

LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
CAUCUS MINUTES
September 11, 2019

Council President Paolone called the meeting to order at 6:00 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 June Byrnes; Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis; Councilman Eric Ford; Councilman Todd Gordon; Councilman Brian Heun; Councilman Darren Matik; and Council President Ralph Paolone.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr., City Solicitor; Vince Polistina, City Engineer; Jen Heller, Engineer's Office; Anthony Strazzeri, CFO; and Leigh Ann Napoli, Municipal Clerk.

2. Approval of Minutes Without Formal Reading

Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Byrnes, to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2019 Caucus meeting without formal reading. All members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

3. Mayor's Report

A. The Mayor advised of the swearing in of Patrolman Eric Guanchez

B. The Mayor reported that he appointed Marian Jordon to the Linwood Environmental Commission and a Resolution is on the agenda confirming same.

4. Councilwoman Byrnes

A. Neighborhood Services (Due to the large crowd in the Caucus Room, Council President Paolone called for a recess at 6:04 P.M. and announced that the meeting will be moved to Council Chambers. The meeting reconvened at 6:08 P.M.)

1. Councilwoman Byrnes reported that in March of 2018, the skateboard park Committee was formed consisting of great Linwood residents that are passionate about skateboarding. Since then, Council has heard from several residents for and opposed to the park. The Neighborhood Services Committee has completed their due diligence in researching if this is the right fit for Linwood. The committee of 3 does not recommend a skateboard park to City Council with a 2-No and 1-Yes (with conditions) vote. There are more pressing needs in the City. Beyond the construction of a skateboard park at approximately \$40-\$45 per sq ft., Council would have to consider costs for; fencing, maintenance, proper drainage and field preparations, possibility of a paid attendant, lighting, and the JIF requirements. Her committee reached out to other municipalities with parks or closed parks for input. Ocean City indicated that having an attendant is beneficial to rules and safety. The one in Galloway was located next to the police department and is now removed due to problems every day. It has been replaced with basketball courts and no problems have occurred since. There is one in Brigantine that is rarely used by skateboarders. Margate had the topic on their agenda a few years ago but did not proceed. Chief Carmen and Captain Hamilton have both expressed that if Council approves a skate park that they request the City has an attendant during operating hours to supervise. At a time in Linwood, with several other priority based projects in need of improvement; sewer maintenance, roadway projects, soccer building improvements, and municipal grounds maintenance; the Committee cannot recommend a skateboard park.

Michael Thomas, the City's Risk Management Consultant to the JIF, explained that the JIF consists of 41 municipalities and has seven operating skateboard parks. Four of the seven are beach communities. He discussed the process of having a skateboard park approved by the JIF. There is about a six month application process with a \$1,500 fee to

begin. Council President Paolone indicated that the JIF recommends that skateboard parks be supervised.

Councilwoman DeDomenicis thanked Councilwoman Byrnes for steering the committee and spending countless hours doing research on skateboard parks. She advised that the last few months there have been residents at meetings providing remarks for and against a skateboard park. She appreciates everyone's comments. Linwood, among other municipalities in the County, have had economic difficulties the last ten years. Council has worked to be fiscally responsible and continued to provide City services, safety and maintain the quality of life for the residents, businesses and employees. Linwood has been a leader in shared services. At one time, the City had six shared service contracts with other communities. In the last four years, Linwood has had close to one thousand tax appeals. Each of those years, the Budget Committee worked hard to keep the tax rate as low as possible even though the City started with a negative balance. All that being said, the City has been able to develop the Poplar Avenue property, install a new playground at Memorial Field, renovate the baseball building, complete road improvements, and develop the bike path extension, and even lighting up parts of Wabash Avenue in the winter. There are some pending capital projects that need to be scheduled. For example, a new roof on the Historical Society building, renovations to the soccer building, and maintenance of City buildings. She appreciates the enthusiasm about the skateboard park. It seems to be getting popular again and she realizes it is even a mode of transportation for some people. Councilwoman DeDomenicis makes her decisions based on the impact presently and in the future. At this time, she feels a skateboard park is not the ideal project for the City of Linwood.

Council President Paolone is also a member of the Neighborhood Services Committee. He thanked Councilwoman Byrnes as Chair of the committee and committee member Councilwoman DeDomenicis for all their hard work and due diligence on the skateboard park review. The committee performed an unbiased review of the pros and cons. They talked to various Police Departments, looked at costs, and considered everyone's comments. He is in favor of a skateboard park because any activity that gets kids off the couch is something to look at. It would be a great addition to the City. He referred to the three goals on the City seal; family, education, and recreation. He discussed the recommendation from the Recreation Board for a skateboard park at the South Jersey Industries Property. Council determined that was not a good location. The committee considered Memorial Park to be a good fit and looked at a conceptual design for that location presented by a volunteer Arthur Chew, who worked on the design for Ocean City's park. That design could cost approximately \$450,000 based on the committee's research of \$45 per square foot. Council President Paolone would require the park to be supervised, which would create a cost for the salary of that individual. The City could charge a fee to use the park to offset that cost, but not at Memorial Park as that land was purchased with Green Acre Funds. The committee determined that a skateboard park is not something to pursue at this time. He would like Council to vote on whether to accept or reject the committee's decision. However, he determined they could wait until the next Council meeting in order to give everyone an opportunity to speak.

Councilman Heun agrees that they are not ready to vote yet and would like to do more research. Councilman Matik would like to have this matter discussed at a town hall style meeting so he could hear both sides. He is also not ready to vote. Councilman Ford is also not ready to vote. He would like to see a plan and the costs associated. He also discussed the possibility of fundraising by those in favor of a skateboard park. He, too, referred to the goals written on the City seal and would like to see more data so he can make an educated decision. Councilman Gordon thanked the committee for their efforts. He is not in favor of spending money on much of anything. He tends to agree with the committee but suggested the possibility of some middle ground on the topic.

Councilwoman Byrnes announced that her committee was charged with determining if a skateboard park would be a good idea for Linwood before City Council agreed to move forward and spend money on a design. They voted in favor of not moving forward at this time. She will not be in town for the next Council meeting. Councilwoman DeDomenicis indicated that there are approximately twenty-seven hundred homes in Linwood and maybe nine hundred children. She understands the need for recreation but does not feel it is a good time to spend the money on a skateboard park. She is disappointed. She has been on City Council since 2008 and Council has always accepted the recommendations of the Council committees. Council President Paolone announced that this matter will be discussed at the September 25 City Council meeting.

5. Councilwoman DeDomenicis
 - A. Public Works
 1. Councilwoman DeDomenicis announced an honorary Resolution on the agenda for Craig Camp for his twenty-five years of employment with the City of Linwood.
6. Councilman Ford
 - A. Planning & Development
 1. Councilman Ford discussed a Resolution on the agenda authorizing temporary signage for the Linwood Farmers Market.
7. Councilman Heun
 - A. Public Safety
 1. Councilman Heun discussed an Ordinance on the agenda for first reading establishing standards and requirements for the sale of used vehicles.
 2. Councilman Heun advised of a Resolution authorizing the hiring of Cheri Broschard as a Substitute Crossing Guard.
 3. Councilman Heun advised of a Resolution on the agenda authorizing a Contract with Airpower International for air compressor maintenance for the Fire Department.
8. Councilman Matik
 - A. Revenue & Finance
 1. Councilman Matik discussed an Ordinance on the agenda amending the Salary Ordinance of 2019 for the position of Fire Inspector.
 2. Councilman Matik advised of a Resolution authorizing the refund of a tax overpayment for 940 Oak Grove Avenue
 3. Councilman Matik advised of a Resolution authorizing a tax lien foreclosure on Block 12, Lot 3 (Cleveland Avenue)
9. Council President Paolone
 - A. Administration
 1. Council President Paolone advised of Resolutions on the agenda authorizing Raffle Licenses to Mainland Football Boosters, the Alcove Center, and Gilda's Club.
 2. Council President Paolone reminded everyone of a policy that has been in effect since 2012 requiring all Department Heads to get their respective Council Committee Chair's approval prior to any spending over \$1,000.
10. Mr. Youngblood
 - A. Mr. Youngblood discussed an Ordinance on the agenda for first reading for the purchase of Block 82, Lot 7 & 8, Poplar Avenue. The purchase will be with grant funds through the Frank Stewart Trust.

At 6:47 P.M., Council President Paolone called a recess.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
Municipal Clerk