



BOROUGH OF HADDON HEIGHTS
Council Work Session Minutes
Tuesday, May 5, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
ZOOM

Mayor Zachary Houck called the meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m. He then read the following statement:

“In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, notice of this meeting was posted on the bulletin board designed for that purpose and notice was transmitted to the official newspapers provided by Resolution adopted January 4, 2020.”

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Houck asked the Clerk for roll call.

Under roll call, Council President Madden, Councilwoman Kurtz and Councilmen Mrozinski, Schreiber, Morgan and Ottoson were present as well as Solicitor Howard Long, Borough Clerk Kelly Santosusso and Administrative Assistant Marian Hauser.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mayor Houck asked for Public Comment on Agenda items only and reviewed procedures for the public to be formally recognized within the ZOOM platform.

Hearing no sound or movement from the public, Mayor Houck closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

CAUCUS WORK SESSION:

Statement on COVID 19 – Mayor Houck

Mayor Houck gave an overview of COVID-19 statistics noting that the County has an additional 87 positive cases, 15 in Haddon Heights and 89 deaths in long term facilities. Three deaths today and 189 deaths in Camden County. He said one death at Stanfill Towers. The numbers for the long term facilities are inclusive from the beginning of April through the first week in May. Mayor Houck said this is a somber time for anyone who has lost a loved one. Mayor Houck announced the May 7th County Town Hall meeting which will cover a number of topic related to COVID-19.

2020 Census – Mayor Houck

Mayor Houck reported that we are one of nine (9) counties who will receive 88 million in funding. We are looking into how to access these funds going forward noting this will be hugely beneficial. He went on to report that Camden County is currently at 58.6% completion with 75% completion rate in Haddon Heights. West side of Haddon Heights is at 77% and the East side at 73%. He said we have a long way to go due to the current crisis. Unfortunately, the planned events the Borough was coordinating to promote and assist residents with the Census have been canceled due to social distancing practices.

Residents can visit 2020 census.gov to complete.

NJ SEM Sustainable Energy Joint Procurement for Purchase of Bulk Electric

Mayor Houck reported that Haddon Heights is exploring options for natural gas purchasing. This will help allow us to utilize sustainable energy resources. Councilman Ottoson commented that this is a good idea and one that he fully supports.

Memorial Day

Council President Madden said that typically a small ceremony at the foreign legion World War I Memorial was held with a procession to the Cannons at the World War II Memorial. Due to social distancing, we will not hold any large gatherings. We are discussing laying of wreaths at staggered intervals. We are in touch with the VFW and are looking into some options to honor our veterans.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES of April 21, 2020 Business Meeting and the April 28, 2020 Special Emergency Meeting

Mayor Houck asked for a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 21, 2020 Business Meeting. A motion was made by Councilwoman Kurtz, seconded by Councilman Schreiber. All members were in favor. A motion to approve the Minutes of the April 28, 2020 Special Emergency Meeting was made by Councilwoman Kurtz and seconded by Councilman Schreiber. All members were in favor.

APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES of April 21, 2020

Mayor Houck asked for a motion to approve the April 21, 2020 Executive Session Minutes. A motion was made by Councilwoman Kurtz, seconded by Councilman Schreiber. All members were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rick DiRenzo, 415 Second Avenue – Mr. DiRenzo inquired as to whether the Mayor will be involved in the International Association of Firefighters contract negotiations. Mayor Houck responded that he will not be involved to avoid any potential conflict.

Mr. DiRenzo went on to ask Councilwoman Madden if she is involved in negotiations to create a position of Business Administrator and questioned why we would create this position. Council President responded noting that any potential position was never intended to be a full time position. Discussion ensued with Mayor Houck interjecting noting that these discussions occurred due to the COVID 19 crisis. With potential budget shortfalls and the possibility of not receiving state aid, close consideration with our finance committee resulted in a decision to utilize a borough administrator from a neighboring town to serve in this capacity specific to the budget. DiRenzo inquired as to salary with Mayor responding 15 to 20K. He further explained that this is temporary and is an at will position and said that the salary will likely be covered by reimbursements through FEMA and the Cares Act. Mayor Houck said we will be adding Resolution 2020:104 appointing Dave Taraschi to address COVID-19 related issues and provide executive assistance to the Agenda.

Mr. DiRenzo then asked several financial questions with regard to the Introduction of the 2020 Municipal Budget. Councilman Schreiber responded first by thanking the Finance Committee for their hard work on the budget. He noted that that we had a \$120,000 increase for trash collection this year and said during any type of financial evaluation, especially when there may be a shortfall, we are trying to limit the expenditures in the budget but noted that despite the tax increase, expenditures were down by \$100,000 through careful planning. Santosusso clarified that the tax increase is approximately \$68 on the average assessed home. Schreiber said that revenues are down, including court, rentals and recreation due to the current crisis.

Councilman Morgan thanked the Finance Committee and said that he agreed with everything Schreiber said but did disagree about the cut to the Heights Report. Councilwoman Kurtz expressed her view of cutting the Heights Report line as well. She said that as an anthropologist, she views things from a cultural perspective and is concerned about the reduction as the Heights Report is a vehicle by which we communicate the work done by Council, our Committees and Commissions. Councilman Mrozinski said that was a lot of debate amongst the

group regarding this but with the projection of lower revenue, this is the decision we came to. There is still an opportunity to consider issues later in the year. Council President Madden said that she thinks all understand the importance of the publication but it is important to stress that this is a temporary measure due to the pandemic. Councilman Schreiber added that if we would be unable to collect the revenue for it, it would not be responsible to vote for this if it cannot be funded.

Mayor Houck thanked the Finance Committee for the careful planning that went into the budget. The concern is that state aid is unknown at this point and there could be possible lasting ripple effects.

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution 2020:101 – Resolution Approving Introduction and Providing Notice for Public Hearing and Public Inspection of the 2020 Municipal Budget

Public Hearing and Final Adoption is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building located at 625 Station Avenue, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035. (*Meeting may be conducted via ZOOM due to circumstances related to COVID 19*).

Mayor Houck asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2020:101. A motion was made by Councilman Schreiber, seconded by Council President Madden. Under a roll call vote, all members voted yes.

Resolution 2020:102 – Resolution Authorizing Payment of Bills and Claims for the First Half of May

Resolution 2020:103 – A Resolution Providing For A Meeting Not Open To The Public In Accordance With the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12. **1.) *Matters of Attorney Client Privilege. Discussion is expected to be ½ hour in duration.*** **2.) *International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Collective Bargaining Agreement. Discussion is expected to be ½ hr. in duration. Formal action may be taken following Executive Session.***

Mayor Houck asked for a motion to approve Resolutions 2020:102 and 2020:103. A motion was made by Councilman Schreiber, seconded by Councilman Ottoson. Under a roll call vote, all members voted yes.

Resolution 2020:104 – Resolution Authorizing the Appointment of David Taraschi to Provide Administrative Consulting Services on a Part Time Basis, At Will, Through December 31, 2020, to Address Certain COVID-19 Related Issues and Provide Executive Assistance

Mayor Houck asked for a motion to approve Resolution 2020:104. A motion was made by Councilman Schreiber and seconded by Councilman Ottoson. Under a roll call vote, all members voted in favor with the exception of Councilman Morgan who abstained.

Mayor Houck announced that Council will now go into Executive Session.

Following Executive Session technical issues with ZOOM precluded an attempt to open the meeting to the public. No formal action was taken on any matter discussed in Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Schreiber, seconded by Councilman Ottoson. All members were in favor. 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Santosusso, RMC, CMR
Borough Clerk

