

BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE
Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2023

Mayor Canose called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Council Members Jay Ambelang, Diane Greenfield, Jena McCredie, Al Ribeiro, and Christine Zamarra. Also present were Tom Czerniecki, Administrator, Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk, and John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney. Council Member Chad McQueen was absent.

STATEMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Notice of this meeting was provided to the Bernardsville News, Courier News and the Star Ledger, filed with the Municipal Clerk and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board on December 15, 2022.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATIONS

Mayor's Proclamation April 2023, Child Abuse Awareness Month, Mayor Canose read a proclamation designating April 2023 as Child Abuse Awareness month in the Borough of Bernardsville.

Mayor's Proclamation for Tom Czerniecki, Mayor Canose read a proclamation listing Mr. Czneriecki's accomplishments with the Borough of Bernardsville and congratulating him on his retirement.

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public. Hearing no comments, Mayor Canose closed the open session to the public.

ORDINANCES (Public Hearing)

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2023-1958, **APPROPRIATING \$24,854.00 FROM THE CAPITAL FUND RESERVE FOR MITIGATION PROJECTS**. Hearing no comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Ms. Zamarra moved to pass this ordinance on final reading and adopt as published. Mr. Ribeiro seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote. Mr. Ambelang, Ms. Greenfield, Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes.

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2023-1959, **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SALARY ORDINANCE #2023-1955**. Hearing no comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Ms. Zamarra moved to pass this ordinance on final reading and adopt as published. Ms. Greenfield seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote. Mr. Ambelang, Ms. Greenfield, Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes.

ORDINANCES (Introduction)

Mr. Ambelang moved that Ordinance #2023-1961, **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SALARY ORDINANCE #2023-1955**, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, April 24, 2023. Ms. McCredie seconded and the motion to introduce was approved with five yes votes.

Ms. Greenfield moved that Ordinance #2023-1962, **REPEALING LOCAL PAY TO PLAY ORDINANCE THAT HAS BEEN PREEMPTED BY P.L.2023, c.30 AND AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE BOROUGH CODE ENTITLED "ADMINISTRATION"**, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, April 24, 2023. Ms. Zamarra seconded. Mr. Ribeiro said he has been following this law and there was bipartisan push back against it and ended up passing the legislature. He said it seems like there's been a lot of municipalities that have a problem with the fact that the state is lowering the Pay To Play laws. He said he feels that no matter what we do, it's rescinded and the state law is eminent. He said he thinks we should move this ordinance to a public hearing but suggested making a statement about this topic. Mr. Ambelang asked what would happen if we didn't pass this ordinance. Mr. Pidgeon said we still couldn't implement our ordinance. Mr. Ribeiro suggested asking our state legislators their perspective on it and maybe getting a third party's perspective. Mayor Canose suggested finding out if the NJ League of Municipalities has an opinion on this topic. Mr. Pidgeon said he will follow up. The motion to introduce was approved with five yes votes.

RESOLUTIONS

- #23-94 AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF BILLS**

- #23-95 ACCEPTING IN-KIND DONATIONS TO THE BERNARDSVILLE
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

- #23-96 AWARDING A CONTRACT FOR RENTAL OF SNACK BAR AND
RIGHT TO SELL FOOD AND SOFT DRINKS AT THE
BERNARDSVILLE MUNICIPAL POOL**

- #23-97 AUTHORIZING REFUND OF STORMWATER ESCROW
ACCOUNT 04-280-7005-0100 FOR GLENN MILLER FOR 125
WASHINGTON CORNER RD**

- #23-98 AUTHORIZING REFUND OF STORMWATER ESCROW
ACCOUNT 04-280-7000-0041 FOR ADVANCED CONTRACTING
LLC FOR 11 WASHINGTON CORNER RD**

- #23-99 AUTHORIZING DONATION OF TRASH RECEPTACLES**

Regarding Resolutions #23-94, Mr. Ambelang asked about the authorization for payment of bills specific to the lighting at the Polo Grounds. He said he noticed there's a ten thousand dollar payment to the engineering firm which he is assuming is for plans that they're putting together. Mr. Ambelang asked if that amount is coming out of open space. Mr. Czerniecki said we did a bond and the bond is being financed by the open space trust fund.

Mr. Ribeiro moved to adopt Resolutions #23-94 to #23-99. Ms. Greenfield seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Ambelang, Ms. Greenfield, Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes.

#23-100 ADOPTION OF THE 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Mr. Czerniecki and Mr. Ribeiro gave a slide presentation for the adoption of the 2023 budget. The slides showed the Finance Committee's priorities and how they are achieved, the distribution of the municipal property tax levy and the budget environment. They noted there was a slight tax rate decrease in 2023 and no tax rate increase for the second consecutive year. They gave the following summary:

- Property tax rate DECREASES despite significant headwinds faced by Borough
- Improved valuations plus new construction allows for stable tax rate
- Budget focused on key priorities (Recreation Improvements, increased Library funding, Bernards Ave, talent retention, etc.)
- Capital improvements to focus on road improvements, parks & recreation master plan, downtown attractiveness and other high priority projects
- Restoration of State Aid would further alleviate tax burden on residents

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on **Resolution #23-100, ADOPTION OF THE 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET.**

Johanna Wissinger, Washington Corner Road, said she moved to Bernardsville in 1971 because the taxes in Somerset County were less than Morris County and Essex County. She said a lot of thought went into this year's budget and no one can say there's no transparency because the Mayor and Council are transparent.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing.

Mr. Ribeiro moved that **Resolution #23-100, ADOPTION OF THE 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET**, be adopted. Mr. Ambelang seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Ambelang, Ms. Greenfield, Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Mayor's Update

Mayor Canose attended Walter Lane's Somerset County Planning Partners meeting which had a presentation given by the Director of the AARP. She said Somerset County is an age-friendly community which is also the goal of the Mayor's Wellness Committee. She said Walter Lane offered to set up a meeting with her and the Director of AARP. Mayor Canose said the Centennial Committee met and there is a website that Olivia Manning created called bernardsvillecentennialcommittee.org. They are kicking off a logo contest and are asking graphic artists or local artists that live or work in Bernardsville to submit their ideas for a centennial logo that we can use on our promotions, cups, and t-shirts. Mayor Canose said the Redevelopment Committee met and reviewed what our progress has been to date and they submitted their comments on the Palmer plan. Mayor Canose attended the Somerset County Business Partnerships lunch which is where they give legislative updates. They had a presentation featuring different towns and they covered Somerville. Mayor Canose attended Annette Manthey's retirement party at the library. Mayor Canose said the Eggs-travaganza for Easter was held last Saturday. The weather was bad and at the last minute they moved into the library. Mayor Canose thanked Fran Daley, Bob Markowick, Leah Horowitz, and all who volunteered and said it was a huge success. Mayor Canose said there was a soft opening at Congressman Kane's office and we are happy that he has his office in Bernardsville. Mayor Canose said she met with our soon to be new Administrator Nancy Malool to talk about general topics and things to expect. She said she will be a great fit with the Borough when she starts on April 17th. Mayor Canose said this morning we had a ribbon cutting for the pickleball courts. Mayor said at noon today they had a meeting at Ricky's Thai with Congressman Kane and they had a presentation by Uber Eats as to how this system has worked with the economy. Mayor Canose said we have Foodstock, which is a food drive by Somerset County, and there is a box in the entrance area of Borough Hall.

Administrator's Update

Mr. Czerniecki thanked council for being supportive and for their kind words. He thanked the borough staff and said they made it extremely easy to work with as we have a good group of people.

Palmer School Project – Chicken Coup for Month of May 2023

Council consent was given to the Palmer School to have a chicken coup on their property during May 2023. It was noted that any procedures as directed by the Bernards Township Health Department must be followed.

Correspondence

Comments on Palmer Redevelopment Plan, Joe Demarco discussed comments made by the Downtown Revitalization Committee regarding the Palmer Redevelopment Plan. He said these comments will be passed on to the Planning Board for discussion at their April 13th meeting when they have a consistency review on Ordinance #2023-1960.

Unfinished Business - None

New Business

Verizon, Mr. Ribeiro said he's received complaints regarding Verizon's coverage from residents in the area of Meeker Road and Charlotte Hill Drive. He asked if we had a representative from Verizon that he could reach out to. Mayor Canose said she received a complaint about one of their wires down. Mr. Ribeiro said the area of Meeker/Charlotte Hill is close to Bernards Township and suggested contacting them for assistance in having Verizon come out on this topic. Mr. Czerniecki had sent Verizon a letter noting multiple hanging wires around town. Mr. Ribeiro will follow up with Mr. Czerniecki.

Little League Parade, Ms. Zamarra said opening day for Somerset Hills Ball Club is this Saturday and there is a parade. Mayor Canose said the parade starts at 9:00am at the parking lot across from the Sacred Heart Chapel and then they march to the Kiwanis Field where they have games all day.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved to adjourn to an executive session to consider Contract Negotiations and that the time when and circumstances under which the matter can be disclosed to the public is when it is finally resolved. The motion was seconded and approved with five yes votes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40p.m.
