

**LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
October 13, 2016**

FLAG SALUTE:

Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis led the flag salute.

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Paolone called the meeting to order at 6:40 P.M., noting that the meeting had been advertised in compliance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Rick DePamphilis; Councilman Elliot Beinfest; 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; and Leigh Ann Napoli, Municipal Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES WITHOUT FORMAL READING

Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilman Gordon, to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2016 Regular meeting without formal reading. All members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

PRESENTATION: Assemblyman Chris Brown – Legislative update

Assemblyman Chris Brown presented an update on his testimony against north Jersey casinos. He also advised that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and discussed a bill to provide for proper training and education to local Prosecutors, court staff, etc. Assemblyman Brown also discussed a bill that would change the state's school funding formula.

ORDINANCES

6 OF 2016 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 56 POLICE DEPARTMENT, ARTICLE IV, PROMOTIONAL PROCEDURES, OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF LINWOOD AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES HERETOFORE ADOPTED, THE PROVISIONS OF WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT HEREWITH.

The Clerk read Ordinance No. 6 of 2016 by title only. Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilman Matik to approve Ordinance No. 6 for first reading. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion was approved.

7 OF 1016 A REFUNDING BOND ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF UP TO \$510,000 AGGREGATE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF REFUNDING BONDS OR NOTES IN THE CITY OF LINWOOD, COUNTY OF ATLANTIC, NEW JERSEY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING REVENUE LOSSES ASSOCIATED WITH TAX CREDITS GRANTED TO TAXPAYERS FOR OVERPAYMENTS IN PREVIOUS QUARTERS IN 2016 AND APPROPRIATING THE PROCEEDS OF SUCH REFUNDING BONDS OR NOTES TO SUCH PURPOSE.

FIRST READING:	October 13, 2016
PUBLICATION:	October 19, 2016
FINAL READING:	November 9, 2016
PUBLICATION WITH STATEMENT:	November 14, 2016

The Clerk read Ordinance No. 7 of 2016 by title only. Councilman Matik motioned, seconded by Councilman Beinfest to approve Ordinance No. 7 for first reading. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion was 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.

- 148-2016** A Resolution authorizing the hiring of Stacie Callanan-Geller as a Part Time Substitute Crossing Guard for the City of Linwood (PULLED)
- 149-2016** A Resolution awarding a Contract to Deltronics Corp. for Fischer Woods Pump Station Upgrades in the City of Linwood
- 150-2016** A Resolution establishing a Policy for the report of Tax Appeals
- 151-2016** A Resolution authorizing the City of Linwood to offer an incentive under the State Health Benefits Program

Council President Paolone advised that Resolution No. 148 of 2016 was pulled. He asked if any member of Council would like to remove any items from consent. Nothing was removed. Councilman Beinfest motioned, seconded by Councilwoman DeDomenicis, to approve Resolutions No. 149-151 of 2016. All members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST: \$228,219.98

Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilman Ford, to approve the bills for payment. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion was approved. (The bill list is attached as Exhibit A)

NEW BUSINESS: Poplar Avenue Recreation Plan

Councilman Matik and Mr. Polistina explained the creation of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Recreation to study the recreational needs of the City. An Open Space & Recreation Plan element of the Master Plan was created as a result of the meetings and has been presented to the Planning Board for review. They discussed the process of evaluating the needs and the committee's recommendation for a new field on the old site of the Poplar Avenue School. Letters were mailed out to property owners surrounding the Poplar Avenue location for their input. Council President Paolone opened the floor to the public for discussion on the proposed plan.

Anthony Ashman, 391 W. Poplar Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Ashman distributed a handout to the governing body outlining his concerns with the project. He thinks the field is a great idea. However, due to the decrease in property values, number of homes for sale and in foreclosure, he believes the money would be better spent somewhere else. He believes the Mayor and Council have done a great job, but asked them to consider other options.

Todd Timbrook, 225 Devonshire Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Timbrook expressed his concern for spending money on the project at this time. He would rather see commercial development that would provide ratables as the City is faced with a large tax burden.

Stacey Loyle, 659 Maple Avenue, Linwood – Ms. Loyle explained that she lives across from the Poplar Avenue field and lacrosse balls have hit her windows. She is concerned that there could be parking in front of her home. She does not want the quality of life negatively affected. There are many homes for sale and in foreclosure in the City and the tax burden is hard. She asked the governing body to watch their spending.

Tia Bucci, 409 W. Poplar Avenue, Linwood – Ms. Bucci believes that Poplar Avenue has become a race-way. She has seen a lot of accidents at the intersection of Oak & Poplar Avenue. She believes a field with children playing would be a bad idea in that location. She suggested closing Oak Avenue between New Road & Poplar Avenue to municipal traffic only. Ms. Bucci does not believe this is a good time to spend the money on the field.

George Bassett, 328 W. Poplar Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Bassett thanked Mr. Ashman for highlighting the concerns with the field such as lights, parking, and loud speakers. He is in favor of recreation and believes it is a good plan, but questions whether or not to spend the money.

Jennifer Sims, 719 Cedar Place, Linwood – Ms. Sims recently moved to Linwood for the schools and for recreation opportunities like the one presented. She is in favor of the plan for Poplar Avenue.

Jim Sayegh, 406 Edna Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Sayegh agrees with the other resident's concerns for funding the project, although he is in favor of recreation. If the project is done, he would like to see it completed with money making opportunities.

Dan Miller, 505 Barr Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Miller appreciates everyone's time raising their concerns tonight. Mr. Miller has five children and coaches or has coached just about every sport in the City. He is a member of the Recreation Board and has attended meetings of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Recreation. He explained that this plan is over a year in the making and is a great commodity for the City. The fields at Memorial Field need rest. He believes the new field could also draw more families to Linwood.

Seeing and hearing no other members from the public wishing to be heard on the Poplar Avenue proposal, Council President Paolone closed the floor.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Council President Paolone opened the floor to the public for discussion on any topic.

Todd Timbrook, 225 Devonshire Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Timbrook is concerned that City Council is taking a loan to fix a tax issue. He understands that there is a loss of revenue and he believes it should be addressed on the expense line. The City has had a history of tax appeals that Council has been aware of. He asked what expenses have been cut in preparation of the loss.

Paige Vaccaro, 21 Asbury Avenue, Linwood

Mrs. Vaccaro advised that there was a special meeting of the Linwood Board of Education scheduled for 4:30 p.m. today. This afternoon, she received a text notification that the meeting was canceled, but no reason was provided. She wants to know why it was canceled.

Seeing and hearing no other members from the public wishing to be heard, Council President Paolone closed the floor.

FINAL REMARKS BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Mayor DePamphilis – The Mayor coached almost every sport in the community and enjoyed every minute of it. City Council introduced an Ordinance to borrow money for the tax appeals and now wants to spend money on a field. He believes something is wrong with that idea.

Councilwoman DeDomenicis – Councilwoman DeDomenicis explained that City Council is working very hard to keep taxes down. She discussed how the governing body has the same goals as the community.

Councilman Gordon – Councilman Gordon thanked everyone for sharing their thoughts and concerns. Things are not easy. Regional issues are impacting our community. He is not sure this is the right time either.

Councilman Ford – Councilman Ford agrees with a lot of things said tonight. He has coached just about all the sports programs in the City. He explained that filing the paperwork does not necessarily mean they are borrowing the money yet. He wants to see something done as there is a lot of planning ahead.

Councilman Heun – Councilman Heun thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting. He advised everyone that Council is looking into all the issues.

Councilman Matik – Councilman Matik attempted to address the list of concerns Mr. Ashman presented. Councilman Matik explained that the money for the Poplar Avenue project is coming from the funds bonded to demolish the building. The current field on Poplar Avenue is in bad condition and is not safe to play on at this time. Public Works maintains the fields and would continue to maintain the field should this project move forward. The Poplar Avenue site was not purchased with Green Acres Funds, so the City can limit access times, etc., to the field. He explained that it would be a multi-purpose field for lacrosse, soccer, and football if needed. There will not be any parking on Edna Avenue. The fields at All Wars Memorial Park do not get rest. Every year, Mainland United Soccer Associations spends thousands of their own dollars to re-do the fields. The High School and Middle School use the fields there as well. Councilman Matik explained that the Poplar Avenue property is deed restricted to recreation and cannot be commercial. The money for the project is a bond. If Council does not use it, they lose it. The project also includes phases of passive recreation including a walking/jogging path and playground.

Council President Paolone – Council President Paolone loves living in Linwood. He moved here for the schools knowing that it is a residential town and that taxes would be higher. Over a year ago, the City entered into a shared service with Atlantic County that works with a group called Community Champions for the registration of

foreclosed properties. The City's Code Enforcement Officer utilizes this program for the maintenance of those properties. The City was pro-actively working to address the foreclosure issues. Council President Paolone explained that the Linwood School Board is an autonomous board. City Council cannot influence their decisions. He reiterated that the Poplar Avenue site is deed restricted for recreation. If it were used for anything else, the property would revert back to the school. He discussed the potential of borrowing money to offset the impact of the tax appeals. During the appeals, City Council hired a company to reassess those properties to be more proactive for the future. Council President Paolone used to Chair the Revenue & Finance Committee. In the past, they cut staff and budget lines as much as they could. They continue to look for shared services. They have done what they can to keep taxes as low as they can. There was a zero increase for 2016. Council President Paolone explained that Linwood schools are still ranked very high, noting the results of the NJ public school rankings for 2016 with Belhaven at #14 out of 714 in the State and Seaview at #94 out of 1355. He believes the Linwood schools are still fantastic.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to be addressed by Council, Councilwoman DeDomenicis motioned, seconded by Councilman Gordon, to adjourn at 8:03 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
Municipal Clerk