



BOROUGH OF LEONIA

COUNCIL- Regular Meeting
~ Minutes ~

Trina Lindsey, Borough Clerk

312 Broad Avenue
Leonia, NJ 07605
<http://www.leonianj.gov/>

November 9, 2022

7:30 pm

Leonia Senior Center

A Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Leonia was held in person at the Leonia Senior Center at 305 Beechwood Place, Leonia, NJ, and virtually via GoToMeeting on November 9, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 by Mayor Zeigler.

Those present were led in the Flag Salute by Councilman Fusco.

A moment of silence was observed for longtime Leonia resident Ellie Spiegel. Mayor Zeigler stated that Ms. Spiegel was a great lady who will be missed by every Leonian.

Mayor Zeigler read the following statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. The meeting dates for the year are confirmed at the Annual Reorganization Meeting, are posted on the public bulletin board in Borough Hall and on the Borough website, published in the Record within the first 10 days of the New Year, and copies are sent to the Star Ledger. The change in date for this meeting to November 9, 2022 was noticed to the Bergen Record and Star Ledger on October 4, 2022 and posted on the public bulletin board in Borough Hall and on the Borough website"

PRESENT: Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilwoman Maureen Davis, Councilman Pasquale Fusco, Councilman Christoph Hesterbrink, and Councilman William Ziegler

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Attorney Nylema Nabbie
Borough Administrator Andrea Wardrop
Borough Auditor Garry Higgins
Borough Engineer Drew DiSessa
Chief Financial Officer Cameron Keng
Deputy Borough Clerk Jonathan Mandel

Presentation

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Cameron Keng began the presentation by stating that both he and Borough Auditor Garry Higgins were able to work through the audit. There were various challenges and there are several areas they are looking to work upon.

Borough Auditor Higgins explained that New Jersey municipalities operate on a regulatory basis with accounting, where they are overseen by the Division of Local Government services. The Audit opinion received at the beginning of the audit discloses that the Borough of Leonia received an unmodified opinion, meaning it is fully compliant with the regulatory basis of accounting regardless of the recommendations to be further discussed. This does not impact the financial statement opinion.

In the 2021 Fiscal Year, a \$700,000 surplus was returned from the prior years back to the taxpayers to reduce tax. The surplus at the beginning of the year was \$1,374,000 and the year ended with \$1,323,000. The decrease of \$50,000 from the prior year means that the Borough regenerated the \$700,000 less \$650,000 and ran a break-even operation.

The Municipal Budget is about \$16,000,000 and a 1.3 million surplus available is a good amount that is favorable to the rating agencies for the Borough of Leonia's bond rating.

Recommendations, as shown on page 113, are a list of 7 items with 5 being repeated from the prior year. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Old Escrow Deposits must be continuously reviewed and cleared of record where applicable. It should be a focus of the Borough to clear the records by end of the year. There are also some unallocated amounts that CFO Keng is currently working on to ascertain the full exact balance of the other trust account to reconcile it.
2. Certain inter funds where one fund may have paid another and were not cleared up by year-end. The recommendation by the Borough Auditor is that all inter funds be reconciled periodically and cleared to 0 at year-end.
3. The auditors suggest a written policy regarding the procedures for allowing purchases on accounts to be prepared. It is typical for a municipality to deal with local vendors on an emergency basis for small purchases. It is recommended that a policy be put in place to allow those purchases so that you do not have purchases being made without the proper incumbrance of the purchase before it is incurred.
4. There are some inactive reserves involved in current and other trust funds. Some of these may be canceled as surplus and should be able to recover some of the surpluses in 2022.
5. There is some old grant receivable balances and grant reserves that are being reviewed and looked into. These should also be canceled or collected in case the grant receivables are outstanding from a prior year.
6. There were over expenditures of certain appropriation reserves. One expenditure was made without an appropriation made. These have already been funded in the 2022 budget, showing that remedial efforts were undertaken to clear up this issue.
7. Recommendation regarding the overall financial reporting system. It was determined that this finding is a material weakness in financial reporting, caused by the switch in software programs and providers in 2021. The transition from the old system to the new system was not properly implemented. This involved the subsidiary records not being reconciled to the general ledger, and bank reconciliations not being reconciled to the general ledger, and all of these required significant audit adjustments. Borough Auditor Higgins's firm had to merge two sets of records from two sets of systems, leading to the audit coming even later. The bottom line is the Governing Body was not given the appropriate reports deserved to ensure finances were properly maintained.

Borough Auditor Higgins stated that both the CFO and Borough Administrator have been heavily involved in working with him to ensure these corrections are made. The audit

performed for the 2022 year will be very different from the 2021 year. Borough Auditor Higgins thanked all those involved in ensuring the success of this difficult audit year and hopes that all shall be reconciled in the coming year.

CFO Keng thanked Auditor Higgins for his knowledge and help through this process. What is currently being worked upon is the Escrow module in the new Edmunds system. J.P. Lee in the Construction Office has learned how to use this software and is working very hard to correct this issue. Right now, placeholder adjustments are being used and work is being performed to cancel reserves and appropriations not needed. Several issues will be worked on one at a time.

Councilman Ziegler stated that he takes very great comfort in that Gary Higgins and his firm are the auditors of the Borough of Leonia. The Governing Body very deliberately maintained a very strong surplus heading into one of the biggest bond issuances they have ever had, for the new municipal building. The bond rating helped to bring down the interest rate paid by the public and subsequently the tax burden. If it was not for Borough Auditor Higgin's firm, these weaknesses would not have been handled as well as they had.

Councilman Hesterbrink asked for an explanation as to where the Borough of Leonia stands financially. Borough Auditor Higgins explained the process of merging records between the two financial systems and how it turned into using Excel spreadsheets to plot out month by month what occurred. The auditing firm accepts this as an alternative form of financial reporting to a General Ledger, but the Borough of Leonia must accept this as a material weakness in financial reporting.

Councilman Fusco reiterated comments made earlier that this has been a trying process and that the Mayor and Council were completely blindsided by what had occurred. Councilman Fusco thanked the CFO and Borough Auditor for their efforts in bringing the Borough to the much better position that it is in today.

Mayor Zeigler echoed these sentiments.

CFO Keng once again thanked Borough Auditor Higgins for the job he has performed.

Borough Auditor Higgins finalized the discussion by thanking the cooperation of the Borough of Leonia in taking the necessary steps towards correcting any issues found throughout the process.

Public Comment

Lydia Maurice, 392 Grand Avenue, thanked the Governing Body for taking the imminent domain off of the table. Ms. Maurice wished to know if individuals who are in affordable housing could ever sell their condo units at fair market value or if they must always be resold as affordable housing.

Another issue Ms. Maurice wished to bring up is that she has been having issues with the DPW, stating that have been breaking glass and leaving it where it fell. This was straightened out after emailing the DPW Superintendent. The other issue Ms. Maurice wanted to make the Mayor and Council aware of is that the DPW trucks have been leaking fluids onto the ground.

Borough Attorney Nabbie explained that typically when you have units that are classified as affordable, they are restricted for a minimum of 30 years. Having been involved in an affordable housing litigation case, it was found that the municipality has the right to extend the controls going forward. It is a complicated issue but typically there is a 30-year deed restriction and the municipality has the right to extend it for an additional 30 years. There are mechanisms where the unit may be released but it is more complicated.

Mayor Zeigler asked that the Borough Administrator look more into the other issue relating to the DPW.

The record will reflect that no further comments were entered into the chat window accessible through GoToMeeting nor via the United States Postal Service or Email.

Appointments

Letter to Mayor & Council – Council Vacancy Candidates

Due to the resignation of Councilwoman Flaim, there has been a vacancy in the governing body. The Mayor and Council have received from the Leonia Democratic Municipal Committee a letter listing the names of three potential candidates to fill this vacancy. The names listed are Christoph Hesterbrink, Matthew Dine, and Carolyn Sobering. Mayor Zeigler placed a nomination in the name of Councilman-Elect Christoph Hesterbrink for the position of Councilperson for the unexpired term to expire on December 31, 2022

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Fusco, that the nomination for Councilman Elect Christoph Hesterbrink is approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|
| Council President Flaim: | Absent | Councilman Grandelis: | Absent |
| Councilwoman Davis: | Aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | Absent |
| Councilman Fusco: | Aye | Councilman Ziegler: | Aye |

Councilman Elect Christoph Hesterbrink was sworn in the role of Councilman by Mayor Zeigler.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Councilman Fusco, second by Councilman Ziegler, with Councilman Hesterbrink abstaining and all other members present voting in favor, that the Minutes of January 19, 2022 Work Session Meeting were approved.

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Fusco, with Councilman Hesterbrink abstaining and all members present voting in favor, that the Minutes of February 7, 2022 Regular Meeting were approved.

Reports

Councilwoman Davis

Police Department

Please see attached the October 2022 Police Committee Report

[October 2022 Police Committee Report](#)

Board of Health

There are three matters currently being worked upon, to be moved forward after a meeting with the Borough of Leonia. In particular, the Board of Health is in the process of hiring a registrar, with a candidate recently found. The creation of the position of Health Educator is another item to be discussed at the meeting.

Councilwoman Davis was unable to attend the October Meeting of the Board of Health.

Councilman Fusco

Department of Public Works

Please see attached the Department of Public Works Monthly Report for October 2022

[October 2022 Department of Public Works Report](#)

Building Department

Please see attached the October 2022 Construction Permit Activity Report and the Cash Receipts Audit Report

[October 2022 Construction Permit Activity Report](#)

[October 2022 Cash Receipts Audit Report](#)

Planning Board

The Planning Board had a very light agenda, four of the hearings were postponed until December. There was a presentation by H2M on the next phase in the area in need of redevelopment study. There was a very robust and active participation with the audience present at the Planning Board. Property owners were ensured that their homes would not be subject to eminent domain. This project is the future of the expansion of the Borough of Leonia. With this in mind, some steps are being taken to present through workshops the plans for the area and to garner public input and opinions.

Councilman Ziegler

Facilities Committee

The facilities committee remains focused on the new municipal building. The project is running on schedule and so far under budget. Communication between the many players of this project has been integral to the success of the project and continues to be a focal point. Various integral pieces of construction such as the installation of interior footings, perimeter peers, masonry, and external walls are expected to be completed by mid-November. Councilman Ziegler requested that the CBRE Flash Reports provided every month to give

updates to the Mayor and Council on the progress of the project be provided to the public on the Borough of Leonia website.

The next Facilities Committee meeting shall be on November 17, 2022. At this meeting, there shall be a multitude of discussions regarding signage, banners, etc.

Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation's Facebook Group, I Grew Up in Leonia, has seen its membership grow at a steady rate.

Michael Fishbein, president of Adas Emuno Synagogue, came to speak to the Historic Preservation Commission as part of his congregation's 100th anniversary.

Councilman Ziegler encouraged Leonia residents to attend the virtual meetings of the Historic Preservation Commission.

By the Presbyterian Church is a bronze plaque set into the footstone of what once was the Moore House on Wood Terrace, designating Washington's retreat down Fort Lee Road in 1776. The church has hired an architect to spruce up the area and bring more attention to the plaque.

Environmental Commission

With Councilman Hesterbrink joining the Governing Body, he will no longer be able to serve in the capacity of Chair of the Environmental Commission. William Russell shall be facilitating meetings until such a time as a new Chair is appointed.

The invasive cat briar plants have been removed from Highwood Hills, catching up on 10 years of neglect. From here on relatively easy annual maintenance is all that is needed, allowing the Environmental Commissions budget to be cut by a potential 75%.

For the first time in a long while, the Borough of Leonia is paying to have their comingled containers recycled.

The Hackensack River has been named a superfund site.

Shade Tree Commission

Spring Planting has begun, and 36 new trees have been planted. 10 additional trees were planted on Broad Avenue between Highwood Avenue and Park Avenue to replace the 9 that were cut down.

The Shade Tree Commission rebirthed its web page with assistance from Michael Greco, the new wage page looks phenomenal.

Some tree damage has been seen around town from deer.

Mayor's Report

Yesterday was Election Day, with Mayor Zeigler congratulating Councilman Ziegler and Councilman Hesterbrink on their elections. Mayor Zeigler also congratulated Isaac Park and Joseph Rzepka on their elections to the Board of Education.

Congressman Gottheimer was reelected, his presence being seen very well in Leonia. Mayor Zeigler looks forward to working more with him.

Mayor Zeigler participated in a call with Governor Murphy and various other leaders in the state, both political and religious. The discussion was regarding the FBI's indication that there is specific credible information relating to potential attacks on synagogues. Mayor Zeigler spoke with Chief of Police Scott Tamagny to ensure that the worshippers of Adas Emuno were properly protected. The suspect was apprehended but the investigation is currently still underway. Mayor Zeigler is astounded that this is occurring. The Mayor, Chief of Police, and Rabbi Schwartz of Adas Emuno spoke as to this seen increase in attacks. These types of threats must be taken seriously and the Borough of Leonia must be proactive to combat them. The only way to truly get rid of these threats is to stand together as a community.

Borough Administrator's Report

Borough Administrator Wardrop wished to add she, along with Chief of Police Scott Tamagny, attends weekly project team meetings with professionals. With the help of the Clerk of the Works, Borough Engineer, and Borough Architect it shows that a great amount of effort is being put into the new municipal building project.

The Leonia Senior Center's lower level has had no issues with flooding ever since the completion of the drainage improvements.

The implementation of the NEOGOV Performance Appraisal Review Software has been a major focus of the Administrators office. The first staff training was held today with NEOGOV and the entire session was recorded for those who were unable to be in attendance. The following week shall be the training for managers. The goal and objective are to have the performance reviews done by the end of December.

One month from today, the budget workshop will be held with the full governing body. The CFO and Borough Administrator will be busy throughout the month to ensure the budgets are presented in a meaningful way.

The CDBG Grant Application is due in December for the 2023-2024 application year. Some ideas and concept plans will be presented to the Mayor and Council at the next Mayor and Council Meeting.

With the health benefits increase of 22.8% as mandated by the state, the Borough Administrator has begun to explore alternatives. The Borough Administrator will bring various ideas and alternatives gained through a multitude of meetings to the Finance and HR Committee soon.

The Borough Administrator wished to bring to the attention of the Governing Body and public that monthly dashboards have been created to show an overall study of statistics for each department. These reports are made available to the public on the Borough of Leonia's website.

For the electric vehicle charging station, the signage has been put up and the station is ready to be activated. Councilwoman Terrell suggested a potential 30-day free period before the collection of fees. Borough Administrator Wardrop wished to ask the Governing Body if they were in favor of this. Mayor Zeigler did not find there to be a reason to have this grace period take place.

Borough Attorney's Report

Borough Attorney Brian Chewcaskie provided a report as to various items to be later discussed in Executive Session.

Borough Engineer's Report

Borough Engineer DiSessa explained that Section 10, Section 11, and the 2022 NJDOT Streets projects have gone out to bid. For Broad Avenue Sections 10 and 11, the same contractor will be awarded the bid. Further discussion will be held as to the 2022 NJDOT project.

Due to the change in weather, it is expected that these projects to begin in full during Spring 2023.

The Senior Center Drainage Project has been completed.

In regards to the Lakeview Avenue and Wood Terrace Drainage projects, the scope is still being created.

The Borough Engineer has reached out to his counterpart in Englewood and they are underway in scheduling a meeting with the New Jersey Department of Transportation

A meeting has been scheduled with the Department of Transportation to discuss the pipe that runs alongside the highway.

Several grants were applied for, in particular a technical assistance grant for Lakeview Avenue.

Introduction of Ordinances

Ordinance 2022-18

The Deputy Borough Clerk read the title of the ordinance into the record:

"An Ordinance to repeal and replace part II, general legislation, chapter 100, cannabis of the revised general ordinances of the Borough of Leonia"

Borough Attorney Nabbie explained the provisions set forth by the ordinance in allowing various types of cannabis licenses within the Borough of Leonia.

Motion by Councilwoman Davis, Second by Councilman Hesterbrink that ordinance 2022-18 be introduced and passed on first reading, and setting November 21, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard for second reading and adoption.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Councilwoman Davis: | aye | Councilman Hesterbrink: | aye |
| Councilman Fusco: | aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | absent |
| Councilman Grandelis: | absent | Councilman Ziegler: | aye |

Ordinance 2022-19

The Deputy Borough Clerk read the title of the ordinance into the record:

“An Ordinance amending Chapter 220 Entitled ‘Rent Control’ of the code of the Borough of Leonia”

Borough Attorney Nabbie explained that this ordinance sets forward regulations that expand what the 5% cap in rent increases covers.

Motion by Councilwoman Davis, Second by Councilman Ziegler that ordinance 2022-19 be introduced and passed on first reading, and setting November 21, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard for second reading and adoption.

Mayor Zeigler expressed his disappointment in some landlords in Leonia who made this ordinance amendment necessary. The Mayor and Council were made aware of some landlords who violated the spirit of the rent control ordinance by exponentially increasing the rental cost of their tenant’s garages and other rental properties.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Councilwoman Davis: | aye | Councilman Hesterbrink: | aye |
| Councilman Fusco: | aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | absent |
| Councilman Grandelis: | absent | Councilman Ziegler: | aye |

Non-Consent Resolutions

RES. 2022-247 2021 Audit Review

[2022-247 2021 Audit Review.pdf](#)

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Fusco, that Resolution #2022-247 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|---------|
| Councilwoman Davis: | aye | Councilman Hesterbrink: | abstain |
| Councilman Fusco: | aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | absent |
| Councilman Grandelis: | absent | Councilman Ziegler: | aye |

Consent Resolutions**RES. 2022-248 Authorize Bill List**[2022-248 Authorize Bill List.pdf](#)[Bill List Backup.pdf](#)**RES. 2022-249 Authorize Application to NJ DEP Hudson Raritan Estuary Urban Rain Garden Grant Program**[2022-249 Authorize Application to NJ DEP.pdf](#)**RES. 2022-250 Recreation Center – Lower Roof Replacement Project**[2022-250 Recreation Roof Project.pdf](#)[Bid Package.pdf](#)[Bid Review Letter.pdf](#)[Pennoni Proposal.pdf](#)[Updated Proposal.pdf](#)**RES. 2022-251 Award of Broad 11 Road Improvement Project**[2022-251 Section 11 Contract Award.pdf](#)[Bid Review Letter.pdf](#)**~~RES. 2022-252 Authorize Change Order #14 – New Municipal Building~~**~~[2022-252 Authorize Change Order #14.pdf](#)~~~~[Change Order #14.pdf](#)~~**RES. 2022-253 Arcari & Iovino – Additional Charges**[2022-253 Arcari & Iovino Additional Fees.pdf](#)[Additional Services Letter.pdf](#)

Motion by Councilman Fusco, second by Councilwoman Davis, that the Consent Agenda be approved.

On a roll call, the vote on the Consent Agenda was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Councilwoman Davis: | aye | Councilman Hesterbrink: | aye |
| Councilman Fusco: | aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | absent |
| Councilman Grandelis: | absent | Councilman Ziegler: | aye |

RES. 2022-252 Authorize Change Order #14 – New Municipal Building~~[2022-252 Authorize Change Order #14.pdf](#)~~~~[Change Order #14.pdf](#)~~

RES. 2022-252 was pulled by Councilman Fusco for further discussion.

Councilman Fusco wished to make sure the public understood that the work approved through this resolution is to widen the lane to allow for firetruck passage is being mandated by state law. This improvement was reviewed by the Fire Chief and would have been part of the original design of the building.

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Fusco, that RES. 2022-252 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote on the Consent Agenda was recorded as follows:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| Councilwoman Davis: | aye | Councilman Hesterbrink: | aye |
| Councilman Fusco: | aye | Councilwoman Terrell: | absent |
| Councilman Grandelis: | absent | Councilman Ziegler: | aye |

Unfinished Business

Federal TAP Grant (McCormick Taylor) – Public Information Center Scheduling – Andrea / Drew

At the last Work Session, McCormick & Taylor gave an update to the Mayor and Council as to the Federal TAP Grant Project. Vittorio Anepete requested of the Mayor and Council their preference as to whether the public information session is held in a Town Hall format or at a meeting of the Governing Body. Borough Administrator Wardrop stated that Mr. Anepete recommends that often it works out best to have these sessions held at a Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council.

Councilman Ziegler expressed his favor of having the meeting done at a meeting of the Mayor and Council.

It was decided to have the presentation done at the January Work Session of 2023.

Overpeck Park Section IV – Bill Ziegler

Councilman Ziegler began the discussion by stating that the resolution sent to Bergen County was received and an official response was sent to the mayor. Councilman Ziegler wished to get a consensus of the Governing Body and approval to write a response back to the County.

Councilman Ziegler explained that the contents of the County's response stated that they wished to begin the project with a blank canvas and that the plans sent out prior were not the real final plans. The County Executive has stated that he shall form a committee that will take up the design matter going forward.

Councilman Ziegler would like to suggest that the Governing Body take an official position to ensure that there is proper representation from Leonia on the committee. Perhaps some of these representatives can come from the Governing Body or the coalition founded in opposition to ensure that both sides' interest is represented in the final design.

Another concern held by Councilman Ziegler is related to over capping and whether or not it is impermeable and can impact what the park can become and its design. Councilman Ziegler is suggesting that the Mayor and Council move forward to begin drafting a formal statement as soon as possible.

Mayor Zeigler agrees on a fundamental level that the committee should be started as soon as possible with members of the various governing bodies who donated land being included. Mayor Zeigler however holds concerns over advocating that members of the coalition be

included as they are not official representatives of the Governing Body. Some of those within the coalition that have taken strong positions have made detractive statements that are not conducive to those positions that are held and desired by the Governing Body. The mayor stated that they must be the voices of reason and that there are other members of other entities within the Borough of Leonia that would make perfect candidates for the committee. Councilman Fusco stated that unfortunately this is being done a little bit late after what has already been done to the park. It is a concession on their part to have this committee be made and that the voice of the Borough of Leonia should be a large one as we are the most affected community and this is a matter that should be taken seriously.

Mayor Zeigler suggested that a request be made to have the first meeting of the committee not occur past a certain date to draw a line in the sand.

Councilman Hesterbrink agrees with this sentiment and believes that it must be recognized that it is within the Borough's best interest to take part in constructive dialogue with Bergen County. The angle taken by Leonia should be public and vocal. Councilman Hesterbrink also agrees with the idea to involve other municipalities and members of various commissions. He also stated his belief that it is not too late to correct this issue as the capping is not yet complete and there seems to not be a set final plan.

Mayor Zeigler agreed and stated that historically this is how things are done, without a plan and it is long past time that this issue is corrected. The Borough of Leonia must continue to be vocal and ensure that this is a real offer and not pre-election rhetoric. Mayor Zeigler agreed with drafting a memo and offered to assist Councilman Ziegler in this process.

Councilwoman Davis wished to ask if they were weighing in on the suggestion of who should represent the Borough of Leonia. One of the things learned by Councilwoman Davis over the nine years being a council member is that having a passion for a particular topic is great but you also must have the wisdom and ability to temper whom you work with. Councilwoman Davis suggests that the Governing Body steer away from working with some of the more inflammatory individuals as some of those strident voices could be counterproductive. With the addition of Councilman Hesterbrink, there are enough experienced individuals that could be sent to represent the Borough.

Mayor Zeigler recommended that the mayor, a member of the Governing Body, and a member of either the Environmental or Shade Tree Commission be appointed. There should also be two representatives appointed by each other affected municipality.

New Business

Primepoint Payroll Discussion – Cameron Keng

Chief Financial Officer Keng explained that it is good practice for a municipality to hold Request for Proposals (RFPs) for a variety of factors. Recently the Borough of Leonia hosted an RFP for payroll services and in that requested general payroll services as well as labor and time tracking, which are typically bundled together in modern systems. Two responses were received, ADS and Primepoint.

ADS is the current payroll service being used by the municipality and they responded with a bid for \$22,141.96. ADS responded to all the services requested by the RFP other than time and labor tracking, as it is not a service they hold in-house.

Primepoint was able to respond to all the services requested as part of the RFP. Their bid was in the amount of \$29,228.00. On the face of it, their request is more, but if you were to remove the time and tracking portion of their quotation the total cost of their payroll services alone would be \$19,420.00. CFO Keng explained that Primepoint invests heavily in its software services and cybersecurity and thus performs two audits to ensure they stay compliant financially and technologically. The CFO recommends that in the future, with the Governing Bodies' consent, move forward with Primepoint's proposal due to their advanced technology and affordable prices. CFO Keng also stated that thanks to Borough Administrator Wardrop's efforts, the Borough of Leonia has a very good negotiation with their bank which will cover part of the cost of payroll services. In particular, this is also an excellent time to visit a potential change in payroll services as because the Borough of Leonia operates on a bi-weekly basis, the final paycheck will be exactly on December 31, 2022. This will allow the Borough of Leonia to end on a clean year.

Mayor Zeigler inquired as to whether the other bidder would be considered responsive to the RFP, as they were missing a necessary component in the request. CFO Keng confirmed that they did not meet the RFP and thus Primepoint is the only responsive bidder.

Councilman Hesterbrink inquired as to when the Borough of Leonia needs to engage in a contract. CFO Keng stated that the Borough of Leonia will engage in the contract at the next Mayor and Council Meeting in two weeks. As CFO Keng has had extensive experience in performing these transfers, he has already begun requesting documentation and information to prepare.

Councilman Hesterbrink requested information as to whether or not there was a way of knowing how the fees go up over time. Councilman Hesterbrink also requested to know if the provider ADP also provides similar services. CFO Keng explained while ADP does perform some of these functions, they have difficulties in certain areas as they do not specialize in government. As CFO Keng has dealt with Primepoint in the past, he is well acquainted with various members of the company who were able to provide aggressively competitive pricing.

Borough Administrator Wardrop stated that the last township she worked with also went through a conversion to Primepoint. She stated that you are not only purchasing the software but customer service and other support, to which the company is very responsive.

Best Practices Inventory – Cameron Keng

CFO Keng explained how the Best Practices Inventory works and noted that the Borough of Leonia passed very easily.

Councilman Ziegler requested to know if the CFO had any idea of how neighboring communities fare on the metrics of the Best Practices Inventory. CFO Keng stated that from the Borough of Leonia's Best Practice Inventory we are well above 90%.

Head Count Freeze – Mayor / Andrea

Mayor Zeigler explained that discussions were held regarding the 22%+ increase in health insurance benefits and a fairly sizeable pension increase of around 9%. As these increases come from tax dollars, it was decided that the Borough of Leonia must be proactive. One of the things discussed as a potential tactic to counter this was a headcount freeze.

Councilman Ziegler wishes to know how much money is expected as part of the 9% and how much this dollar amount would mean in dollars rather than percentiles.

Mayor Zeigler suggested that no Governing Body member provide permission for new members of staff until more information is received.

CFO Keng stated that one option to save in costs is to seek out a HIF Joint Fund or private insurance provided that would provide better rates. This is a potential already being explored by the Borough Administrator.

Mayor Zeigler hosts doubts as to whether or not similar or better coverage and savings could be acquired from the public market. However, he agrees that it is best to explore any options. The mayor also suggested that at least through budget hearings the policy should be that the Borough of Leonia is in a headcount freeze.

Councilwoman Davis requested clarification as to whether the mayor was referring to the budget hearing to be hosted in December or budget adoption in the Summer of 2023.

Mayor Zeigler responded that the freeze should be held at least through the Reorganization meeting in January of 2023.

Rise in Anti-Semitic Threats and Attacks – Mayor Ziegler

Mayor Zeigler placed this item on the agenda as in the past the Governing Body has taken a stance on matters such as this. Mayor Zeigler is saddened by the comparative silence that exists concerning the rise of these attacks. He does not think that we can sit idly by as attacks continue to increase. The community must stand together against comments that are made by public figures and reinforced by maniacs.

Mayor Zeigler wishes to pass a resolution similar to one that was passed prior condemning these attacks.

Councilman Fusco stated that he believes that the resolution is worth repeating and that the discussion must be kept active.

Leonia History Museum – Bill Ziegler

Councilman Ziegler wished to add to a future Work Session a discussion item relating to a Leonia History Museum in the lower level of the Senior Center. This discussion was decided to be placed upon the March Work Session.

Councilman Fusco agrees that there is no better place to have a museum than in a historic building itself.

Trolley Artifact – Pasquale Fusco

Councilman Fusco stated that he has had discussions with Borough Historian David Braun over the potential of creating a trolley artifact on the triangle where the trolley used to make the turn to go up to Fort Lee. Councilman Fusco asked that this discussion item be placed on the March Work Session agenda for further discussion.

Correspondence**Board of Health letter to the Mayor & Council**

This item does not to be discussed this evening but the mayor will convene a meeting with the Board of Health to realign and discuss ways of closing any gaps in communication.

Closed Session**RES. 2022-254 Authorize Closed Session**

[2022-254 Authorize Close Session.pdf](#)

BE IT RESOLVED in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-12, the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Leonia entered into Closed Executive Session to discuss the following matters:

- A. Contract Negotiation
- B. Lease of Borough Property

Minutes will be taken of the meeting and released to the public at the time that the matter is resolved. After Closed Executive Session, the Mayor and Council will reconvene to adjourn this meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Council, on a motion from Councilman Fusco, seconded by Councilman Ziegler, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Executive Session at 9:21 p.m.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Fusco, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Mandel,
