clerk Campbell administered the Oath of Office; Mayor Chau’s niece Emma Hale and nephew Johnny Hale held the bible.

Mayor Chau thanked all and paused for photos.

ELECT COUNCIL PRESIDENT FOR 2024

Clerk Canesi opened the floor for nominations for Council President for the year 2024.

Councilman Dewees nominated Councilman Leeds.

Clerk Canesi asked if there were any other nominations, seeing none, the floor was closed for nominations.

Councilman Notaro motioned, Councilwoman Bucci seconded, to elect Councilman Leeds as Council President for 2024.

All members present, except for Councilman Leeds who abstained, were in favor of electing Councilman Leeds as Council President for 2024.

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ELECT COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO-TEMPORE FOR 2024

Council President Leeds opened the floor for nominations for Council President Pro Tempore for the year 2024.

Councilman Notaro nominated Councilman Dewees.

Seeing no other nominations Council President Leeds closed the floor for nominations.

Councilman Notaro motioned, Councilman Smith seconded, to elect Councilman Dewees as Council President Pro Tempore for 2024.

All members present, except for Councilman Dewees who abstained, were in favor of electing Councilman Dewees as Council President Pro Tempore for 2024.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Chau congratulated all, he acknowledged Commissioner Maureen Kern and her spouse in the audience.

Mayor Chau read the following statement:

“Good evening members of City Council, honored guests, friends, family, and residents of Northfield.

2023 was a challenging year for the municipal budget. Despite our best efforts, we were unable to maintain a zero-increase in the local purpose tax, as we had in 2022.

Increases in the cost of goods and services, along with substantial increases in employment costs resulted in a 1.5 cent increase for our residents. Even so, we continued to uphold the high level of service that our residents expect, and through efficiencies, continued to provide those services at less than 28 cents of every tax dollar.

Building department revenue decreased to less than half of what it was in 2022, but the signs of economic recovery in our business community were encouraging. Northfield happily welcomed 23 new businesses, indicating that the commercial sector continued to grow.

To foster economic growth, our City Officials have reinvigorated the City of Northfield's Economic Development Commission and have joined forces with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance.

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Together, with members of our community, and planning professionals, we are working to attract and retain commercial enterprise. This is an impressive group of people, and we are lucky to have business leaders like this in our community. Thank you to Councilwoman Bucci for her efforts and contributions with the Economic Development Commission.

Despite challenges, we continue to maintain a stable financial position, with a strong surplus balance. We have retained our AA- credit rating with a positive outlook. Our tax collection rate is strong, at 99.1%. Our total assessed value in 2023 was just over \$867 million dollars.

Other Key Accomplishments for the year 2023 included:

- City Council adopted 233 resolutions and 13 ordinances.
- We replaced over 400 feet of existing stormwater pipe along Oak Avenue, with 80% of the cost borne by the Water Company, and received close to \$100,000 in funds from the Water company towards the paving restoration of Oak Avenue
- We were awarded \$556,000 in grant funding for roadway improvements, public safety, recycling efforts, community education, and more.
- In April, we celebrated the grand opening of the new playground at Birch Grove Park
- We completed Phase II of the Sanitary Sewer Slip Lining project which will result in additional savings in our 2024 sanitary sewer flows of approximately \$175,000.
- We completed the first phase of our records imaging project: all Planning Board Records have been digitized, along with the permanent records in the Municipal Clerks Office
- We added three new sets of bleachers at the City's athletic fields and updated the City's tax maps.
- We installed new seating in Council Chambers, and awarded a contract for the replacement of the roof at City Hall, both funded by the American Rescue Act
- We purchased new vehicles for Public Works, and the Police and Fire Departments
- We were awarded a grant for energy savings improvements at municipal facilities, with an estimated annual energy savings of \$5,000.
- We entered into a shared service agreement for the services of a Chief Financial Officer and completed our second year as a participant in the Central Municipal Court of Atlantic County.
- The Police Department and Municipal Alliance hosted many events this year, including: National Night Out, Trunk or Treat at Birch Grove Park, Coffee with a Cop (twice), Cookie with a Cop, Bike Rodeo, Movie Night at Birch Grove, Hooked on Fishing, and a Senior Luncheon

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- We held our annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Veterans Day events at Veterans Park
- We conducted the Mayor's Recycling Contest and Holiday Light Contest, and held two wellness fairs for employees, with over 30 employees in attendance.
- And in June, we welcomed one of our own, Miss New Jersey, in front of City Hall with her family, friends and many residents.

Year 2024 Objectives include:

- The addition of a Frisbee Golf course at Birch Grove Park, and significant improvements to our baseball Major League field
- Phase II of our digital imaging project for our public records, to include our Building Department
- The Paving of Oak Avenue, Wabash Avenue, and a portion of Ridgewood Drive
- Completion of the upgrade to the Zion Road Sanitary Sewer Pump Station

As another year ends and we begin anew, I want to take a moment to recognize our most valuable assets – our employees and volunteers. Thank you to all for your service to our residents.

In 2023, we swore-in our new Chief of Police. We congratulated Eileen Pantalena, School Crossing Guard, who retired after an incredible 36 years of service, and we welcomed 13 new hires, including 2 police officers and 3 part-time firefighters.

We had several promotions within the Police Department, including an additional Lieutenant, and one promotion in Public Works.

We also endured tragic loss, with the deaths of Deputy Chief of the Volunteer Fire Company, Bob Leeds, and our long-time Payroll Specialist, Ray Adams.

I am grateful for the members of the Volunteer Fire Company and Ladies Auxiliary; these men and women spend countless hours away from their families to ensure the safety of ours.

Thank you to the members of the Planning Board, the Birch Grove Park Advisory Board, Cultural Committee, Library Board of Trustees, and those who plan and organize City events, such as the 4th of July Parade and Annual Holiday Tree Lighting.

Thank you to the Veterans of our community, for their past service, and for their dedication and effort to honor all who serve and have served.

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Thank you, as well, to the many parents who spend their time on the City’s athletic fields, coaching our youth sports, helping the children of our community to develop physical skills, make friends, have fun, learn teamwork, and to learn to play fair. These are life lessons that extend well beyond their time here in Northfield, and that will benefit future generations to come.

Thank you to the members of City Council for their ongoing hard work and commitment.

I look forward to working together with everyone to continue to provide excellent services to the residents of Northfield.

Thank you.”

Mayor Chau congratulated the holiday light winners and thanked the businesses who donated prizes. He announced an upcoming event at Mainland to honor the football, cheer, and band program participants for their accomplishments.

READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion by Councilwoman Carfagno with a second by Councilman Notaro, all members present, were in favor of approving the minutes of December 12, 2023, without formal reading.

PUBLIC SESSION

Council President Leeds opened this meeting for any member of the public to speak on any topic.

Ian Brady, Linwood, congratulated all on their reelection. He met with Councilman Smith and others in the park, they have opted to create a 9-hole course, initially. He asked if anything had changed or if there were any updates.

Councilman Dewees advised that once committees were assigned there would be an update.

Mr. Brady announced he would be back in two weeks.

Seeing no one else from the public or in Zoom wishing to speak the public session was closed.

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RESOLUTIONS / CONSENT AGENDA

Council President Leeds read the following statement: “All matters listed under the consent agenda are considered to be routine in nature, and having been reviewed by Council, will be enacted by one motion. Any item may be removed from the Consent Agenda at the request of any Council Member and if so removed, will be treated as a separate matter. Any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of Funds. The Executive Session of Council will be held at the end of the meeting, and we will come back in public session to make a comment on the record after the executive session has concluded. Any vote made on subjects discussed will be made in public.”

Councilman Smith announced he would be abstaining from Resolution 22-2024.

On motion of Councilman Notaro, seconded by Councilman Dewees all members present were in favor of voting on Resolutions 1-2024 through 32-2024 by Consent Agenda, with the above noted abstention.

1-2024	Annual Schedule of Meetings
2-2024	Temporary Appropriations
3-2024	Designation of Official Newspapers for the Publication of Legal Notices for the City of Northfield
4-2024	Annual Appointments
5-2024	To Authorize the Tax Assessor to File a Petition of Appeal or Appeals for the Tax Year 2024
6-2024	Safety and Health Committee Appointments
7-2024	Establishing Charges for Municipal Public Records
8-2024	Appointing Fund Commissioner and Alternate Fund Commissioner for the Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund
9-2024	Appointing Public Agency Compliance Officer
10-2024	Appointment of Risk Management Consultant in Accordance with the Bylaws of the Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund
11-2024	A Resolution Authorizing the Contact Persons to Access the Employment Practices Liability Consultation Service (EPL) / ACMJIF
12-2024	A Resolution Adopting Robert’s Rules of Order
13-2024	City of Northfield Local Emergency Management Council Appointments
14-2024	A Resolution Adopting a Cash Management Plan
15-2024	To Establish the Rate of Interest for Nonpayment of Taxes or Assessments
16-2024	Authorize Delinquent Tax Penalty Charges

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- 17-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Registered Municipal Accountant through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 18-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Licensed Land Surveyor through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 19-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Bond Counsel through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 20-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Labor Relations Attorney through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 40A:11-5 and N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 21-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Tax Appeal Attorney through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 40A:11-5 and N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 22-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Municipal Engineer through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 23-2024** Authorizing Award of Contract for Municipal Solicitor through a Fair and Open Process Pursuant to N.J.S.A 19:44A-20.5, Et Seq.
- 24-2024** Resolution Authorizing the Public Auction of Abandoned / Unclaimed Vehicles
- 25-2024** Resolution Recognizing Members of the Northfield Volunteer Fire Company
- 26-2024** Resolution Recognizing Members of the Northfield Volunteer Company Ladies' Auxiliary
- 27-2024** Resolution Authorizing Contracts with Certain Approved State Contract Vendors for Contracting Units Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-12a
- 28-2024** Authorizing Award of Professional Services Contract for Continuing Disclosure Agent Services and Independent Registered Municipal Advisor of Record
- 29-2024** To Reject the Sole Proposal and Authorize Re-Advertisement of Request for Proposals for Renovations to the Existing Little League Major Field at Birch Grove Park
- 30-2024** Designating Custodians of Records in Accordance with the Open Public Records Act
- 31-2024** Approving Job Description for Inspections Department Supervisor
- 32-2024** A Resolution Providing for an Executive Session Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(7) – Matters Covered Under the Attorney Client Privilege

Councilman Notaro motioned, Councilman Dewees seconded, to adopt the Consent Agenda.

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Roll Call: Mrs. Bucci – yes; Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees- yes; Mr. Notaro – yes; Mr. Polistina – yes; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Leeds – yes; Motion carried.

Clerk Canesi noted the abstention of Councilman Smith on Resolution 22-2024.

ORDINANCE

Councilman Dewees motioned; Councilman Smith seconded to introduce Ordinance 1-2024.

1-2024 Ordinance Providing for and Establishing Salary Ranges of Officers and Employees of the City of Northfield and Repealing All Ordinances Heretofore Adopted, the Provisions of Which are Inconsistent Herewith
*Introduction / No Public Input / Published in the Press of AC 1/07/2023
2nd Reading / Public Hearing / Final Consideration 1/17/2023*

The Municipal Clerk read the Ordinance by title, stated that this is the first reading, and announced the publication, public hearing, and final consideration dates. The full Ordinance has been posted in the lobby of City Hall and on the City website, and copies are available at no cost in the office of the Municipal Clerk between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday to any member of the public who requests same.

Roll Call: Mrs. Bucci – yes; Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees- yes; Mr. Notaro – yes; Mr. Polistina– yes; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Leeds – yes; Motion carried.

PAYMENT OF BILLS \$ 61,789.64

Councilman Smith motioned, Councilman Dewees seconded, for payment of bills.

Roll Call: Mrs. Bucci – yes; Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees- yes; Mr. Notaro – yes; Mr. Polistina– yes; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Leeds – yes; Motion carried.

MEETING NOTICES

Council President Leeds read the meeting notices.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

32-2024 A Resolution Providing for an Executive Session Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(7) – Matters Covered Under the Attorney Client Privilege

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Clerk Canesi read the resolution by title and announced that it had just been adopted as part of the Consent Agenda. Clerk Canesi announced that members of the public who were in attendance in-person would need to exit Council Chambers during the Executive Session. For those participating via Zoom, the audio and video portions of the meeting would be paused. At the conclusion of the Executive Session of Council, the Council would resume the public session, including reactivating the audio and video for Zoom participants, and welcoming the return of the in-person public. A public statement would be made for the record at that time.

Clerk Canesi further stated that we are required to set forth as much information as possible as to the subject matter to be discussed as well as provide for the public the amount of time they can expect to elapse before the non-public portion of the minutes can be disclosed. She deferred to the Counsel for further explanation.

Solicitor Facenda announced that the matter to be discussed was the appointment of a conflict labor counsel. The minutes would be kept and made available when permitted and required by law. The timeframe for the release of those minutes is unknown. Council will remain in Council Chambers and return to the public session when the Executive Session is complete for a short statement.

Mayor Chau asked to make a couple of statements prior to moving to Executive Session. He congratulated Mr. DeBlasio on his appointment as engineer and recognized Councilman Polistina for his service as Council President for the past three years.

Solicitor Facenda also asked to note that Nancy Holm sent everyone a memo from our COAH Counsel - is anyone available or willing to attend the Appropriations Committee Meeting Thursday at noon? Our counsel is attempting to garner support to oppose this pending bill. We will be represented by Jeff Surenian.

Council President Leeds confirmed that no one from Council could attend.

Solicitor Facenda would advise Ms Holm.

At 6:30pm Council entered Executive Session and remained in Council Chambers.

At 6:46pm the Executive Session of Council was adjourned, and the Regular Meeting resumed in Council Chambers.

Solicitor Facenda announced that the Executive Session had concluded. The matters discussed involved attorney client privilege and the appointment of a conflict labor counsel as a professional service. The minutes would be kept and made available when permitted and required by law. The timeframe for the release of those minutes is unknown. Council could now consider Resolution 33-2024.

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Councilman Dewees motioned, Councilman Notaro seconded, to adopt Resolution 33-2024.

33-2024 Authorizing the Appointment of Conflict Labor Counsel in Accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 (1) as a Professional Service

Roll Call: Mrs. Bucci – yes; Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees- yes; Mr. Notaro – yes; Mr. Polistina– yes; Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Leeds – yes; Motion carried.

At approximately 6:46pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk