

STRATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
AGENDA MEETING/REDEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Borough Clerk Bill Bray called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

STATEMENT OF ADVERTISEMENT: The Borough Clerk read the following statement:
Notice of this meeting has been provided to the Courier Post and The Retrospect and is posted on the Borough Hall Bulletin Board stating the time and the place of the meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Keenan led the Pledge and said an opening prayer.

ROLL CALL:

JOSH KEENAN, MAYOR – PRESENT
PATRICK GILLIGAN, COUNCIL PRESIDENT – PRESENT
STEPHEN GANDY, COUNCILMAN – PRESENT
JAMES KELLY, COUNCILMAN – PRESENT
MICHAEL TOLOMEO, COUNCILMAN – PRESENT
LINDA HALL, COUNCILWOMAN – PRESENT
TINA LOMANNO, COUNCILWOMAN – ABSENT
STUART PLATT, BOROUGH SOLICITOR – PRESENT
STEVEN BACH, BOROUGH ENGINEER – PRESENT
DET. THOMAS FARRELL, DEPUTY OEM COORDINATOR – PRESENT
JOHN D. KEENAN, JR., ACTING BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR - PRESENT
BILL BRAY, BOROUGH CLERK – PRESENT

PUBLIC PORTION FOR AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:

Councilman Gilligan motioned to open the public portion on agenda items only. Councilman Gandy seconded the motion, which passed with all members present voting in favor in a voice vote.

John Gentless, 111 Union Avenue – Mr. Gentless asked about the salary range for Administrator and Director. Mr. Keenan stated those are not the parts that the ordinance changes. Mr. Keenan stated not every position on the salary ordinance is filled or planned to be filled. Mr. Gentless asked if FEMA grant money has been received. Councilman Gandy stated the money has not yet been received.

There were no further comments.

Councilman Tolomeo motioned to close the public portion for agenda items. Councilman Kelly seconded the motion, which passed with all members present voting in favor in a voice vote.

POLICE/OEM REPORT: Det. Farrell provided the following information regarding Stratford Borough Police Department Activities for August 2022.

Aug. 1 – Chief of Police Ron Morello retired, we wish him all the best

Aug. 6 – Police responded to Whitehall Apartments 8-year-old female found alone and upset inside a residence and upset. Officers spoke with the child, found her apartment and returned her to her sleeping grandparent.

Aug. 6 – Police responded to Jefferson Hospital driveway for a man having a manic episode. The man jumped onto the roof of a police vehicle. The man was taken to mental health facility.

Aug. 8 – Police responded to Cornell Manor Apartments for a domestic dispute and found a woman high on methamphetamine. The woman was taken to Jefferson ER.

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Aug. 9 – Police responded to a MV theft that had just occurred. Patrolman Morello spotted the stolen vehicle and worked with other detectives to identify the suspect who had recently escaped from a facility by stealing a government vehicle. The vehicle was recovered two days later and returned. Complaints were issued against the suspect.

Aug. 10 – A chemical release caused a foul odor throughout southern New Jersey. Officers responded to multiple residences due to reports of the odor which impacted many communities throughout southern New Jersey.

Aug. 10 – Police responded to Jefferson ER for the report of a 63-year-old man who assaulted a nurse. The suspect was secured and charged.

Aug. 14 – Police found an extensive amount of graffiti was found at the vacant Laurel Mills Shopping Center. Police installed cameras to help catch the offender and other property maintenance issues were noticed and violations were issued.

Aug. 23 – The cameras at the Laurel Mills Shopping Center were stolen.

Aug 22 – Officers responded to Cornel Manor Apartments for a break-in. Police found the callers granddaughter was attempting to gain access to the home. The granddaughter was reported as a missing person last year. The granddaughter has permission to be at the home and was removed from the missing person database.

Aug. 22- Police responded to Brookview Manor Apartments to speak to sister of a missing 15-year-old. Stratford Police were able to locate and contact the juvenile who had been abducted. Stratford Police were able to provide information to Cherry Hill Police who arrived on the scene and found the juvenile safe.

Aug. 23 – Police responded to Jefferson Hospital for a male patient who was four times the legal BAC limit. The patient left barefoot and attempted to steal alcohol after he left the hospital. Police located the patient and returned him to the hospital.

Aug. 23 – Police responded to a well being check and discovered a woman living deplorable conditions. Police contacted state agencies to provide assistance for her. Police found the woman's husband had passed away at a medical facility. Police were able to locate the man's son so that his body could be claimed and burial arrangements made.

Aug. 25 – Antisemitic propaganda was found near Estates II neighborhood which was similar to propaganda found at other locations in the state. The FBI was contacted and it is investigating.

Aug. 27 – Police stopped a vehicle on White Horse Pike and discovered the driver had a warrant out for their arrest and they were a murder suspect. Police took the suspect into custody without incident. The suspect was lodged in the county jail.

Aug 29 – Police responded to Dena's Auto for a customer dispute involving a weapon. The customer wanted a refunded after finding problems with a vehicle. The owner refunded the money and the customer left without incident.

Aug 29 – Police responded to Jefferson Hospital for a suicidal female who had left. Police located the woman and returned her to the hospital without incident.

Aug 29 – Police responded to Wright Ave and Columbia Ave for a fight between two women. When police arrived, the two women were separated but a 29-year-old suspect began to assault the other woman in the presence of the police officer. The suspect was taken into custody and she began to kick and resist and damaged the patrol car. The suspect was charged with assault and criminal mischief.

Councilwoman Lomanno entered the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

OEM REPORT - Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you, Mayor and Council and citizens assembled to talk about how Stratford Office of Emergency Management (OEM) can assist with the Stratford Ambulance Association.

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First, if you would indulge me, I would like to let you know my background. In addition to being a Police Officer with the Stratford Police Department for the past 20 years, I am also an EMT. I received my initial certification in 1998, in Stratford, at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, (UMDNJ) which consisted of over 200 hours of training. My certification is current, and in the past 24 years I have hundreds of hours in state mandated training or CORE training in addition to hundreds of hours of elective training. Also, for 24 years, I have been a CPR/AED/First Aid Instructor with the American Heart Association. My initial EMT training was completed by State Certified Instructors many from Stratford Ambulance Association.

I have been the Stratford Police Department Ambulance Liaison to Stratford Ambulance for the past 20 years. I was member of Pine Hill Fire and EMS, where I achieved the rank of EMS Lieutenant. In that capacity I was tasked with training and supply acquisition. I volunteered in Pine Hill in addition at Stratford Ambulance Association. I worked for Kennedy EMS as a 911 EMT for 8 years in Lindenwold, Pine Hill, Clementon, Gloucester Twp., Washington Twp., and Pitman. At that time, when paid services were beginning to take over, Stratford Ambulance Association continued serving the residents of Stratford with an all-volunteer service.

As you are well aware, Stratford Ambulance had contacted you for assistance in November of 2021. The concerns were loss of billing revenue, lack of volunteers, and desire of long-standing members, some with over 30 years' experience, to retire from service.

I have been catching up with all the meetings that have occurred between Council, Stratford Ambulance, Stratford Fire Department, and the OEM. I would first like to thank mayor and council for putting the citizens of Stratford first by researching every option to save a 67-year-old institution that provides lifesaving services to Stratford.

The Office of Emergency Management's job is logistics which includes coordinating with organizations both in planning, during an emergency and after the emergency occurs. The OEM publishes the Emergency Operations Plan which is designed to protect lives and property in emergencies by coordinating response activities of municipal and volunteer entities to ensure their optimum use. It provides for actions to be taken to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of an emergency. It is the OEMs responsible for implementing this plan and coordinating the response. I cannot think of a better example of an emergency then the loss of the Ambulance Association.

The problem of finances is one of the primary problems that was identified by President Meyers. Currently citizens of Stratford are not Hard Billed, OEM immediately began searching for alternate sources of income for the ambulance. The main costs associated with the Ambulance Association are equipment, supplies, building costs and maintenance, and manpower.

Multiple options were analyzed and rejected until ultimately using the existing structure to continue as a hybrid where Stratford EMS remains a separate legal entity, and where paid volunteers of the Stratford Ambulance Association staff certain hours. And an arrangement where supplemental staffing coverage is required is supported by the Sterling Alliance on a contract basis. Utilizing this option, the Stratford Ambulance Association and Sterling Alliance would both remain unchanged and the workforce unaffected. Under this model, Stratford residents would will not be hard billed for EMS services.

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A plan developed in which the Stratford Ambulance Association would move operations into the Stratford Fire Department. This would allow the Borough to provide additional financial support Stratford Ambulance Association and to the Fire Department. Stratford could in-turn repurpose the existing facility, saving thousands of dollars on gas, water, electric, cable tv, internet etc.

OEM recognized that although no help was specifically requested by the Fire Department, costs have been rising for all Emergency Services. With the Fire Department “leasing space” to the Ambulance Association, the Fire Department would be able to acquire an additional revenue source. The OEM sees this as a two-for-one, win win scenario.

OEM recognized the additional tangible benefit to having all three emergency services within walking distance to each other and to the Borough Hall, and Senior Center.

- In times of emergency, similar to large weather events all three of the organizations could keep crews manned in housed. Additional manpower for maintaining equipment and services with housing and feeding the crews would be easier with a command post.
- Cross training Fire and Ambulance personal could occur as both crews could meet at the same time. The training would not make Firefighters into EMTs, and would not make EMTs into Firefighters, but the cross training could only enhance the skills of both and only be beneficial to citizens of the Stratford.
- In Pine Hill a similar approach was made when three (3) fire departments and EMS were merged into a Fire District. The additional funds provided by the EMS were used by the Fire Department for equipment.

OEM has access to apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding. This includes one-time funding and grants for federal events. These funds have to be accounted for through tracking. This is done through the accounting function of Chain of Command, which in our case is vested with the Borough Finance Office.

Multiple Grants were searched when the first grant was found and applied for. The Grant was won and was allocated for manpower. These funds were received and are to be used for future EMS costs.

All federal grants funds must be accounted for, especially since the Borough of Stratford was awarded the funds for EMS purposes.

An additional grant has been applied for which is also in process for additional EMS costs. These grants cannot be re-purposed or be used for anything other than EMS related labor and expenses. With the members of the Association wanting to retire, the decision was made to transition the EMS Accounts Payable and receivable to Stratford Borough finance office.

A trust account, approved by the Stratford Chief Financial Officer with the Division of Community Affairs, was established to deposit funds, including the FEMA Grants, for year-to-year use by the Ambulance Association.

The opportunity to secure additional funding was developed through the adoption of an Ordinance of EMS Subscription Service. Council had sought funds through Laurel Springs and Hi Nella who also are primary users of Stratford Ambulance. These additional of revenue in conjunction with current and grants would have secured funding for multiple years in the future.

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The Ambulance Association suddenly contacted an attorney to dissolve during the first week of August 2022. The irreparable harm incurred from the decision to dissolve would have a ripple effect to our community.

- It would be impossible to secure any additional grant funding for a non-existent entity, making reimbursement for past expenses impossible.
- In addition to funding for manpower, if the resources like ambulances and equipment were given away to another entity, it would be cost prohibitive to repurchase these items.
- Void the contract between Stratford Ambulance Association and Magnolia Ambulance thus ending the Sterling Alliance.
- The Stratford Residents would be without local ambulance service.
- Ambulance services would have to be out-sourced to a hospital bases system or to another municipality. This is similar to what happened in Voorhees when Virtua Hospital was contracted to provide EMS Service to Voorhees.
- The Stratford Fire Department would lose its additional revenue that which was being raised by leasing space to the Ambulance Association.
- The Citizens of Stratford would have to incur the costs of the new service. Privatization comes at a hefty price tag.

Looking forward, It is imperative the Stratford Ambulance Association is kept in-tact. A comprehensive review had begun of the Stratford Ambulance Association By-Laws in order to keep the entity in place. The By-Laws are governed by the Ambulance Association, they control who may become a member and who may not. They are essentially a private company with their own board of directors.

A Resolution was developed by Council that would allow members to be added and the second request of President Meyers, an opportunity for her and other members to retire. A new Board was developed that required input from multiple agencies along with Ambulance Association to ensure its continued mission of service to the citizens of Stratford. The new board would not have to be limited to active EMTs. As membership was identified as a point of concern, this would only add to the diminished return and lead back to the same issue. Similar to Boards in the private sector that are comprised of specialized individuals, this could ultimately help a more streamlined and efficient management operation while EMTs could also have an opportunity to contribute to the overall emergency function. Additionally, it would reduce to amount of time that individuals may not have to commit to the organization.

With funding secured, the second issue of manpower has to be addressed.

Recruitment

Most EMTs have multiple jobs due to the lower wages and time availability.

New recruits could be obtained through:

- Postings on local electronic signs, Fire Department, Schools
- E Blast
- Signage in the center of town
- Direct postings at local training centers:
 - Camden County Regional Emergency Training

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- Waterford Twp EMS
- Gloucester County EMS Training Facility
- Rowan College EMS EMT Training Facility
- Direct communication with local EMTs and EMS organizations

All training costs are incurred by the Ambulance Association.

New EMTs have to first have a valid CPR certification, and then attend school for approximately 3 months.

24 hours of CORE Classes are required by all EMTs every three years

24 hours of Elective Classes are required by all EMTs every three years. Some of these classes could be taken by Firefighters which would also add to the value of both responders. These classes could be scheduled at one of the municipal buildings depending on size.

- Currently the members of the Stratford Ambulance are compensated at a rate of \$14.50 per hour.
- The salary could be adjusted to \$17.00 per hour which is an increase of almost 20%.

As a basis of understanding:

- The NJ Average for EMT Salaries is \$19.80 per hour. This includes EMTs that are part of paid Fire Departments, from towns to larger townships throughout the State.
- The National Average is \$19.50 per hour.

OEM is continuing to support the efforts to support the Ambulance Association until and through the retirement of current administration and implementation of the new board and continued service to the citizens of Stratford. To be absolutely crystal clear, it is not, and has not, been the idea or intention, of the Stratford OEM, Stratford Mayor and Council, or any another group or association to eliminate, or take over, the Stratford Ambulance Association. The countless hours of work to get everyone to this place has been in direct response to a request made from the Stratford Ambulance Association and the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Stratford. The only goal is the mission of the Stratford Ambulance Association, Service to the residents of Stratford.

ENGINEER REPORT:

Mr. Bach stated his written report was submitted to Council. Mr. Bach stated the Borough funded road improvement project is moving forward with surveys and designs with fall bid, winter contracts and spring 2023 construction. The FY23 DOT aid application has been submitted. The 2021 DOT grant project notice to proceed has been issued and the work will be performed this fall. FY 2022 DOT grant project is currently in design with construction anticipated in Spring 2023.

Councilman Gilligan stated school buses had some issues moving through the construction area on Central Avenue. Mr. Bach stated he will contact the contractor to make sure they are not blocking traffic if the roadway is not set to be closed for the day. Councilman Gilligan stated a resident complained that signage was also block their line of sight when pulling onto the White Horse Pike. Mr. Bach stated the contractor will be told to make sure lines of sight are preserved.

There were no more questions.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

August 4, 2022 AGENDA MEETING
August 4, 2022 EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING
August 9, 2022 REGULAR MEETING
August 15, 2022 SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
August 15, 2022 EXECUTIVE SESSION MEETING

A motion was made by Councilman Gandy, seconded by Councilwoman Lomanno with all members present voting aye by roll call vote except Councilman Tolomeo who abstained for the August 9 Minutes due to his absence from that meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

REPORT #1 Upcoming Public Hearings of Ordinances:

Ord. 2022-13 AMEND 2022 SALARY ORDINANCE

Mr. Bray stated this ordinance adjusts the salaries of building code enforcement officials.

NEW BUSINESS: Report #2 Upcoming Introduction of Ordinances:

ORD. 2022-14 AMEND CHAPTER 15 BUILDINGS AND CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Bray stated this ordinance makes several adjustments to the Ordinance adopted in August to adjust construct permit fees.

RESOLUTIONS:

Mr. Bray reviewed the proposed resolutions. No one from Council removed or added to the consent agenda. Resolutions 2022:127 through 2022:139 were approved as a consent agenda.

RES. 2022-127 RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR A MEETING NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT, NJSA 10:4-12

The matters for executive session will pertain to matters relating to Negotiations – Berlin Road Redevelopment Phase II, Brandywine-Stratford Square, EMS Services; Litigation – Laurel Mills LLC vs Stratford

RES. 2022-128 AUTHORIZE MAINTENANCE LEIN – Block 116, Lot 14

RES. 2022-129 APPROVE SPECIAL EVENT- JP II CARNIVAL SEPT. 22-24

RES. 2022-130 APPROVE MEMBERSHIP IN ESCNJ COOPERATIVE PRICING SYSTEM

RES. 2022-131 AUTHORIZE PURCHASE OF POLICE VEHICLES

RES. 2022-132 AUTHORIZE PARTICIPATION IN CCCP FOR ROAD SALT

RES. 2022-133 APPOINT CROSSING GUARD

RES. 2022-134 AUTHORIZE PERMIT FEE REFUND

RES. 2022-135 ACTIVATE NJ CIVIL SERVICE LIST FOR POLICE LIEUTENANT

RES. 2022-136 APPOINT FIRE OFFICIAL

RES. 2022-137 AUTHORIZE ELECTRONIC TAX SALE

RES. 2022-138 AUTHORIZE DISPOSAL OF BICYCLES

RES. 2022-139 APPOINT MEMBER TO LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Motion was made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilman Tolomeo with all members present voting aye by roll call vote.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

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Councilman Gilligan – On Monday I will be representing Stratford in the county Town Hall meeting at Rowan University’s campus here.

Councilman Gandy – The report from the police department is always surprising to hear what our officers encounter everyday and we appreciate our officers’ efforts.

Councilman Kelly – Thanks to Det. Farrell for his through report this evening.

Councilman Tolomeo – Nothing at this time.

Councilwoman Hall – We have had some bus issues in the town and I can’t thank the police enough for their assistance this week. Thanks to Det. Farrell for his assistance with school busing and to Officer Morello for his outstanding work.

Councilwoman Lomanno – I apologize for being late due a work scheduling conflict. Thanks to Det. Farrell for his detailed report.

GOOD AND WELFARE:

Motion was made by Councilman Gilligan, seconded by Councilwoman Lomanno to open the meeting to the public for Good and Welfare with all Council voting aye.

There were no comments.

Motion was made by Councilman Tolomeo, seconded by Councilwoman Hall to close the public portion with all Council voting aye.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Mr. Platt stated the Executive Session is anticipated to last approximately 35 minutes and no action is expected afterwards.

Motion was made by Councilman Gandy, seconded by Councilman Kelly, with all Council voting aye to enter into Executive Session.

Council entered Executive Session at 7:31 p.m. Council returned from Executive Session at 8:58 p.m.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilwoman Hall, with all Council voting aye to come out of Executive Session.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Councilman Tolomeo, seconded by Councilman Kelly with all Council voting aye to adjourn at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Bill Bray, Borough Clerk