

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 18, 2014**

At 5:59pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi Municipal Clerk. It was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 11, 2014 in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor McGee. Following the flag salute a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chau, Devine, Dewees, Perri, Piergiovanni, Travagline
Absent: O'Neill

Also in attendance were Engineer Kwapinski, Mayor McGee, Solicitor Facenda and Acting Police Captain Dan Mitchell.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- Presentation from Rutala Associates – Grant Writer

Council President Travagline introduced Jim Rutala from Rutala Associates, a grant writing firm. He stated they come highly recommended.

Jim Rutala shared his work history. He started out as Planning Director for Atlantic County, served on the ACUA Board and was City Manager for the City of Ocean City. His resume is well suited for grant writing since his prior employment relied heavily on getting money. He listed his present municipal clientele and highlighted several key projects including a \$10,000,000.00 grant for a seawall in Atlantic City. He stated that his firm acquires approximately \$30,000,000.00 annually for their clients. He added that he serves on the Linwood Planning Board and in that capacity has secured grants for Linwood, including one to extend the bike path around Mainland Regional High School. Rutala Associates will provide a one page grant summary for all grants that become available including requirements and submission deadlines free of charge.

Councilman Chau asked if Rutala Associates does Police and Fire grants.

Jim Rutala answered yes and provided a list of several such grants.

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Mayor McGee asked if the City can have paperwork ready before a grant becomes available.

Jim Rutala stated this is difficult to do since grants change a little bit every year and plans need to be comprehensive. Each grant has to be written to the actual requirements of a specific grant.

Council President Travagline noted that a committee has been established to start working on proposed projects and begin the planning process.

Councilman Chau asked about the compensation for the firm.

Jim Rutala stated the firm only works when authorized for a specific application. The firm does not get a percentage of the grant and there is no reduction in fees if a grant application is not approved. His firm charges a \$2,000.00 retainer and the hourly rate is \$135.00 which includes everything. There are no outside fees.

Council President Travagline explained past efforts to find a grant writer, including going out for RFP and looking at an in house person. He expressed his confidence in Rutala Associates.

Councilmen Dewees, Piergiovanni, Perri, and Devine together with Mayor McGee stated they were in favor of Rutala Associates.

Councilman Chau stated that a former grant person working for the municipality received a percentage of what he brought in and he thinks that was an incentive. He added that he hopes Rutala Associates success rate will make it worthwhile.

Councilman Perri mentioned that Rutala's first assignment should be to get a status update on the Department of Transportation grant that was approved to put sidewalks on Route 9.

Council President Travagline asked Municipal Clerk Canesi for an update.

Municipal Clerk Canesi stated there was an update of some sort in 2012, maybe 2013, from Matt Doran; she did not recall what the update was but that there was movement of some sort.

Council President Travagline stated he would like a resolution to award to Rutala Associates at the March 11, 2014 Council meeting.

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Solicitor Facenda asked if Mr. Rutala could quantify a typical grant so we can have an idea of how much it will cost.

Jim Rutala stated there is no typical grant but when the one page summary is provided an estimate of the number of hours required will be included so the City can estimate what his fees would be.

Councilman Chau asked if there are shared grant opportunities that two towns can apply for.

Jim Rutala said that there was no reason why not and it might even strengthen the application.

Council President Travagline urged Council to come forward with any concerns as it will be on the agenda for consideration on March 11, 2014 to award to Rutala Associates.

- Review of Final Proposed Paving List

Councilman Dewees referred Council to the proposed paving lists. He asked if anyone had any questions.

Councilman Chau asked if paving includes curbing.

Engineer Kwapinski stated that it is included only if the existing curbing is disturbed or if there is a grade change or if there will be concrete curbing involved. Otherwise, it's just asphalt, resurfacing and paving. He referred Council to the color coded map and diagram that was distributed at the beginning of the meeting.

Councilman Dewees stated he was in favor of recycling materials for paving but has reservations. He asked if cores could be done because he wants assurance that the roads will last. He added that he was concerned about compaction.

6:48pm Councilman O'Neill entered the meeting

Engineer Kwapinski estimated 95 as the typical compaction to look at and explained that the current roads have approximately two inches of asphalt. He added that the process involves pulverizing eight inches instead of removing eight inches and bringing in all new material. He clarified that the pulverizing process is reusing the existing material.

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Discussion ensued, including Councilmen Perri, Dewees, Piergiovanni, Mayor McGee and Engineer Kwapinski with regard to durability and other aspects of using the recycling process.

Council President Travagline asked if Council is in approval of the existing proposed list. He reiterated his request for Council's approval of the priority of the streets. He noted that if funding is not available the last street, Yorkshire Avenue may not happen.

Councilman Perri stated that if that happens he would like to see at least part of it completed.

Councilman O'Neill suggested a punch list of problem areas that resulted from road openings.

Engineer Kwapinski stated he will put that together.

- Road Opening Moratorium Waiver for New Jersey American Water Company, as presented by Dan Kwapinski of Schaffer, Nassar, Scheidegg Consulting Engineers, LLC

Engineer Kwapinski provided an overview of the request to waive street opening moratorium for New Jersey American Water Company, referring to the color coded maps provided earlier in the evening. New Jersey American Water Company wants to make improvements to address the water quality issues that exist in the area.

Councilman Dewees asked if the waiver request is only for this one project.

Engineer Kwapinski explained there was an additional request for the area where the City will be paving next year as part of Broad Street Phase 3.

Councilman Perri asked if the contractor would be required to post performance guarantees.

Engineer Kwapinski answered yes; but noted that the contractor would prefer that the City pave it and provide a cost share.

Solicitor Facenda indicated that there could be issues and that it should be clearly spelled out who is responsible.

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Engineer Kwapinski continued to explain that the utility company would like to enter into a cost sharing agreement, whereby instead of paving they estimate the cost and give the City the money rather than the service. He added that if we don't do this the utility company will just wait until the moratorium expires and then they would pave a half width.

Solicitor Facenda urged that all the details be established and finalized before the moratorium is granted.

Council President Travagline urged that questions be directed to Engineer Kwapinski and noted this topic will be put back on the agenda for March 11, 2014.

Councilman Perri suggested that the trench be backfilled and compacted but not paved, serving as a temporary solution until final paving.

Solicitor Facenda explained his reservations that the contractors are fully in agreement as to their obligations. He added that he is concerned that the City has nothing in writing from the contractor.

Municipal Clerk Canesi urged that all terms be in an agreement form and that said agreement should be used when voting on the moratorium waiver resolution and authorized to be executed as part of same.

- Proposed Switch in Rx Benefits for City employees

Council President Travagline switched topic for discussion to the proposed switch in the prescription benefits for City employees.

Councilman Perri explained the proposed switch from a copayment plan to a coinsurance plan. He stated that he had attempted to reach out to the unions but was unable to reach all representatives and feels that more negotiations will be required.

Council President Travagline distributed worksheets to Council and Mayor that outlined the plans and costs and reviewed same. He explained the options are to keep it as is; or to switch Horizon BC outside of the State Health Benefits Plan at an approximate savings of \$60,000.00 - \$80,000.00; or direct employees to NJ Direct 15 Plan which would save approximately \$45,000.00; or to go to a major medical prescription plan at a saving of approximately \$65,000.00 annually. He advocated that the prescription switch is a change in payment terms not in benefits.

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Councilman Perri noted that any reduction in premium would automatically result in a reduction in what the employee would pay.

Council President Travagline asked if anyone had any questions.

Councilman Devine asked why a broker would be cheaper.

Council President Travagline explained loss ratio as part of a large pool of towns with the State Health Benefit Program, as opposed to standing alone with a broker. He stated the downside is that there is no guarantee the rate would stay low. He added you lose the cushion of having a more stabilized loss ratio.

Councilman Perri indicated that the Fire Department wanted to open the contract.

Council President Travagline stated that it is unfortunate that revenues are declining and expenses are rising. He noted that this topic will be discussed again at the next work session.

- Topics for County / State Liaison Piergiovanni to address with County and / or State Personnel on behalf of Northfield

Council President Travagline asked if anyone has any topics for the County/State Committee to take to either entity.

Councilman Perri indicated that historically the Mayor would spearhead these efforts. He added that the Mayor should be the head executive and should use the Mayor's Association together with New Jersey League of Municipalities, when applicable.

Council President Travagline stated he sees the Committee as just another avenue to communicate.

Councilman O'Neill advocated that City Council have a representative with the County due to the presence of County infrastructure in the town, cited recent cutting down of trees and Tilton Road. He added that someone needs to set forth the Council's expectations.

Councilman Perri cited the difference between the Legislative and Executive branches of the government.

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Councilman Piergiovanni supported Mayor McGee interacting with other Mayors and County executives; but feels that Council should address things such as the trees being cut down.

Council President Travagline stated he feels that certain things need to be addressed, such as the City's request for flashing lights on Shore Road and noted that Freeholder Risley had a sign moved in one day based on a request made by a member of City Council.

Councilman Dewees stated that a single voice is advisable.

Councilman Perri reiterated that it should be the Mayor or Council President.

- Proposed Nominal Increase in Sewer Fees

Council President Travagline referred to proposed increase in sewer fees. He noted that funding was appropriated for sewer infrastructure improvements. He requested an analysis from CFO Stollenwerk and that analysis indicated that no increase is warranted at this time based on current revenues.

Councilman O'Neill asked if the sewer interlocal has a graduated increase annually.

Councilman Perri stated it's negotiated but he isn't sure about this year.

Municipal Clerk Canesi explained that the sewer interlocal expired on December 31, 2013. She added that it has not been signed as a renewal and that Linwood is satisfied, but Northfield wants to meet. She noted that Linwood is the chair, but they have not yet set up a meeting.

Councilman O'Neill noted that dispatch fees increased approximately \$50,000.00 this year, but we can get out of our dispatch contract in sixty days.

Council President Travagline asked if anyone wants to pursue increasing sewer rates; no one responded.

- Possible Advertisement to Hire a Part Time Firefighter

Councilman Chau stated he was not in favor of a part-time firefighter.

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Councilman Perri indicated that NJSA 40A:14-44 gives preference to volunteers, considers residency and veteran status. He added it should go to the volunteers and it should be advertised.

Councilman Chau suggested eliminating all full-time Police and Fire. He stated they should make them all part-time. He said he finds it hard to believe that Council thinks they will be able to find someone to fill this position. He further added that he feels it could be a legal issue, if through attrition, the City acquires part-time staff by not replacing full-time employees who leave.

Council President Travagline explained that the part-time position was conceived as a means of reducing overtime.

Councilman Chau stated overtime is unavoidable. He noted that last year the department had three men each out of commission for one month. He said it is not in the best interest of the safety and welfare of the residents to have a part-time employee. He added that the Fire Chief does not feel a part-time employee is a good idea. He also stated that Brigantine ended up with a legal issue when they tried to hire a part-time firefighter.

Mayor McGee stated that the Fire Department should provide an explanation as to why they did not hire the two part timers that were budgeted for in 2012 and not just that the Fire Department thought it would work out better. They should provide proof that it did or did not work out better. He added that the Assistant Chief told him that there were firefighters out for 6 months last year, which resulted in the increase in overtime.

Councilman Chau stated that the 2013 budgeted overtime amount was \$35,000.00. They used all but \$600.00 of it. He noted that the 2012 overtime amount was \$16,000.00 and they used all but \$375.00 of that.

Councilman O'Neill urged Council to put an immediate freeze on overtime in all departments unless approved by Council President or the Mayor.

Councilman Chau stated he believes that should be left up to each Council chair.

Council President Travagline asked if Fire Department goes out on all EMS calls.

Councilman Chau stated the practice had roots in showing up to all EMS calls back when the rescue squad was volunteer.

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Councilman Perri said that the Fire Manual indicates that if personnel are available they have to respond.

Councilman O'Neill asked if there are still three men on each shift Monday through Friday.

Councilman Chau answered sometimes.

Councilman O'Neill asked if anyone's getting overtime to ensure that there are three men on day shift.

Councilman Chau replied that is what he's being told.

Councilman Piergiovanni urged further fact finding about staffing, scheduling etc. before the decision is made with regard to a part-time firefighter or not. He suggested that it has to be a cooperative effort. The services are necessary but the budget has to be reduced.

Council President asked if anyone wants to advertise a part-time firefighter.

Councilman Perri does not think an advertisement is necessary. He believes that a notice on the volunteer bulletin board is sufficient.

Councilman O'Neill suggested asking Linwood what they pay.

Municipal Clerk Canesi explained hourly rate of approximately \$16.00 based on step one wage and number of hours a full-time firefighter would work as per the contract. She added that she and CFO Stollenwerk proposed a range of \$15.00-\$25.00 with Council deciding on the rate.

Council President Travagline stated that the part-time firefighter will be discussed again at the March 11, 2014 Council meeting

Solicitor Facenda stated that if New Jersey American Water performs the restoration, they do that per the current ordinance. He added that there are items that the water company's contractor may not be required to do under the current ordinance. His recommendation is to get New Jersey American Water to restore in accordance with the current ordinance, plus the additional conditions, and then proceed with the waiver and vote on it at the budget meeting on February 27, 2014.

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Councilman Dewees urged caution. He stated that the City will have every utility claiming they need a waiver.

Solicitor Facenda reiterated his reservations.

Council President Travagline asked if there were any other questions regarding the agenda for the regular meeting and made assignments.

Councilman Perri asked about Resolution 53-2014.

Councilman Chau stated it was fact finding for him.

Councilman Perri asked if Assistant Chief Crooks received a Rice Notice.

Municipal Clerk Canesi answered yes.

PUBLIC SESSION

Council President Travagline opened the meeting to any member of the public wishing to speak on any subject.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, stated that the shed blew done at Veterans' Park and asked who the new council person is assigned to the Veterans' Park Committee.

Councilman Piergiovanni stated that he is the liaison to the Committee.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, continued his comments. He stated that volunteers used to cover vacancies or open shifts in the Fire Department. He added that City hall should not be locked at night; a person who needs help should be able to get it. He also stated that he would like to see the shed at Veterans' Park put back up.

Councilman O'Neill asked if the shed is damaged or can it be reassembled.

Robert Webb, 218 West Revere Avenue, commented that he did not know yet and also indicated that the flags need to be replaced.

Councilman Piergiovanni stated that the next Veterans' Park meeting would be on February 25, 2014 at 5pm at City Hall.

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Seeing no one else from the public wishing to speak, Council President Travagline closed the public session.

At 7:33pm on motions properly made and seconded this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC
Municipal Clerk