

LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
CAUCUS MINUTES
April 14, 2010

Councilman Elliot Beinfest called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M., noting that the meeting had been advertised in compliance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

1. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Rick DePamphilis; Councilman Elliot Beinfest; Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis; Councilman Matt Levinson; Councilman Ralph Paolone; and Councilman Tim Tighe.

Absent: Councilman Alex Marino; and Council President Donna Taylor.

Also Present: Joseph L. Youngblood, City Solicitor; Steve Mazur, Dixon Associates; Chief Jim Baker, Police Department; Hank Kolakowski, Public Works Superintendent; Bonnie Tiemann, CFO; and Leigh Ann Napoli, Municipal Clerk.

2. Approval of Minutes Without Formal Reading

Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilman Levinson, to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2010 Caucus meeting, without formal reading. All present Council members were in favor. Motion was approved.

3. Mayor's Report

A. The Mayor announced his appointment of Barbara Reed to the Senior Citizen Advisory Board. Ms. Reed is a longtime resident who has remained actively involved in the community.

B. The Mayor discussed the recent Mainland Regional High School Board of Education meeting on their proposed budget. Linwood is facing a nine cent increase. Seven and a half of those nine cents is because of the debt service from the referendum last year. Without it, there is only a one and a half cent increase. The overall budget is down from last year. Somers Point is looking at an eleven cent increase. Northfield is looking at about four or five cents. Councilman Paolone asked if the teachers are taking a wage freeze. The Mayor indicated that the teachers may be asked to take a wage freeze and the administration is taking a wage freeze. The Mayor does not feel that one and a half cents is unreasonable for an increase.

4. Councilman Levinson

A. Engineering

1. Councilman Levinson advised that the Resolution to authorize sharing costs with the NJDOT for a traffic control device at Route 9 & West Avenue is back on the agenda. He reported that Mr. Mazur and Councilman Marino informed him of the process it took to get a device at this location. The Engineering Committee is in favor of it.

2. Councilman Levinson discussed an article in The Current that stated the City has the funds for the Frances & Grammercy Avenue drainage project and is ready to begin the work. The City does not yet have the funds or is ready to begin the work and it should be reported as such. He did call the newspaper to request a retraction.

5. Councilman Marino

A. Revenue & Finance

1. Councilman Beinfest advised of a Resolution on the agenda authorizing a NJ Tax Court Judgement in reference to the Linwood Country Club.

2. Councilman Levinson reported that the tax collection rate for the month ending in March is 99%.

6. Councilman Paolone

A. Public Safety

1. Councilman Paolone indicated that in the next few weeks he would like to have the Mayor establish a Blue Ribbon Committee to evaluate the Fire Department. Similar to the Blue Ribbon Committee on New Road Safety, which was very successful. Councilman Paolone

suggested five members on the committee; one current Linwood Volunteer Fire Company member, one paid Linwood Fire Department member, one resident of Linwood who is a professional firefighter in another municipality, and two members of Council. He would like to see Councilman Tighe on the committee because of his insurance background. The Mayor indicated that he is in favor of the committee. Councilman Beinfest asked what the goal of the committee would be. Councilman Paolone advised that the goal would be to make improvements. Councilman Tighe referenced the recent article in The Press that was embarrassing. Councilman Paolone would like to modernize the relationship between Council and the Fire Department. Mr. Carelli wrote something similar in a letter to Chief Foster. The Volunteer Fire Company is on its own. Council should have some oversight of the company. The Mayor indicated that he will appoint the members by the first Council meeting in May. Councilman Paolone will reach out to individuals who may be interested in serving on the committee.

B. Linwood Arboretum at Belhaven

1. Councilman Paolone discussed the plaques ordered for the Arboretum dedication. Inaccurate information was given to the City regarding the cost for two outdoor bronze plaques. They are too costly to obtain. An alternative is an etched plaque, which Mrs. Napoli provided a sample of. They will not be ready for the dedication. However, Schopp's will prepare a presentation board to use for the event. The Mayor and all present members of Council were in favor of ordering the etched plaques. Councilman Levinson also suggested contacting Belhaven School to see if their Industrial Technology class could provide outdoor signs. Mrs. Napoli will contact them. Councilman Paolone also advised that the identification signs for the plants are almost done and some are being installed with concrete.
2. Councilman Paolone advised there are reports that kids are using the school garden at the Arboretum as a playground. This creates a liability. The committee has discussed putting signs up and Councilman Paolone asked Council for other alternatives. The committee wants to encourage kids to visit the Arboretum, but without harm.

7. Councilman Tighe

A. Planning & Development

1. Councilman Tighe reported that two individuals will give presentations at the regular meeting on how they propose to save the City money on electricity. Atlantic Electric will still service the accounts. However, the proposals are from companies that claim they can undercut the delivery costs. Councilman Levinson questioned what would happen if the company goes out of business. Councilman Tighe indicated that the rates would return to where they are now.

B. Councilman Tighe discussed a proposal from PHL Y Loss Control for Volunteer Fire Company loss control services. He asked Mrs. Tiemann to find out how much the JIF assessment is as it pertains to the Fire Company. Councilman Tighe will evaluate the figures to see if it would save the City money to move to this company.

C. Councilman Tighe reported that a resident contacted Councilman Marino about being denied the senior citizen rate for a parking permit after April 1. The resident was in the hospital for a few weeks and missed the deadline. The permits are discounted from January 1 through March 31. Other senior citizens did pay the increased rate after April 1. Council felt that the three months at a discounted rate is sufficient.

8. Council President Taylor

A. Administration

1. Councilman Beinfest advised of two Resolutions on the agenda authorizing Raffle Licenses to Our Lady of Sorrows Church.

At 6:40 P.M., Councilman Beinfest called a recess.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
Municipal Clerk