

CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
JUNE 25, 2024

At 6:03pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 6, 2024, and in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Bucci; Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Polistina; Councilman Smith.

Absent: Council President Leeds

Mayor Chau, Solicitor Facenda, Engineer Mauro, and Patrolman Sundstrom (on behalf of Chief of Police VonColln) were also present.

Councilwoman Bucci welcomed all to the meeting and announced Mayor Chau, Councilwoman Carfagno, and the Cultural Committee to present the Cultural Committee Awards.

6PM – CULTURAL COMMITTEE AWARDS

- 1st Baby - Maxwell Murphy O’Connell
 - *Born January 4, 2025, to parents Ryan and Samantha O’Connell*

Joan Brennan, Cultural Committee, called forward the O’Connell family.

Rob Patrick, Cultural Committee, read the following statement:

“Northfield’s first baby of 2024 is Maxwell Murphy O’Connell born to Ryan and Samantha O’Connell. Ryan is a police officer originally from Linwood and Sam is in healthcare sales from Pennsylvania. Ryan and Sam joined the wonderful Northfield community in 2018 after meeting in college in North Carolina. They got married shortly after purchasing their home and welcomed their first child, Maxwell on January 4th, 2024, at 12:15 am at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, Mainland Campus. Max arrived fashionably late; six days after his expected December due date in order to win this award. He follows in his late great uncle's footsteps with this tremendous honor. Max loves to smile, laugh, and pet his puppy named Macy. You’ll often catch Max out on the town on one of his many daily walks to Veterans Park.”

Mayor Chau presented the family with a certificate commemorating the occasion.

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- Mrs. 4th of July – Eleanor Webb

Ms Brennan announced Mrs. Eleanor Webb, our Mrs. 4th of July, and called her forward.

Mr. Patrick read the following statement:

“Eleanor Webb was born March 31st, 1934, on English Creek in Egg Harbor Township. Eleanor was the youngest of three girls born to Catherine and Russell Swift. Eleanor went to Scullville schools and Pleasantville high school and then finally went on to receive her teaching degree from Glassboro college.

Eleanor then went on to teach at Egg Harbor Township schools for over 25 years. She loved her job teaching with what she called “the beginners” first graders!

As a side note the Russell Swift school was named after her father from years of service on the school board in Egg Harbor Township.

Eleanor and Bob were married in 1956 when Bob was in the Navy. Bob started off being a fireman and worked for Wilson dairy. Eleanor and Bob moved to Northfield in 1956 in the middle of a snowstorm! In 1964, Bob decided to move to the Police Department because at that time it paid \$300.00 more a year and they had three children to feed so he decided to become a police officer in the mid 1960’s. The Webb house was the place to be. The kids all loved her and all the neighborhood kids played in their backyard. They had a tree for it and a dollhouse to play in, they absolutely loved playing there! Once Bob became Sergeant of the Northfield Police Department, he worked nights she spent hours at Birch Grove park letting Bob sleep but they enjoyed playing in the park the kids loved Birch Grove after retirement Bob and Eleanor were at Birch Grove park putting together Bob's military shed that sits next to the Cultural museum and Casto house with all of his boats that he put together they were in there working on it when Joyce Pullan decided to ask Eleanor if she would assist with the museum as a volunteer. Eleanor said she would and from then on, she spent a lot of her time assisting with whatever was needed at the museum and the cultural community. Bob and Eleanor both came to all the meetings and discussed events that were going on with the museum and Birch Grove park. After Bob passed, Eleanor continued to work at the museum and as Joyce Pullan put in the book (*Who is Buried in Northfield*) Eleanor was listed head docent. Eleanor immediately started working at the museum with Roy and Joyce and was there to assist with anything that was being done then.

Eleanor did several things in her lifetime besides her teaching, for years, raising three children and being the wife of a police Sergeant! She volunteered on the book to the end on the preparing and putting together *Who is buried in Northfield Atlantic County Burial Ground*. She worked on the Culture committee flea market and she had a very active participation in working and creating the veterans park and auxiliary, the American Legion and of course volunteers at her church. Eleanor has

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lived in Northfield for 68 years. Eleanor and Bob had three children, Bob, Teresa, and Linda, and nine grandchildren and three great grandkids. We love you and are proud to call you Mrs. 4th of July for 2024.”

Mayor Chau presented Mrs. Webb with a certificate. He announced that Mrs. Webb does so much for Northfield, she is at every City event and we were grateful for her support.

Ms Brennan pinned a sash on Mrs. Webb and presented her with a crown.

- Citizen of the Year – Post Crashers

Ms. Brennan announced the American Legion Post Crashers as Citizens of the Year and called them forward.

Mr. Patrick read the following statement:

“Nearly ten years ago, the first ‘crash’ at the Harvey D. Johnson American Legion Post 295 in Northfield marked the beginning of an extraordinary journey. Contrary to its name, Post Crashers was founded to renovate the building where veterans gather, rekindling the camaraderie shared by those who have served. In 2014, the Post Crashers, armed with determination and student volunteers, began their mission to support veterans and combat food insecurity.

Over the years, more than 900 volunteers have transformed a once dark and dreary Legion Hall with an overgrown yard into a bright and welcoming space. The renovations include a remodeled kitchen, new floors, new bathrooms, and a deck suitable for events and meetings. The revitalized yard now features a community garden, greenhouse, and a fence.

Ten years ago, the club was founded by Bradey Ferguson, a middle school student at Northfield Community School, and now a Harvard graduate. Bradey secured over \$200,000 in grants to support the Post Crashers' efforts. The current student leaders, brothers Christopher and Brian Garrabrandt, now juniors and seniors at Ocean City High School, have been involved since seventh grade. Recently, they secured \$6,500 in grants to support the garden and provide monthly meals for veterans. Student volunteers from across South Jersey contribute to these efforts.

Post Crashers' impact extends beyond renovations. They have prepared 20,000 lunches for the homeless, served 4,800 full-course meals to homeless veterans, and grown over 12,000 pounds of produce for those facing food insecurity. Additionally, Brian and Chris run a food recovery program that has donated over 108,000 bagels and organized food drives yielding thousands of pounds of food for emergency shelters.

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The students of Post Crashers have made a remarkable difference in their community through dedication and hard work, embodying the true spirit of service.”

Mayor Chau presented the Post Crashers with a certificate commemorating the occasion and noted that he had known Carol Ferguson for many years, he praised the efforts of the Post Crashers in feeding those in need with the produce from their victory garden. He thanked them all.

Councilwoman Bucci congratulated all.

At 6:15pm on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of a brief recess.

At 6:22pm Councilwoman Bucci resumed the meeting.

Councilwoman Bucci moved to committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Dewees – Buildings/Grounds, Athletic Fields; Birch Grove Park, Bike Path, 1st Street Playground, Veterans Park; Public Works: Roads, Engineering

Councilman Dewees reported the bandstand was painted in anticipation of upcoming work, the roof work was winding down, once that is done there was some interior work. It was something to look forward to.

Councilwoman Bucci – Insurance and Safety; Planning Board; Economic Development / Chamber of Commerce

Councilwoman Bucci had no report but would like to recognize the Northfield Business Association members here tonight, they were up to 65 members, she thanked them for everything they do for our community.

Councilman Polistina – Finance and Collections; Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Library; Municipal Alliance Senior Citizens

Councilman Polistina had no report.

Councilman Smith - Central Municipal Court; Little League and Babe Ruth; Northfield Community School; Shared Services

Councilman Smith announced that he, Councilman Leeds, and Solicitor Facenda met with Judge Blee last Monday; they need to get more information from Hammonton to proceed.

Solicitor Facenda added that he followed up with Mr. Malinsky to get the

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information to Hammonton as soon as possible.

Councilman Smith continued; he thanked the South Jersey South Shore Baseball League for hosting a baseball clinic this past weekend for Northfield youth; members of Mainland Regional High School softball were there to help out with girls. He thanked them for the free clinic. He congratulated Councilwoman Bucci on her wedding anniversary and his wife on his own, 20-year anniversary.

Councilwoman Carfagno - Technology / MRHS Channel; Cultural Committee / Veteran Liaison; Mainland Regional

Councilwoman Carfagno for Mainland Regional, congratulated graduates including Ryan Foltz (son of Mary Foltz with the Northfield Business Association), Casey Bretones (daughter of Superintendent of Northfield Community School Pete Bretones), Kylie Smith (daughter of Councilman Brian Smith), Denver Obermayer (daughter of Inspections Department Supervisor Jessica Caramma), Luca Canesi who graduated from ACIT (son of Municipal Clerk/Business Administrator Mary Canesi), and her own son, Nikko Carfagno. The Mainland Regional High School budget meeting was scheduled for this week. She congratulated all Cultural Committee award recipients. Parade forms were still available on the website. Council was working on honoring veterans with banners via a Hometown Heroes Program. She would have a flyer and some sort of information form; she encouraged all to watch for that, and she asked for Council's support in honoring our hometown heroes.

Councilwoman Bucci conducted a straw poll vote to gauge favor of proceeding with the Hometown Heroes Banner Program; all members present were in favor.

Councilman Smith suggested Veterans Park as an option, but, yes.

Councilman Notaro - Inspections, Housing/Zoning; Sewer Operations; Northfield Sports (FAN)

Councilman Notaro had no report.

Council President Leeds – Fire Department/EMS

Council President Leeds was absent. Councilwoman Bucci read the following on his behalf:

“Two weeks ago, I saw a post on social media about children trying to raise money for a pool membership. They were selling lemonade and cookies to help raise money.

I reached out to Chief VonColln and Captain Nixon and asked if their on-duty members would consider joining me there. Without hesitation our public safety teams accompanied me to the 500 block of Burton Avenue.

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Each and every time I've asked our police and fire to join in a community gathering, they without hesitation step up.

I would like to express my gratitude to Firefighter Chris Sacco, Firefighter Cole Leeds, Police Sergeant Pete Czaplinski, Police Officers Brandon Garofalo and Andrew Griess, and Supervisor of Public Works Darren Boyd. He just happened to come upon the lemonade stand.

This is just another reminder that when it comes to showing our community we care. Our Public Safety team is right there.

Thank you to all who made these kids day. By the way, Sergeant Czaplinski was right, those cookies were amazing.

AtlantiCare has taken over our EMS effective June 12 at 7am. I was at the kickoff at the Linwood EMS building with Captain Nixon and Linwood's BA. I was asked to speak on behalf of Northfield and I welcomed AtlantiCare back and expressed our desire for a great relationship with the City."

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Electric Vehicles – *Councilmen Polistina and Notaro.*
No update.

Special Events Ordinance – *Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Dewees.*
Councilwoman Bucci stated she would be scheduling a meeting to move forward with a special events ordinance.

Affordable Housing – *Councilwoman Carfagno, Councilman Polistina*
Councilwoman Bucci noted there was a closed session on tonight's agenda.

Insurance Requirements Review – *Councilman Polistina, Councilwoman Bucci.*
Councilwoman Bucci reported the ordinance was on the agenda tonight.

Road Opening Ordinance – *Councilmen Dewees and Notaro.*
Councilman Dewees reported there were a few items that required further review.

Councilwoman Bucci announced the school's presentation.

6:30PM PRESENTATION, SPIEZLE ARCHITECTURAL GROUP, JUSTIN KOZIK ON BEHALF OF THE NORTHFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Pete Bretones, Superintendent of Northfield Community School, thanked Council for allowing the presentation; the new school was not so new, it opened in 1998. Many of the improvements in the bond are driven by program needs. He explained and listed various programs that required small group instruction, many of which are

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currently operating in temporary spaces that are created with partitions. The Department of Education was looking for Northfield Community School to provide a more permanent instruction space. They also needed to bring the media center up to current technology standards. The playground equipment was not ADA compliant and needed to be replaced. He noted a few exterior improvements and highlighted a need for security enhancements to the vestibule. Now was the time to take advantage of a bond referendum, it's an investment in the future for the children of tomorrow. All projects qualify for 40% funding from the State in the form of aid. There was zero tax impact due to retiring debt. It was more cost effective to plan the projects now, as opposed to one at a time. The projects needed to be done, if they don't get done with the bond referendum, it will be from the operating budget. The school has always been fiscally responsible. These needs are critical. Northfield is a great place to live, a big reason is our schools.

Justin Kozik showed a presentation on the overhead screen. He explained how the process unfolded. It was a year-long process that began with a facilities assessment, including all systems and the building envelope, they came up with a project list and then prioritized based on the need. He turned the presentation over to Geoff Zeigler.

Geoff Zeigler continued to review the school's plan via the overhead slides, including the playground, downspouts and gutters, and hollow metal doors, which will be replaced with fiberglass reinforced plastic. He noted flooring to be replaced, kitchen equipment, media center modifications, renovated bathrooms and locker rooms, and a secure enclosed vestibule, plumbing and electrical repairs and upgrades.

Sherry Tracy, Phoenix Advisers, reviewed the financial estimates for the project. It was a total of 8.6 million dollars. The district was very excited that all projects were eligible for State aid on principal and interest. The repayment was a 15-year term. She reiterated the neutral impact on the tax rate due to retiring debt.

Justin Kozik continued; in terms of a timeline, the district approved the project scope in September of 2023, they sent it to the Department of Education in December of 2023 and would adopt the referendum question in June 2024 with submission to the County for inclusion as a special question at an election on September 17th. If approved, the playground would come first and be completed by September 2025. The second phase will consist of two phases of construction, they were going out to bid in spring 2025, with some work being done summer 2025, and the bulk in September 2026, with all work complete in September 2026. He restated that if the bond was not approved the cost of the improvements would come from the operating budget, there was zero tax impact, and 40% debt service aid. If the project was done from the operating budget, they would lose economies of scale and the project would be more expensive. He offered to answer any questions.

Mayor Chau asked if it would interfere with the school calendar and inquired about the solar panels.

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Mr. Kozik replied, no, and that the solar panels were under warranty and being maintained.

Councilman Notaro asked would any students be displaced during construction.

Mr. Kozik replied, no.

Councilwoman Carfagno asked about the doors and referred to prior door replacements.

Mr. Kozik noted these were the balance that were not replaced under prior projects.

Councilman Smith asked was the 40% part of the \$8.6M or was that after the 40%?

Mr. Kozik replied the \$8.6M was the total cost, before the 40%.

Councilman Polistina asked was there a cost for the referendum and was it rolled into the administrative fees?

Mr. Kozik replied, yes it was rolled into the project; if asked if there were any other questions?

Mayor Chau asked if the \$8.6 million was all or none?

Mr. Kozik replied, yes, it's a single question.

Mr. Bretones added that the Board did adopt the Resolution to authorize the public question.

Mr. Kozik thanked Council.

Mr. Bretones thanked all, noting this was a very important project for the district.

Councilman Smith thanked Mr. Bretones.

Councilwoman Bucci moved to the work session.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – ONGOING BUSINESS

There was no ongoing business.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

There were no new grant opportunities.

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REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Councilwoman Bucci made the assignments.

Councilwoman Bucci asked if any member of Council wanted any resolutions voted on separately?

Councilman Smith questioned Resolution 142-2024 and the need to replace all cameras.

Clerk Canesi explained the banned-vendor list set forth by Governor Murphy in 2023; our camera system was made by a manufacturer on the banned list.

PUBLIC SESSION / FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

Councilwoman Bucci opened the public portion of the meeting for any person to comment on any subject, she asked that all persons state their name and city of residence for the record and observe the five-minute limit per speaker.

Pete Brophy, Northfield, was a member of the Planning Board. He announced that at the last Planning Board meeting they were presented as a courtesy by the Council, a presentation, to encourage economic development. The presentation was via Zoom and many members of the Board had questions and were unclear on a number of things, and perhaps a delay for more time to consider was needed. He thanked Councilwoman Bucci for suggesting they come to the public session tonight and do it this way. He understood that the age of housing stock was a factor. He also understood that a liquor license for Tilton theater was one of the reasons. If he understood correctly, a developer could spot a tract of land, and put a hotel on it with homes next door, submit a plan to the Council and have it approved. Residents don't want to see an erosion of our residential zoning. He felt this was a work around for zoning, it becomes inconsequential. He asked what was the benefit to the taxpayer? He asked did a resident get the benefit if they were in a home in need of rehabilitation. There was a stigma attached to the word rehabilitation that does not apply to Northfield, at all. He asked had anyone done a cost analysis? He didn't think Northfield residents wanted another liquor license in town. He understood there was a new law that would allow the transfer of a liquor license but was unclear on how that would work. He called Eric Brophy, the Governor's Aid, and was told the entire mechanism was completely unclear and rules had not yet been formulated. The town was 98% built out, he did not understand where it could work without causing residential harm. He reiterated his questions; how does this benefit the City and does it not render zoning ineffective? And why not select areas, as opposed to the entire town, he did not know if the Council considered that?

Solicitor Facenda announced that Tiffany Morrissey our Planner was here, as was Nancy Holm, they could answer questions.

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David Goldstein, Dolphin Avenue, on behalf of Joan Brennan, stated that she'd come up with the idea a while ago to honor veterans on telephone poles etc. She brought it to City Council and had done research, she would like to make a presentation at the July meeting on what she's learned.

Councilwoman Carfagno explained that earlier this evening Council did a straw poll to move forward, Mark Doherty would be giving a presentation.

Councilwoman Bucci added, there was no reason Mrs. Brennan can't be involved as well.

Mr. Goldstein added that he saw the school's presentation, the school does a great job. Regarding the need for the school to replace kitchen equipment, he would like to know what they need to replace, he was not against the referendum, but someone independent should look at what they are proposing. He felt they needed a culinary expert for the kitchen and someone electrical for the electric, etc.

Clem Scharff, Northfield, was the Vice Chairman of the Planning Board, he referred to the Resolution and intent to aid in revitalization, sale of property without public bidding, and tax abatement programs. He referred to Pleasantville's attempt to sell their sewer assets, which was unsuccessful. He asked was there any plan to sell the sewer assets?

Councilman Notaro replied no, we were in fact, upgrading.

Councilman Polistina added that before he was on Council, Northfield was being courted by someone, he was against it now and was then. That was not part of this discussion.

Mr. Scharff thanked Council.

Richard Levitt, Northfield, Planning Board Chairman, thanked Councilwoman Bucci for being a very engaged liaison between the Planning Board and the Council. He referenced the proposed rehabilitation designation Resolution. This Resolution would not address the age of housing stock and did not address issues with sewer. The Board was skeptical that it will be helpful and, in some ways, may be counterproductive. He commented on the designation of the entire City as in need of rehabilitation as stigmatizing. He noted thoroughness of our COAH Plan, and the difficulty in finding developable space, he noted the Gurwicz property and the driving range. Current zoning permits pretty much anything in the R-C Zone; the Planning Board goes out of their way to approve. He noted the ease with which the Moppert Brothers business was approved. He approached Gurwicz about what the Planning Board could do to help them promote the business, and believed Mr. Gurwicz was content as is. There was no guarantee a liquor license would go to the Tilton Theater. The City would get no benefit from the transfer of a liquor license. The resolution would permit tax abatements, he did not believe there was a lot of

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appetite for that. Passing the resolution would incur fees, what was the benefit? Galloway and Ventnor, who also did this, are very different from Northfield. Would this further economic development, lower taxes or improve quality of life? Dr. Levitt did not believe it would. The Planning Board has asked for an extension.

Solicitor Facenda replied that the Resolution to extend was on the agenda.

Councilwoman Bucci offered that Tilton Theater was an example.

Mr. Brophy asked, were other businesses pursuing a liquor license?

Councilwoman Bucci replied, she had no idea.

Planner Tiffany Morrissey apologized for the Zoom presentation to the Planning Board; it was not ideal. They started with the rehabilitation designation because it was the most cost-effective way to provide the City with opportunity for economic development. It started with a liquor license but that was not the only benefit. She explained the differences if you designate on a site-specific method. She reviewed her notes to highlight the key points mentioned by those who spoke. She did feel this was the most cost-effective way to create a toolbox of opportunities. The designation creates a list of tools. This was not a redevelopment plan, which was the second step, all this does is adopt an ordinance and the 'tools' you want to use are selected and that too is referred to the Planning Board. She cited the hotel example; that would have to be vetted by the Governing Body and the Planning Board. If the construction of a hotel was something the City wanted, on the Gurwicz property for example, as an extreme example, that would provide for negotiating what you want that to look like, or any other kind of development. One of the tools that could be provided were incentives to residential homeowners in the form of an abatement, on improvements only. This was just an example. There was no automatic approval. It does not take away the master plan or the zoning process, it adds another layer in the form of the ability to create a developer's agreement. This does not have to be done; this just creates opportunities. It does have to go to the DCA (Department of Community Affairs), but that process involves sending a letter. It is a routine approval with no additional costs or fees. A full site plan, variance, public notice requirements, as currently applicable, would still apply. If the City wanted to focus on a specific area, it was more costly and involved a more in-depth analysis. She was happy to do that if the Council desired, this was just the most cost-effective way. She asked if there was anything she missed or that anyone would like her to elaborate on.

Dr. Levitt asked what sites and types of development would benefit from this?

Planner Morrissey believed the Gurwicz property was an ideal example if they could be incentivized. Absent a redevelopment plan, this designation doesn't change anything. A basic redevelopment plan would just give you tools.

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Solicitor Facenda added, procedurally, we aren't doing anything tonight other than extending the Planning Board's time to provide us with a response to their referral. This was an opportunity to engage with the Planning Board.

Mr. Scharff asked could these things be done without the designation?

Planner Morrissey replied, no.

Mr. Scharff asked, can't an abatement be provided, today?

Planner Morrissey replied, no, not in the state of New Jersey.

Solicitor Facenda and Councilwoman Bucci thanked Planner Morrissey.

Mary Foltz, Northfield, on behalf of the Northfield Business Association (NBA), along with board members Deidre Kreuz and Joe Ianello, both of Northfield. Mrs. Foltz distributed a proposal for a community event to Council members.

Mrs. Kreuz announced the NBA was proposing the 1st Annual Pet Parade, they have preliminary sponsors, including Spirit Halloween and the new veterinary practice. She asked what were the next steps, do they need a permit?

Mrs. Foltz added they were proposing October 19th. They would like to know if they can use the bike path.

Mayor Chau asked who would absorb costs, closing streets, parking, public works?

Mrs. Kreuz replied they have preliminary sponsors and would use those funds for that. They were proposing on the bike path between Merritt and Oakcrest. They would cover police costs, and have volunteers to clean up, and have extra trash bins for pet waste.

Councilwoman Carfagno commented that she mentioned licensing.

Mrs. Kreuz explained they would require preregistration, with an adult present and pets must be registered whether they are from Northfield or another town.

Councilwoman Bucci replied they would need to complete facilities use form.

Clerk Canesi suggested the event be used to encourage registration of pets.

At 7:47pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk