

LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
CAUCUS MINUTES
April 28, 2010

Council President Donna Taylor called the meeting to order at 6:05 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; Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis; Councilman Matt Levinson; Councilman Alex Marino; Councilman Ralph Paolone; Councilman Tim Tighe; and Council President Donna Taylor.

Absent: Councilman Elliot Beinfest.

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 April 14, 2010 Caucus meeting, without formal reading. All present Council members were in favor with abstentions from Councilman Marino and Council President Taylor. Motion was approved.

3. Mayor's Report

- A. The Mayor reviewed his Proclamation for Arbor Day.
- B. The Mayor reappointed two school board members, Joann Scannell and Shelly Meyers. They are both long term members of the school board and very active in the community. They do a great job.
- C. The Mainland Regional High School defeated budget meeting will be held on Monday, May 10 at 6:00 p.m. at the High School. This is the only opportunity that Council will have to provide input for the budget.

4. Councilman Beinfest

- A. Neighborhood Services
 1. Councilman Marino advised that the Hi Neighbor Hop is scheduled for June 11. Tickets are for sale at \$65 each. The proceeds will benefit the All Wars Memorial Park. The Linwood Country Fair is May 8.

5. Councilwoman DeDomenicis

- A. Public Works
 1. Councilwoman DeDomenicis advised of the confirmation by the Atlantic County Utilities Authority regarding their proposal to offer reduced tipping fees. Councilman Marino indicated that the budget was reduced by \$10,000 for half of the year as a result of the lower rates. A greater savings will be seen next year.
 2. The City Auction is scheduled for Saturday, May 8 at 9:00 a.m.

6. Councilman Levinson

- A. Engineering
 1. Councilman Levinson advised of a Resolution awarding a Contract to Curb Con, Inc. for Wabash Avenue ADA Curb Ramp Improvements, Phase 3.
 2. Councilman Levinson reviewed a Resolution authorizing application to Cape Atlantic Conservation District for Soil Erosion Sediment Control and RFA permits for Hemlock Drive Drainage Improvements.
 3. A Resolution authorizing the final change order with South State for 2008 State Aid Improvements to Central Avenue is on the agenda. Councilman Levinson explained that the final payment was a result of negotiations.

4. Councilman Levinson discussed a Resolution on the agenda authorizing the Mayor to submit a Release Statement from Agreement for Federal Aid to the NJDOT with regard to the Crosswalk Enforcement Operations.
 5. A Resolution to authorize the advertisement for bids for Hemlock Drive Drainage Improvement is on the agenda.
7. Councilman Marino
- A. Revenue & Finance
 1. Councilman Marino advised that copies of the 2009 Audit Report have been delivered and he asked that everyone review the report prior to the next meeting when Council will have to sign the affidavit for the State. Councilman Marino discussed the Management Letter that was included with the report specifically the details concerning the City's decrease in revenue and the State's adoption of the Best Practice Standards that municipalities will have to implement. He also reviewed the newly passed legislation concerning pension and health care costs. Some municipal employees will be affected soon. Beginning in May, non-contractual employees will contribute 1.5% of their salary to health benefits. Employees with spouses in the State's Health Benefit Plan can no longer receive a waiver. When the current union contracts expire, those contracted employees will then have to contribute the 1.5%. The audit also suggests that the City's financial position is strong. They are able to provide tax rate stability. The management letter also reviews the City's declining Fund Balance. The recommendations in the audit are being addressed by the Finance Office.
 2. Councilman Marino advised that Council is only introducing the budget tonight. Adoption will take place on May 26. Council will continue to work on lowering the proposed tax rate of 3.6 cents. The proposed municipal tax rate is .958. Last year's rate was .992. This would result in a \$36 increase per \$100,000, or \$93.60 increase on an averaged \$260,000 assessed home. They are using 57% of Fund Balance. The budget is under the appropriation cap at 1.75%. The City is allowed to go to 2.5%. The revenue cap is at 3.99%. The 2010 proposed budget total is \$12,798,737 and is a decrease over last year at \$14,023,529. However, there was a school note for \$1,300,000. With those figures adjusted, there is an increase of \$75,208.00 over last year's appropriation. This budget includes a 6.3% increase in PERS and 4% increase in PFRS contributions, a 5% increase in insurance, and a 3.7% for reserve in uncollected taxes. This budget focuses on three primary factors; declining revenues, maintaining services, and getting aggressive on debt.
 - a. The City is facing a 2% decline in overall revenues, from \$3.25 million to \$3.19 million. Last year the City witnessed more than a 10% growth over the previous year. Interest on taxes and investments is down 13% and the construction office is down 5%. State Aid is down 20% over last year, or the loss of almost \$150,000, which is equal to 1.88 cents.
 - b. Council has appropriated less this year for operating expenses than last year. Operating expenses have declined since 2007. The overall number of employees, both full and part time, has declined from 115 in 2006 to 98 today. With the recommendation of the Police Chief, a Special Class II Officer will not be replaced. Police overtime has been greatly reduced over last year. Council is strongly considering furloughs, or temporary layoffs, as well as permanent layoffs, but those decisions have not been finalized. Any reduction in workforce, either through furloughs or layoffs, will be scrutinized to their impact of maintaining services. Shared Services from last year have reduced expenses approximately \$256,000 between the shared agreements for Court, Emergency Medical Services and Dispatch. All City issued cell phones have been terminated, which provides an approximate savings of \$10,000. The proposed budget limits several salaries to 0%, including Council salaries. No members of City Council receive tax payer funded health benefits.

At 6:37 P.M., Council President Taylor called a recess.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
Municipal Clerk