

CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

At 6:00pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 11, 2025, and in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

Mayor Chau led the flag salute.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilwoman Kern; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Polistina; Councilman Smith; Council President Bucci.

Absent: Councilman Dewees

Mayor Chau, Solicitor Facenda, Engineer Mauro and Chief VonColln were also present.

Council President Bucci remembered Officer Jon Scull who died August 30, 2022.

Council President Bucci moved to committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Polistina – Finance and Collections; Library; Municipal Alliance; Senior Citizens; Affordable Housing

Councilman Polistina announced the bike rodeo on September 20th and Trunk or Treat on October 4th, contact Shannon Campbell for registration information. For affordable housing, there is a national firm interested in the Oak Avenue site, it was only in the initial stages. Regarding the Diocese project, there were no updates, there were more investigations into the land. The Habitat for Humanity project was reduced from 7 to 6 duplexes to address lot sizes, drainage, and exits onto Dolphin Avenue. Regarding Wabash Avenue, the project now has another suitor with financial resources and they were ready to move forward; they were working on details, the project was 77 overall units with 12 affordable, the new proposal will be 124 units total, more details to follow.

Solicitor Facenda added they would likely to come back to Council for revisions to the overlay before it gets to the Planning Board.

Mayor Chau noted, regarding the Diocese, part of the delay was permit-related and the results of an investigation at the state level.

Councilman Polistina continued, he attended the ACUA meeting at the treatment plant, we are below budgeted amount for flows, it was likely due to slip lining activities and other infrastructure improvements. They were very interested in our

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slip lining because we've had such great results. We budgeted almost 3% of total flows and we are at 1.9%. We would see the financial benefit in the following year.

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

Councilman Dewees was absent.

Councilwoman Kern – Northfield Sports (FAN)

Councilwoman Kern reported that cheer and football practices have begun; the first away game is scheduled for September 13th and the first home game is September 21st at Birch Grove. She asked all to please come out and support the Cardinals.

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

Councilwoman Bucci recognized Superintendent Boyd for his work on the stormwater ordinance. Regarding the EDC, the Atlantic City Country Club will be hosting a community event in December.

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

Councilman Smith reported that the Central Court was going well, he asked Solicitor Facenda to reach out to Hammonton to get a midyear result as to the shared service. Fall ball has started for little league, the first day for Northfield Community is this Friday for students, he wished them all a safe and healthy school year, he encouraged all to be aware and courteous as to traffic around the school.

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

Councilwoman Carfagno read the Fire and EMS report for August, fire members have completed hose, ladder and pump testing training and held a drill at the community school. For Mainland Regional High Board school starts on Thursday, and the next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for September 13th in person. She also asked all to be mindful of all riding bikes and scooters. September 16-20 there will be a series of events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War at Atlantic Cape Community College, it is open to the public and starts each day at noon.

Councilman Notaro – Sanitary Sewer Operations; Inspections, Housing/Zoning.

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Councilman Notaro did not have a report.

Council President Bucci moved to ad hoc committee reports.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Special Events Ordinance – *Councilwoman Bucci, Councilman Dewees.*

Councilwoman Bucci reported the special event ordinance was on the agenda tonight, this will allow us to bring fun activities to Northfield at Birch Grove Park and on commercial properties. She was very happy this was done.

Road Opening Ordinance / Remaining Proposed Amendments – *Councilmen Dewees and Notaro.*

Solicitor Facenda announced that the ordinance was finalized and sent to the committee, Engineer Mauro, Councilmen Dewees and Notaro, all have been asked to review.

Engineer Mauro responded that she sent a follow-up email today.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – ONGOING BUSINESS

- Future Amendment to Bulk Waste Collection Rules – Councilman Notaro

Councilman Notaro reported there was no update for the ACUA.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

No new grant opportunities were mentioned.

- Draft Ordinance Regulation of Ebikes, Etc.

Council President Bucci moved to the draft regulation for ebikes, everyone was sent a draft packet. The first item of business was to take straw poll to be consistent with Linwood and allow classes 1 and 2 on the bike path.

Mayor Chau recommended a bill similar to this.

Council President Bucci took a straw poll vote, Councilwoman Carfagno was opposed, Councilmen Notaro, Polistina and Smith along with Councilwomen Bucci and Kern were in favor.

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Council President Bucci moved to section 5 of the draft ordinance. Councilwoman Bucci recommended we do not allow ebikes at Birch Grove or at Veterans Park.

Councilman Polistina suggested limiting use of ebikes to parking areas.

Clerk Canesi clarified is this just 1's and 2's, or 3's as well?

Council President Bucci clarified that all are allowed on streets and parking areas only.

Council President Bucci referred to section, 115-51 (3) - Linwood's Ordinance reads that the Department of Public Works can confiscate and impound. Council President Bucci recommended just the Police Department.

Solicitor Facenda recommended seizure by Police Department only.

Council President Bucci referred to section 9 penalties - Linwood's has a variety of penalties.

Solicitor Facenda recommended letting the judge decide, up to \$2000.00.

Solicitor Facenda suggested 111-49 may need to change, he could look at that.

Councilwoman Carfagno advised Chief VonColln that the bike path speed Linwood sentry clocked her on her bike at 11mph.

Chief VonColln replied that self-pedaled bicycles, such as racing bikes, can exceed 10mph. He referred to legislation that would pass at the State level that he can report on further.

Councilman Smith would defer to Chief VonColln once we have more information, he is fine with 15mph.

Councilman Notaro believed the State would defer to towns as to uses on bike paths.

Clerk Canesi reminded Council of their goal to create a final draft of an ordinance during this meeting; if they waited beyond this meeting for the additional recommendations, Council would not be able to introduce the ordinance as planned on September 16th.

Councilman Smith asked was it possible to fill in the mph on the 16th?

Clerk Canesi replied, yes.

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Councilwoman Kern thanked BA/Clerk Canesi, Councilman Notaro, Solicitor Facenda and whoever worked on this; we are finally getting something on the books. She thanked Chief VonColln as well.

REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Council President Bucci reviewed the agenda and made the assignments.

PUBLIC SESSION / FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

Council President 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.

Jackie Somers, Northfield, her son, and daughter-in-law had chickens on Dolphin Avenue, and now on they live on Oak Avenue and have chickens. They were good people; they went to Mainland Regional High School. She asked the audience how many people have and want chickens?

Norm Wilson, Northfield, was not for or against chickens. He was here to speak about aggressive solicitors, he was badgering people. He claims the Clerk told him EcoShield had a permit. He referred to ebikes and the need for licensing, registration, and insurance.

Jackie Reynolds, Northfield, regarding ebikes, they don't obey traffic signals, she has seen two riders on one bike, they go 35 mph and are not even looking. They are riding four across on Jackson Avenue. These bikes can do 35-40 some can do 50mph. Kids aren't paying any attention. Ebikes need to be looked at really hard. It was something to think about.

Kate Devaney, Northfield, doesn't have chickens, she asked what happened to the ordinance that used to say you could have chickens, was there a complaint? There was no reason given that she knows of.

Solicitor Facenda explained that there were two separate sections of the ordinance that weren't consistent with each other, when that disparity came to the Council's attention, a committee was formed to examine and clarify the inconsistency. He was not aware of a specific complaint.

Councilman Notaro and Council President Bucci replied there have been several complaints.

Kate Devaney added that these are pets to people who have them, they have names, people are responsible. If someone complained there was too much dog barking you wouldn't tell people to get rid of their dogs. People who have chickens should not

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have to get rid of them. She suggested having someone come and inspect the properties, that would be reasonable.

Ana Frangias, Northfield, has chickens, they have names, not one person in her development has ever complained.

Ari Frangias, Northfield, commented that they did have one complaint, as you raise them, you realize one of them is a rooster, so he gave it away to someone in Galloway, and families complained that they liked the sound of the rooster. These are their pets. They don't sell eggs but gives them away. He felt existing chicken owners should be grandfathered in.

Terry Benjamin, Northfield, doesn't have chickens, she asked why such a knee jerk reaction to deprive people of food for their families? She read from research that they would prevent rodents.

Solicitor Facenda, for general benefit of the public, explained the ordinance is prospective, if you have chickens now, you won't necessarily have to get rid of them, but people who don't have them now, the door closes. There may be conditions with regard to compliance with zoning ordinances.

Jackie Kondrk, Northfield echoes the statements that this was important for our community, the fact that it isn't retroactive doesn't make it right. She provided literature regarding Atlantic City's ordinance and believes the code could be amended to address misconceptions. If a dog was barking you would call and report it. Chickens aren't noisy. She referred to Solicitor Facenda saying there were two pieces of the code that contradict each other, they were at that meeting and had a conversation with all of Council, and it seemed that everyone was in agreement that there would be no roosters, they discussed the issues with rats. At the last meeting, a ban was not what it sounded like was going to happen.

Christina Walley, Northfield, one of the things she enjoyed about moving to Northfield was the potential to have chickens, there was a lot of educational value in having chickens and teaching children how to raise them, there were benefits to the soil, she has heard there was a problem with rats. Are they allowed to have pools, and ponds and compost in your backyard? These all draw rats.

Solicitor Facenda was unaware of any prohibition.

Ms Walley continued, last year she asked a member of Council if she could have chickens and was told yes. She suggested permits, inspections, and fees. She does not see why you can't have chickens if it is done properly.

Deniz Bilge, Northfield, announced there were a lot of rats on East Revere, and they have nothing to do with chickens. Regarding 15 mph speed limit for ebikes, he didn't

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believe we should punish people and responsible children because some aren't responsible. The city invests heavily in the infrastructure of our youth, Covid came in 2020 and they got chickens, which turned into involvement with 4H. If we have chickens, we can have more involvement with organizations like 4H. In terms of education, it starts with how to build a coop. Think about what it means to provide opportunities for kids, it has been a great benefit for his daughters. Kids should be allowed to sell eggs, similar to a lemonade stand, but that would be the extent of it in terms of commercial activity.

Brooklyn Bilge, attends Egg Harbor Township High School. They have 60 chickens on half of an acre, they sell a lot of chickens. It was a good educational opportunity. It was really special to be a part of something not everyone knows about. She felt everyone should have the opportunity.

Cheyenne Bilge added that they judge at the 4H, they have won numerous awards. The 4H is a youth and volunteer organization, they are international as well, and Atlantic County is underrepresented. They want more people to be involved in chickens. It's a lifestyle. They get rid of pests in your yard, such as grubs and ticks. They do not spread disease to humans. It would bring the community of Northfield together.

Darryl Kashey, Northfield, did not have chickens, but her neighbors did, and they have made their property a beautiful community for kids. Kids learn things and gather eggs, she has never heard one peep, there are no smells and has not seen any rats in 27 years. They are like pets, they are named, there are more problems with barking dogs, she has heard how much goes into it. People invest their life and their time and if they are responsible there are no problems.

Zack Somers, Northfield, regarding the Atlantic City ordinance that they adopted in 2023, they do have a maximum of 5 chickens, regardless of lot size. He moved here in December of last year and got chickens a few months later, a neighbor made a complaint, his chickens were 10 days old at this point and not outside. Some neighbors are truthful and dealing with a noisy neighbor, but that is usually roosters. Native birds are louder than chickens.

Jackie Reynolds, Northfield, this town was based on farming. No one complained.

Joe Sweeney, Northfield, there was a rumor going around that the Council voted to let him keep his pot belly pigs, it was a County judge. People don't do research before they get chickens; he made that mistake but learned and has corrected his errors. Residents should not be limited in keeping chickens. His home had been inspected six to eight times; his pigs were clean. What was next? Can't have dogs? Can't have cats? He was informed by the health department that the rat dens were not on his property. He just today received another complaint from the health department. He truly believed this was brought to the Council by someone who has a

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personal vendetta against him. If he finds out who it is, and that it was a personal vendetta, it will become a harassment case.

Jessica Obermeyer, Northfield, commented that as Solicitor Facenda said, the Code, as old as it is, there was some discrepancy. She believed it was probably intended to be no chickens; the Code is archaic. She thought its interesting they got the information from Atlantic City. She listed towns that prohibit chickens. She listed towns that allow chickens and noted a 2-acre minimum to have 6 chickens. Her daughter drinks a gallon of milk a day, but she was not looking to invest in a cow. We live in an area where some of our homes are set on a property of 4,500 square feet. That property may have 6,7,8 or even 9 houses that back up to their home, and could be 100 chickens. We have 3,200 homes and we have 1% of homes represented here, there is a reason this is prohibited in so many towns. We ask people to be responsible; people are not responsible. The smells in the 1st Street area prevent people from enjoying outside activities. We are on the right path. There are no regulations, no restrictions, she believed the intent long ago was no chickens.

Colleen Bennett, Northfield, had chickens in upstate NY, the chickens were her pets and her friends. Due to political unrest she wanted to be a little self-sufficient and have chickens. What was next, outlawing corn because it's too tall? She was shocked that the constitution does not protect growing your own food. Her neighbor has seven cats who urinate everywhere. She wanted to keep her chickens. Her inalienable rights are protected and she believed one of those rights is the right to eat. She did not believe chickens should be outlawed; she bought a home in Northfield because she could have chickens. She had called the City Clerk's Office many times and was told they were permitted.

Rita Clemens, Northfield, she felt like it's already a done deal and that anything anyone says won't make a difference. She passed out her business card to the Council. She posted on the Northfield Lounge to encourage people to come tonight. Chickens are pets too. She would like to invite the Council, if you are making this choice without direct contact with a chicken or chicken owner, to come to her house and meet her chickens, it might change your mind.

Herb Fehr, Northfield, doesn't have chickens but would like the right to have chickens in the future. If you are going to ban chickens maybe you should consider banning bird feeders. As to ebikes, the rules say no motor vehicles on the bike path, he knows the class 2's can be modified. He rides a bike at midnight and likes to go as fast as he can, and one night an ebike went past him, he was nudged on the elbow and almost knocked over. Regarding the slip lining, for the sewer, he asked was it done at Second and Davis? There seemed to be a sinkhole, the road has sunk 6-8", and there is a cement-like slurry.

Dom Cappella, Northfield, stated the constitution defends everyone, not just people who own chickens. Where does it end? You vote tonight to allow chickens, then next

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meeting, the room is packed with people going the other way. You want inspections, then you get a letter that your taxes are going up to pay for it.

Clem Scharff, Northfield, had chickens, a hawk killed them, and he may want to get chickens again. He was a combat veteran and wanted a more peaceful lifestyle. He loves what he does. It was kind of crazy that we are sitting here talking about chickens, he implored the Council to allow chickens.

John Ordille, Northfield, wanted to approach from a different angle. Law makers make laws and they have secondary consequences. He asked how many people have seen the ice cream man? You haven't because the City Council passed an ordinance because someone complained about the music. You can get a \$4,000 fine and go to jail if you cut down a big tree. He advocated for chicken owners, there shouldn't be laws to regulate what you do on your own property.

Diana Hart, Northfield, she advocated for chickens, she had two as pets. She would not object to regulations. Nobody gets chickens without understanding how much work it is. She doesn't see how it would be anything that anyone wouldn't properly maintain. Having chickens promoted sustainability. Growing tomatoes shouldn't be considered different than growing eggs. She used her fertilizer in her yard, there were environmental benefits, feeding them table scraps reduces food waste. She had never had a complaint and was sure it's the same for everyone else.

Christine Camp Taggart, Northfield, does not have chickens yet but has been building her backyard to have them. She suggested a ballot question as to whether or not people can have chickens, it should not be eight people making this decision for the town. Enforce all other laws such as dogs and bikes in the park, fine people who don't pick up after their dogs.

Steven Lusk, Northfield, felt people should be allowed to have chickens, he suggested an ordinance regarding number of birds based on lot size, noise regulations, would make sense. His dog makes more noise than his chickens.

David Goldstein, Northfield, thanked the Veterans who spoke for their service. He wasn't going to come until he heard about the chickens. He has concerns with ordinances that are passed, when there is an ordinance that says about where he parks his car. How about worrying about lowering our taxes, about Dolphin Avenue residents who no longer have a place to park their car because the County wants to build a building on a cemetery. He has been bitten by a dog, and hit by an ebike on the bike path, Northfield won't help with noise coming from Pleasantville. He didn't care what Linwood did, he was not against ebikes. He suggested Council set up some rules for people with chickens so they'll follow the rules.

Colleen Bennett, Northfield, asked what started all of this turmoil about chickens. She moved here because she thought she could have chickens.

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Solicitor Facenda reiterated that the current ordinances don't match.

Council President Bucci added that we get complaints.

Mrs. Bennett asked how many complaints?

Council President Bucci replied, enough to be concerning.

Mr. Goldstein commented, you're going to vote on something, you don't know how many complaints, you don't have all the facts.

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

At 7:57pm, on motions properly made and seconded, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk