

**LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REORGANIZATION MEETING
JANUARY 7, 2025
6:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

Councilman Eric Ford called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M., noting the meeting had been advertised in compliance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

FLAG SALUTE

Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis led the flag salute.

INVOCATION

Pastor Jayson Byrd delivered the Invocation.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Darren Matik; Councilwoman Blair Albright; Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis; Councilman Eric Ford; Councilman Ken Kelly; Councilman Matt Levinson; Councilman Todd Michael; and Councilman Adam Walcoff.

Absent: None

Also Present: Joseph L. Youngblood, City Solicitor; and Leigh Ann Napoli, City Administrator/Municipal Clerk.

OATHS OF OFFICE

Mayor Darren Matik administered the Oath of Office to Kenneth Kelly as Council Member Ward 1. Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr., Esq., administered the Oath of Office to Blair Albright as Council Member Ward 2.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The City Clerk opened the floor for nominations for Council President. Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned to nominate Eric Ford with a second from Councilman Walcoff. The City Clerk called for any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed by motion from Councilman Levinson and a second from Councilwoman Albright. The City Clerk called for a voice vote to close the floor for nominations. All members of Council were in favor to close the floor for nominations. The City Clerk called for a voice vote for Eric Ford to Council President. All members of Council were in favor. The nomination of Eric Ford for the position of Council President was approved. City Clerk Leigh Ann Napoli administered the oath of office to Eric Ford as Council President.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The City Clerk opened the floor for nominations for Council President Pro Tempore. Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned to nominate Blair Albright with a second from Councilman Kelly. The City Clerk called for any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed by motion from Councilman Walcoff and a second from Councilman Levinson. The City Clerk called for a voice vote to close the floor for nominations. All members of Council were in favor to close the floor for nominations. The City Clerk called for a voice vote for Blair Albright to the position of Council President Pro Tempore. All members of Council were in favor. The nomination of Blair Albright for Council President Pro Tempore was approved. Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr., Esq., administered the oath of office to Blair Albright as Council President Pro Tempore.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

The Mayor welcomed everyone in attendance and recognized the former and current elected officials. He is honored to address the community and celebrate the incredible accomplishments of the City, reflect on the progress made, and look ahead to the future with optimism and pride. Everything achieved as a City is grounded in the shared commitment to each other and the community, and it is that spirit of collaboration that drives success. The residents of Linwood are very lucky to have a Council as professional and

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

educated as this one. Council members Levinson, Micheal and DeDomenicis spend an inordinate amount of time on the City business of Finance, Public Safety and Public Works. The new guy on the block, Councilman Kelly, has taken the mantle of Neighborhood Services to new heights acting as liaison to the Library and the Recreation Boards both with significant time commitments.

Over the past year, Councilpersons Albright and Walcoff and Council President Ford led the Planning, Engineering, and Development Committee, with the overworked City Engineer Jen Heller. They have been busy bringing the Recreation Master Plan to life. This visionary plan lays the groundwork for meaningful improvements to the Poplar Avenue Recreation Complex and the All-Wars Memorial Park Complex. One of the key projects at Poplar Avenue includes repaving the parking lot, adding more spaces, and introducing new recreational amenities. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring, and it promises to transform the area into a hub for families and sports enthusiasts alike.

In 2024, there have also been small but impactful upgrades, such as installing water and electricity at Poplar Avenue to support a portable restroom trailer, with even more enhancements planned for 2025. At All Wars Memorial Field, the City partnered with Musco Lighting to install energy-efficient LED lights and used local grants to lay new sod on the soccer fields, ensuring they are in top condition for players of all ages. Additionally, construction of a state-of-the-art field house began last year and is on track for completion by February. All Wars Memorial Park will continue to see improvements in 2025 including a new state-of-the-art turf field, Basketball and Pickleball courts, new decking for the hockey court, and improvements to the baseball fields. The Recreation Board under the leadership of Parks Director Colleen Kaufelds and Board president Marc Carpenter will enjoy these new upgrades along with the various sports organizations and residents alike.

The City's waterfront saw progress as well. Thanks to a grant from the Frank Stewart Trust Grant, improvements were made to the Seaview and Poplar Avenue Docks, enhancing their functionality and appearance for residents and visitors. Infrastructure projects have also been a priority, with Wabash Avenue paved from Poplar Avenue to the Northfield boundary, and the Monroe Avenue Bike Path Extension expected to wrap up next month. Drainage and paving improvements on Oakcrest Avenue are set to begin this winter, addressing longstanding issues and improving road safety.

The Public Works Department led by Chip Jones and Joe Olden assisted on many of the projects mentioned already while also maintaining City streets, public buildings, and everyone's favorite time-of-year leaf collection. We all saw firsthand after yesterday's storm the responsiveness and professionalism we can always count on day to day and in time of need.

The Tax Assessor's Office, under Diane Hesley, has also delivered significant results. Added assessments brought in over \$228,000 in new tax revenue from construction projects last year, with a total ratable value of \$7.4 million. Meanwhile, our Tax Collector, Silvia Washington, led her team to maintain an impressive 99.13% tax collection rate. From processing 307 Senior Tax Freeze applications to running a tax sale without liens, Silvia and her staff have shown exceptional dedication to serving our residents. A special thank-you goes to Tonya Chrysler-Fortino, who has been an invaluable addition to this Department.

Our Police Department led by Police Chief Cunningham and Lieutenant Austin Martin has been a cornerstone of community engagement and public safety. Their efforts last year were nothing short of extraordinary. They spread holiday cheer with Santa visits for Toys for Kids and the HeadStart Program, assisted the Fire Department with Santa on fire trucks, and helped to host a Senior Holiday Lunch at the Fire House. Events like Popcorn with the Police, Pretzels with the Police, Coffee with Our Police, and a record-breaking National Night Out strengthened the bond between our officers and the community. The department's commitment to safety and education was evident through programs such as the DEA prescription drug take-back, Firearms Investigation Training, and the Bike and Scooter Safety Program at Seaview Elementary. Additionally, their presence in schools, from Read Across America to DWI Driver's Education at Mainland High School, demonstrated their dedication to our youth. Officers Barretta and Gallagher joined as full-time officers, and SLEO III Jennifer Pullman began her role at Mainland High School, further enhancing our force.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

The Fire Department led by Chief Marty Walley and recently promoted Captain Frank Gabriel are always ready at a moment's notice to serve the residents of Linwood. This year we hired more part time firefighters and hope to increase staffing next year as we roll out a first responder program to supplement our EMS service.

The Construction Office is now led by William Miller as we said goodbye to Jim Galantino our Construction Official after many years of exemplary service. We would also like to recognize the amazing work of Angela Marshall who serves as TACO/Zoning officer with her assistant Donna McBride. The Construction Office reached new milestones in both revenue and processed permits.

Our esteemed Fire Official Tom Flynn and his Deputy Ray Conover took the department to new heights completing 835 inspections for the year and raising revenue to its highest level ever.

This City takes great pride in having a special place we call the Linwood Library. Long term Library Director Maria Moss retired on May 31, 2024. We thank her for her many years of dedicated service. In June 2024, we welcomed our new Director, Hannah Bishop (born and raised Linwoodian). The Library continues to undergo changes to modernize, including updating our integrated library system (which should launch near the end of the month), incorporating technology into regular library operations, and promoting programs in The Makery. The Library has seen increases in new patrons, physical circulation, and use of digital resources.

Grants applied for by City Administrator Leigh Ann Napoli and City Engineer Jen Heller have played a critical role in supporting our projects. Last year, we secured \$376,000 from the NJDOT Safe Routes to School Program for pedestrian improvements, \$100,000 for replacing the Linwood Library elevator through the Community Development Block Grant Program, and \$252,109 from NJDOT for resurfacing Barr Avenue and Oak Avenue.

Behind all of these achievements are the hardworking individuals who keep Linwood running smoothly. I want to thank CFO Anthony Strazzeri and Deputy City Clerk and Planning Board Secretary Mary Cole for their professionalism and dedication. The Auditors, Leon Costello and Carol Russ, ensure the financial practices are sound, while City Solicitor Joseph Youngblood continues to guide us with wisdom earned over his 48 years of service. And, as always, a special thanks goes to our City Clerk and now flourishing in the roll of City Administrator Leigh Ann Napoli, whose expertise and tireless efforts truly hold everything together. Leigh Ann, we couldn't do this without you.

A special thanks to the Planning and Zoning Board who work under the radar to keep up the high standards set by our history and the members of the Historical Society who preserve that history. Unfortunately, this year we lost a great member of our community with the passing of Carolyn Patterson, the City's Historian and the catalyst for our Historical Society.

In closing, the Mayor expressed his gratitude to the volunteers for their time and dedication to making Linwood the exceptional community it is. On a personal note, he thanked his wife Brett and my sons, Zach and Xander, for their unwavering support, allowing him to serve this wonderful City.

Together, we've accomplished so much, and the best days are still ahead. Linwood is more than just a City; it is a community united by trust, pride, and a shared vision for the future. Here's to another remarkable year for Linwood. Thank you, and may Linwood continue to thrive.

RESOLUTIONS

15-2025 A Resolution approving the Temporary Budget for 2025

The Clerk read Resolution No. 15 of 2025 by title only. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilman Michael, to approve Resolution No. 15. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion approved.

RESOLUTIONS WITHIN CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under item, **Consent** Agenda, are considered to be routine by City Council, and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed. Any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of Funds and any item requiring discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda and discussed separately. All Consent Agenda items will be reflected in full in the minutes.

- 1-2025** A Resolution setting dates for Caucus and Regular Council Meetings
- 2-2025** A Resolution adopting a Cash Management Plan for 2025
- 3-2025** A Resolution naming check signers
- 4-2025** A Resolution authorizing the Finance Office to maintain a Petty Cash Fund in the amount of \$100.00
- 5-2025** A Resolution setting interest rates on delinquent taxes
- 6-2025** A Resolution setting a service charge for checks returned for insufficient funds
- 7-2025** A Resolution authorizing the allowance of a grace period before charging a penalty for late payment of taxes
- 8-2025** A Resolution authorizing the imposition of a penalty on tax delinquencies in excess of \$10,000
- 9-2025** A Resolution naming the official City Newspapers, for purposes of publication, specifically, The Mainland Journal, The Press of Atlantic City, The Ocean City Sentinel-Ledger, and The Current of Northfield, Linwood and Somers Point
- 10-2025** A Resolution appointing an authorized agent for the sale of City owned land and/or property
- 11-2025** A Resolution appointing the Tax Assessor as Agent in appeals to reduce assessments for the year 2025
- 12-2025** A Resolution designating the Public Agency Compliance Officer for the City of Linwood
- 13-2025** A Resolution adopting Robert's Rules of Order and establishing rule of order and conduct for all City Council, Caucus, and Special Meetings in the City of Linwood
- 14-2025** A Resolution authorizing the City of Linwood to enter into a Contract with the attached list of vendors for State Contract Purchases
- 16-2025** A Resolution authorizing the canceling of small balances of tax refunds or delinquencies
- 17-2025** A Resolution authorizing the Tax Collector to substitute two mailings in lieu of advertising of the Tax Sale to be held in 2025
- 18-2025** A Resolution confirming Mayoral appointments for the year 2025
- 19-2025** A Resolution appointing Steve Cunningham and reappointing Tim Longnecker as Deputy Emergency Management Coordinators for the City of Linwood
- 20-2025** A Resolution authorizing the award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to Joel M. Fleishman as Municipal Bond Counsel for the Year 2025 for the City of Linwood
- 21-2025** A Resolution authorizing the award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to Ford Scott & Associates, LLC as Municipal Auditor for the Year 2025 for the City of Linwood
- 22-2025** A Resolution authorizing the award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr. as Municipal Legal Counsel for the Year 2025 for the City of Linwood
- 23-2025** A Resolution authorizing the appointment of Glenn Insurance as the Risk Management Consultant for the Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund
- 24-2025** A Resolution confirming the reappointment of Darren Matik as Emergency Management Coordinator for the City of Linwood
- 25-2025** A Resolution authorizing the City of Linwood to enter into the New Jersey Cooperative Purchasing Alliance Cooperative Pricing Agreement

RESOLUTIONS WITHIN CONSENT AGENDA (CONTINUED)

- 26-2025** A Resolution authorizing submission of a Local Recreation Improvement Fiscal Year 2025 Grant Application to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
- 27-2025** A Resolution authorizing the Tax Collection to participate in an electronic tax sale
- 28-2025** A Resolution approving Change Order No. 1 with Miller's Lawn Care Inc. with regard to Snow Removal Services in the City of Linwood
- 29-2025** A Resolution awarding a Non-Competitive Contract for Professional Services to John A. Ridgway as Conflict Solicitor for the City of Linwood
- 30-2025** A Resolution authorizing the participation with Atlantic County in applying for a Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) Implementation Grant for the purchase of three highway digital message boards
- 31-2025** A Resolution authorizing the participation with Atlantic County in applying for a Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) Implementation Grant for the purchase of three speed feedback signs
- 32-2025** A Resolution authorizing the appointment of Belford Rivera as a Special Law Enforcement Officer, Class II, for the City of Linwood

The City Clerk read the Consent Agenda by title only. Council President Ford asked if any member wanted any items removed from the Consent Agenda. No items were removed. Councilman Michael motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Albright, to approve Resolutions 1-14, 16-32 of 2025. All members of Council were in favor. Motion approved.

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST: \$2,875,174.40

Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Albright, to approve the bills for payment less Purchase Order #25001851 in the amount of \$6,585.66. A roll call vote was heard with five in the affirmative and two abstentions by Councilwoman Albright and Councilman Levinson. Motion approved. (The bill list is attached as Exhibit A)

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Council President Ford opened the floor to the public for discussion on any topic. Seeing and hearing no members from the public wishing to be heard, Council President Ford closed the floor.

FINAL REMARKS BY COUNCIL

Councilwoman DeDomenicis – Councilwoman DeDomenicis congratulated Councilmembers Albright and Kelly on their re-elections and she looks forward to continue working with them. She thanked the Mayor on all the achievements he noted in his speech and is looking forward to all the projects ahead. She recognized Chief Cunningham and the Police Department along with Chief Walley and the Fire Department on all they do for the community. She recognized Chip Jones, Joe Olden and the whole crew of the Public Works Department for all they do. She is proud of all their efforts. She thanked the City Hall employees and thanked Mrs. Napoli as their guiding light. She thanked the Mayor and fellow Council members for their professionalism and hard work and recognized the three values of the City's seal; education, family, and recreation.

Councilman Walcoff – Councilman Walcoff also congratulated the newly re-elected councilmembers and thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He also thanked the Police, Fire, & Public Works Departments along with the City Hall employees. He is proud of all the accomplishments that have been completed over the past year and is looking forward to the upcoming projects.

Councilwoman Albright – Councilwoman Albright thanked Mr. Youngblood for swearing her in and thanked her children for participating. She thanked her fellow council members for electing her Council President Pro Tem. As Chair of the Planning, Engineering, and Development Committee, Councilwoman Albright reviewed the accomplishments of 2024 and thanked Mrs. Heller and Mrs. Napoli on their efforts in obtaining grant funds for several of the projects. One project that will be completed soon is the Bike

FINAL REMARKS BY COUNCIL (CONTINUED)

Councilwoman Albright (continued)

Path Extension Project along Oak & Monroe Avenue. This will complete the path from Route 9 to the existing bike path and all in the City's right of way. The new fieldhouse building at Memorial Park should also be completed soon. A drainage project on Oakcrest Avenue will be completed in the next few months and the first phase of the Recreation Master Plan will also be started soon. All very exciting projects.

Councilman Kelly – Councilman Kelly enjoyed this past year on Council and is happy to have been re-elected and continue to work with an exceptional group of elected officials. He thanked the Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments and all the City Hall employees noting that Linwood is a great place to live. He thanked the Library and Recreation Board members along with Park Director Colleen Kaufelds. His priority on Neighborhood Services is to listen to the residents and compromise. He enjoys assisting with the budget and the balance of quality. He recognizes that taxes matter and the members of Council are very frugal minded while able to move ahead with needed projects. He wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Councilman Levinson – Councilman Levinson congratulated Councilwoman Albright and Councilman Kelly on their re-elections. He commended the Mayor's recap of the year in his speech. Councilman Levinson is looking forward to all the upcoming projects in 2025. He thanked the Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments and all the City employees for their hard work and tireless efforts for the City. He also thanked Mrs. Napoli for all her hard work. He thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting.

Councilman Michael – Councilman Michael thanked everyone for attending. He thanked the Mayor and fellow Councilmembers for their efforts. He thanked the Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments for their hard work which is greatly appreciated. He listened to all the accomplishments the Mayor discussed in his speech that are very impressive. He looks forward to more in 2025.

Council President Ford – Council President Ford thanked the Mayor and everyone on City Council for their efforts and for electing him as Council President.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to be addressed by Council, Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilman Michael, to adjourn at 6:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
City Administrator/Municipal Clerk