

STRATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
AGENDA MEETING/REDEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP MINUTES
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024
6:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: Administrator, John Keenan called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

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

ROLL CALL:

MAYOR LINDA HALL – PRESENT
COUNCIL PRESIDENT MICHAEL TOLOMEO – PRESENT
COUNCILMAN PATRICK GILLIGAN – PRESENT
COUNCILWOMAN TINA LOMANNO – PRESENT
COUNCILWOMAN DAWN MARTIN – PRESENT
COUNCILMAN STEPHEN GANDY – PRESENT
COUNCILMAN JIM KELLY – PRESENT
JUSTIN STRAUSSER, BOROUGH SOLICITOR – PRESENT
STEVEN BACH, BOROUGH ENGINEER - PRESENT
RON MORELLO, POLICE CHIEF/OEM – PRESENT
BOB BOVE, DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF – PRESENT
JOHN D. KEENAN JR, BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR – PRESENT
STEPHENIE CIANFRANI, DEPUTY CLERK - PRESENT

STATEMENT OF ADVERTISEMENT: The Administrator 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.

PUBLIC PORTION FOR AGENDA ITEMS ONLY:

Motion was made by Councilman Gandy, seconded by Councilman Tolomeo to open the public portion for comments on agenda items only, with all Council voting aye by voice vote.

John Gentless of 111 Union Avenue inquired about Resolution 130 related to Triad. The Administrator explained Triad Associates is the Borough’s COAH Administrative Agent, and the current agreement was being amended to allow for the new rehab program. He also confirmed his desire to see Cornell Manor apartments changed in to COAH units.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilwoman Martin to close the public portion with all Council voting aye by voice vote.

POLICE/OEM REPORT: Ron Morello provided the following report of the Stratford Borough Police Department Activities for September 2024:

- 9/3 During the afternoon hours, one of our young officers made a pedestrian stop along Berlin Road. An Atlantic City women known to have warrants. The female was found in possession of 30 bags of heroin with intent to distribute. She was remanded to the CCJ.

- 9/5 During the morning hours, officers responded to a home on Oak Drive for a 55-year-old unconscious male. Officers arrived and CPR was initiated. The male was transported to Jefferson, unfortunately, he passed away.

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- 9/7 Overnight, another auto theft crime spree targeting high-end cars. In Stratford, the suspects stole a specialty model of a Dodge Charger. Luckily, the thieves could not drive a stick and they abandoned the car on Union Avenue. So down the Pike they went and stole the same car in Oaklyn. That car was tracked by OnStar on a cargo ship that left from the Port on Newark a few days later.
- 9/7 A 17 & 18-year-old from Bear Delaware were charged with theft, \$40.00 in a tip jar from D'Amicos. They fled in a vehicle that was eventually caught up to in Lindenwold. The driver fled from police, crashed on Blackwood Rd and fled again. They surrendered a few days later and we were able to get restitution for the business.
- 9/8 During the afternoon hours, officers responded to a home on Saratoga Rd for a report of unconscious male, this was a 68-year old male DOA of natural causes.
- 9/8 Once again, a 22-year-old from town left home, taking a trip without telling his folks. He's been tracked and confirmed to be in Mexico by way of El Paso TX. Same 22-year-old who had out of state adventures in the past. This trip however is without a US passport. He's entered into NCIC as a missing person, which will enable CBP to bring him into the US without a passport. We've been in touch with the US Embassy and alerted them of the situation. There is no indication of foul play.
- 9/9 Another enraged psychological patient causes thousands of dollars in damage, destroying heart monitoring equipment in the Emergency Room. 33-year old Pine Hill man was charged with criminal mischief
- 9/14 During the afternoon hours, we were called to a home on Columbia Avenue for a report of a CAT burglary. Literally, 2 exotic cats were stolen. In this case, the resident has been hospitalized from an accident for two months.
The owner had purchased these cats from a woman in Virginia last year, there was supposedly some type of contract that she had a right of first refusal if the cats were to be given away or sold. After learning the owner was ill, she arrived at the victim's home, and while streaming on Facebook live, she kicked open the door and took the cats back. Apologizing for the property damage on the way out. The woman was charged with burglary and theft, she failed to appear in court.
- 9/16 School threat occurred at Yellin School. In this case a 6th grader threatened to bring a gun to school to shoot classmates. That situation was resolved. We confirmed there was no weapons. The school and police followed procedures regarding charges and discipline.
- 9/18 During the evening hours, we were called to the 3rd floor of Jefferson to assist staff with a male actively slicing his throat with a hospital knife. In this case, a psychological patient was provided a knife with his dinner and proceeded to attempt suicide. The patient was disarmed upon police arrival. In bad shape, he was flown to Jefferson in Philadelphia.
- 9/19 Yellin School again, a 7th grader who had an ongoing conflict with a classmate brought a folding knife to school for protection. When staff learned of the weapon, they conducted a search and located it in a backpack. The school and police followed procedures regarding charges and discipline.

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- 9/20 During the overnight hours, at least 4 unlocked vehicles were burglarized, with change stolen. No suspects.
- 9/23 During the afternoon hours, we were called to the Goodwill for a fight in progress. In this case, an employee was having a customer dispute and challenged the customer to a fight. Prior to leaving the store to fight, the employee called family members on Pennsylvania Avenue to come help. The fight happened in the lot and the employee got the worst of the fight. Three involved parties were charged with Disorderly Conduct, fighting.
- 9/25 Again, I filed multiple charges against Brandywine and Velocity for the property maintenance violations that they took no action on after being cited last month. All these matters are due in Court on October 23, 2024.

Today, I received a grant award letter for \$48,0000.00, 2024-2025 Drunk Driving Task Force, the grant also funded a purchase of a second RADAR Speed sign like the one we purchased last year. We receive requests the RADAR by residents, so having a second unit will help with the demand.

A Federal Bullet Proof Vest grant was awarded and drawn on for vest replacement That amount was \$3539.90

Also, I had sent the committee an email regarding a quarter million dollar DOJ COPS grant award to fund two police officers over the next 36-48 months. Not sure if you want to accept the grant funds, it commits the borough to fund the officers 12 months beyond the grant period. These are not additional officer positions; the funds would be used to re-staff vacancies.

If these officers were laid off after the grant period, we would have to reimburse the full grant award.

FIRE REPORT: Deputy Chief Bove presented the Fire Report for September 2024.

ENGINEER REPORT:

Mr. Bach stated the written report was submitted to Council. He highlighted some of the work.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

SEPTEMBER 05, 2024 AGENDA MEETING

SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 REGULAR MEETING

A motion was made by Councilman Kelly, seconded by Councilman Tolomeo with all members present voting aye by roll call vote, with the exception of those who were not present at any of these meetings, abstained.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Fireman Membership Application – Frank Hartman

Jr Fireman Membership Application – Jonathan Nelson

Jr Fireman Membership Application – Nicholas Marshall

A motion made by Councilman Gandy, seconded by Councilman Kelly to approve the membership application, with all Council voting aye by voice vote.

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RESOLUTIONS:

Mr. Keenan reviewed the proposed resolutions.

No one from Council removed or added to the consent agenda. Resolutions 24:125 through 24:137 were approved as a consent agenda by motion of Councilman Kelly, seconded by Councilman Tolomeo, with all Council voting aye by roll call vote.

- RES.24:125 APPOINTMENT OF POLICE LIEUTENANT
- RES.24:126 APPOINTMENT OF A POLICE OFFICER
- RES.24:127 APPOINTMENT OF POLICE SERGEANT
- RES.24:128 APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS CLASS I
- RES.24:129 SETTING CURFEW FOR HALLOWEEN
- RES.24:130 AMENDMENT TO AGREEMENT W TRIAD ASSOCIATES
- RES.24:131 CHAPTER 159 - COUNTY DWI CHECKPOINT \$1400
- RES.24:132 AWARD 2024 SEWER ROOT CONTROL BID
- RES.24:133 AUTHORIZE PARTICIPATION IN CCCP FOR ROAD SALT
- RES.24:134 AUTHORIZE CAMDEN COUNTY DEER CARCASS REMOVAL CONTRACT EXTENSION
- RES.24:135 ACCEPTING THE DOJ BVP GRANT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,539.90
- RES.24:136 EXECUTIVE SESSION – FAIR SHARE HOUSING v BOROUGH OF STRATFORD
- RES.24:137 APPROVING CHANGE ORDER #1 (FINAL) FOR FY2022 NJDOT TRUST FUND

BUSINESS LICENSE: The Motor Zone 1010 N. White Horse Pike

Motion was made to approve the license by Councilman Gilligan, seconded by Councilman Tolomeo, with all Council voting aye by roll call vote.

The Borough Administrator did discuss the 2024 Best Practices process which is required by each municipality to complete, and obtain a score to find out if eligible to continue to obtain State funding. Stratford's score was high enough to continue to obtain 100% of State funding.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilman Tolomeo – Nothing to report.

Councilman Gilligan – reported a new natural gas generator had been installed at the Community Center with a grant from NJ DCA. He explained the Commissioners of Camden County are going to purchase the Quaker Store from its owner, and then donate it to the Borough of Stratford, with restrictions to preserve it for the future. Councilman asked residents who may be interested in being active on the Park Commission to please email him. He spoke about a new program being offered to qualified residents based on family size and income to provide rehabilitation funds to bring their homes up to code such as for roofs, electrical upgrades, etc. This program is being fully funded by fees obtained by new developers. The borough in 2024 has received over \$130,000 and in 2025 anticipates over \$300,000 additional funding. The program will begin in early 2025.

Councilwoman Lomanno – congratulated the police officers who were honored this evening, and nice to see a long devotion within some families to be officers.

Councilwoman Martin – stated “I’d like to thank our local businesses and organizations who are participating in our First Annual Selfie with a Scarecrow contest. Their involvement plays a key role in making the event a success and in bringing our community together. As this new tradition continues; I hope to add more businesses and organizations every year. For every selfie that is emailed to Councilwoman Martin, an entry will be submitted to win one of 4 gift certificates to a local business. Winners will be announced at our Halloween parade on October 30th at Yellin School and posted on social media. Our 3rd Annual House decorating contest has begun.

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Any resident that is interested in entering the contest should email a photo of their decorated house along with their name and address to Councilwoman Dawn Martin by October 19th. A link to vote online for the best decorated house will be emailed to residents and posted on social media from October 21st to October 28th. 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners will be announced at our Halloween parade on October 30th at Yellin School and results will be posted on social media. Our Halloween parade and festivities will be held at Yellin School on Wednesday, October 30th beginning at 6pm and will end at curfew. Lastly, October is Fire Prevention Month. I'd like to take a moment to express our gratitude to our volunteer firefighters for their selfless dedication and tireless efforts in keeping our community and surrounding communities safe. Our fire department along with several local fire departments will be participating in a Fire Prevention Night on Wednesday, October 16th from 7-8:30pm at Sterling High School. I'd like to encourage residents to attend this wonderful community event." Councilman Gandy – welcomed Frank Hartman as a volunteer fire fighter following in his grandfather's steps. Also nice to see the officers tonight receive their promotion, and thankful for their long-term commitment to the town.

Councilman Kelly – stated he was sorry he could not make the earlier presentation, but thanked the police, fire and EMS for their service.

Mayor Hall – commented on the many homes already getting ready for the Halloween season and decoration contest. She welcomed the new fire members, and looks forward to the Fire Prevention Day at the Parkview School. Thanked the police and recognition to those just promoted this evening. She explained in 2025 the in-person meetings were going to be on one night and not two.

Solicitor Justin Strausser gave an update on the Laurel Mills site. He explained the most recent history which started about one year ago. The redevelopment agreement had been signed after litigation related to it. In the month following there was very little to no movement from the owner especially related to JLUB conditions being satisfied. The Solicitor gave notice of default to the owner, and soon Council terminated the redevelopment agreement and designation. The owner then filed a complaint against the borough to challenge the termination. Since February 2024 the town has been in court on several occasions trying to resolve the case. The borough felt the owner was not making time concessions which were favorable, and did not agree to resolve the case. The proceeding is scheduled for January 08, 2025 where the judge will decide if the redevelopment termination was valid. The owner still must maintain the site and the town can still issue summons. The goal is to develop the site as quickly as possible.

GOOD AND WELFARE:

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

John Gentless of 111 Union Avenue inquired to the Solicitor if Eminent Domain was an option related to Laurel Mills. The Solicitor confirmed it was an option. Mr. Gentless inquired about the tax appeal related to Methodist Church. The Administrator confirmed the State has not heard the case yet. Also, he inquired about the broken sprinkler system at the War Memorial. The Administrator confirmed the vendor has been notified.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilman Gilligan to close the Good and Welfare portion with all Council voting aye.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion was made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilman Kelly to enter into Executive Session, with all Council voting aye. Mr. Keenan stated this session could take about 30 minutes, which no action being taken afterwards, but reserved the right to take action.

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Motion made by Councilwoman Lomanno, seconded by Councilman Gilligan to come out of Executive Session with no action taken in Executive Session. All Councilmembers voted aye.
Comment was made no action was taken during the Executive Session.

ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Councilwoman Martin, seconded by Councilwoman Lomanno with all Council voting aye to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Stephenie Cianfrani
Borough Deputy Clerk