

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Tuesday, **February 14, 2023** at 7:37 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo, Council Vice President
Suzette Given
Steven McIntyre
Everett Merrill
Keiona R. Miller
Wendy Schaefer
Frank “Skip” Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
David E. Hollod, Business Administrator
Eric M. Bernstein, Esq., Borough Attorney
Brian Hak, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
Michele Irby-Garry, CMR, Acting Borough Clerk

Council President Stabile read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 12, 2022 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

The Flag Salute was led by Council President Stabile followed by a moment of silence for the men and women serving in the Armed Forces.

Mayor La Ronde presented the following Mayoral Proclamation:

WHEREAS: the citizens of the Borough of North Plainfield stand firmly committed to promoting reading as the catalyst for our students’ future academic success, their preparation for America’s jobs of the future and their ability to compete in a global economy, and;

WHEREAS: the Borough of North Plainfield has provided significant leadership in the area of community involvement in the education of our youth, grounded in the principle that educational investment is key to the community’s well-being and long-term quality of life, and;

WHEREAS: “Read Across America Day,” a national celebration of reading, will be conducted on March 2, 2023, and promotes reading and adult involvement in the education of our community’s students;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that I, Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor of the Borough of North Plainfield, do hereby call upon its citizens to assure that every child is in a safe place reading together with a caring adult on the evening of March 2, 2023; and

BE IT FURTHER PROCLAIMED that I, Lawrence La Ronde enthusiastically endorses NEA's Read Across America and Read Across America - NJ, and commits our community to engage in programs and activities to make America's children the best readers in the world.

Mayor La Ronde then presented the evening's second Mayoral Proclamation:

WHEREAS, the National School Breakfast Program has served our nation since it was permanently established in 1975; and

WHEREAS, the School Breakfast Program is dedicated to the health and well-being of our children; and

WHEREAS, research shows that school aged children who experience hunger have higher levels of absenteeism, nurse's visits, and have more challenges than children receiving a well-balanced diet; and

WHEREAS, frequent studies have shown that meals provided at school significantly increase and enhance their ability to learn; and

WHEREAS, as parents, teachers, and school food personnel, we are endowed with the responsibility of providing the children of our communities with their basic resources needed to grow, learn, discover their own potential, and live happy fulfilling lives; and

WHEREAS: Offering breakfast as part of the school day improves children's diets, builds healthy, lifelong eating habits and allows students to begin their days focused and ready to learn; and

WHEREAS: the campaign for this year's theme, "Dig In To School Breakfast!" is about having healthy breakfast options available at school to provide an energizing start to the day for students;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that I, Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor of the Borough of North Plainfield, do hereby proclaim the week of March 6th through March 10th, 2023, as

NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK

and encourage all our residents and schools to know the importance of starting the starting the day with a healthy breakfast.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Josh Gargano, 57 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, inquired after the lack of public notice given for the dismissal of Richard Phoenix. The Council President interjected that Mr. Phoenix was not dismissed, he was not reappointed and the meeting was noticed in accordance with State statute. Mr. Bernstein advised that it was a personnel matter and should not be discussed in a public meeting.

Francine Gargano, 57 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, opined it to not be a personnel matter as it was done via resolution at a public meeting without discussion. If the matter was not handled in accordance with the law, the residents will be the ones to pay, she remarked. The speaker then stated her opposition to the Mayor and Council collecting salaries. She urged the Council to implement permit parking to help alleviate the abundance of on-street parking throughout the Borough.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Presentation of the Proposed 2023 Municipal Budget – Patrick DeBlasio, Kitty Intravartolo to be present** – L.L. Mr. DeBlasio indicated that as the Budget stands, the municipal tax rate would increase to 1.517 which would amount to an approximate increase of \$196 per household. The Borough lost approximately eight million dollars of valuation due to tax appeals. Our surplus is over three million, a portion of which will be used to offset additional tax increases. We anticipate State aid to remain stable. Health insurance and pension costs have all increased. Our tax collection came in at 97.85% thanks to Ms. Intravartolo. Mayor La Ronde indicated the Budget would be introduced at the February 27, 2023 meeting.

2. **Presentation of the Prospective Developer for Villa Maria Site Affordable Housing** – B.H. Mr. Hak introduced Joe Villani and Joseph Paparo, Esq. to make a presentation on the development of the Villa Maria site for affordable housing. Mr. Villani indicated that he works for Villani Realty Group in Dunellen, NJ. With over fifty years of experience, he remarked that they have completed several redevelopment projects in Union, Hudson, Somerset, and Middlesex counties. Commenting on his review of the Borough's redevelopment plan adopted for the site, he shared details of his proposed plans for the two-family units, confirming each would be different with the affordable housing units interspersed. A twenty-year PILOT program could be an option with an approximate ten percent payment to the municipality which would increase each year. Responding to Mr. McIntyre, Mr. Paparo referenced a Rutgers University study which breaks down the anticipated number of school aged children to be expected in the affordable housing units. Mr. Villani indicated the potential for thirteen to sixteen school aged children living in the new units.

3. **Historic Preservation Commission** – S.M. Mr. McIntyre explained that the existing historic ordinance requires a certified mailing of the ordinance to the seller, buyer, real estate agent and the attorney for each sale of a house within the district. In an effort to save money, the Zoning Office proposed eliminating the need to notify the seller and real estate agent, leaving just the buyer and attorney as recipients in the process.

4. **Plainfield Humane Society** – F.S.S. Council President Stabile reported that the Borough had enjoyed several years of animal control services with the Plainfield Area Humane Society. Joining in, Ms. Schaefer recalled their exemplary service during the pandemic, specifically their offer of kitty litter, dog and/or cat food for our resident’s animals and even offering to transport animals to the vet.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS: None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Given and on voice vote carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President