



BOROUGH OF LEONIA

COUNCIL- Sine Die Meeting
~ Minutes ~

Trina Lindsey, Borough Clerk

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

January 3, 2024

7:30 pm

Leonia Senior Center

The Sine Die 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 January 3, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mayor Zeigler.

Those present were led in the Flag Salute by Council President Grandelis.

Mayor Zeigler read the following statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Notice of this meeting by the December 29, 2023 Sunshine Notice containing the time, date, location, and online access information was sent to the Record, Star Ledger, and has been posted at Borough Hall and on the Borough website."

PRESENT: Mayor Judah Zeigler, Council President Louis Grandelis, Councilwoman Maureen Davis, Councilman Pasquale Fusco, Councilman Christoph Hesterbrink, Councilwoman Joanne Choi Terrell, and Mayor-Elect William Ziegler

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Attorney Brian Chewcaskie
Acting Borough Administrator Scott Tamagny
Borough Clerk Trina Lindsey
Deputy Borough Clerk Jonathan Mandel

Consent Resolutions

RES. 2024-01 Amend and Correct Resolution 2023-245
[2024-01 Amend and Correct Resolution 2023-245.pdf](#)

RES. 2024-02 Approve 2023 Budget Account Transfers
[2024-02 Approve 2023 Budget Account Transfers.pdf](#)

RES. 2024-03 Amend Rules of Order[2024-03 Amend Rules of Order.pdf](#)[Proposed Rules of Order Amendments 1-03-2024.pdf](#)

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilwoman Terrell, that the Consent Agenda be approved.

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

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	aye
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

Remarks**Councilwoman Davis**

Councilwoman Davis spoke as to how on the last day of her official tenure as Councilwoman she met and answered questions of a 12-year-old member of the Leonia Boy Scouts troop relating to traffic and pedestrian safety. Public Safety has always been of great importance to Councilwoman Davis, making it a fitting end to her tenure as a public servant.

Councilwoman Davis reiterated her parting words to the boy scout, highlighting the important role and monumental task the Leonia Police Department has in having to collaborate with officials from New York and New Jersey as well as other municipalities.

Councilwoman Davis hopes the upcoming Mayor and Council will continue to support the Leonia Police Department so that they have all the resources to meet all the incrementally increasing challenges. Councilwoman Davis explained to the Boy Scout representative that they may start increasing public safety by spreading awareness of various traffic safety procedures and behaviors.

Councilwoman Davis cautioned individuals to recognize the difference between equality and equity, especially when difficult decisions need to be made. Spreading out resources simply in equal formulas does not always bring out results and representing justice and making difficult decisions in terms of allocation of resources does not equate to a lack of appreciation or lack of value of the efforts of everyone else. We may appreciate the value of everyone whilst also prioritizing needs over wants. Councilwoman Davis reiterated that safety is a need for everyone and not a want.

Councilwoman Davis thanked her colleagues in the Governing Body as well as the Borough of Leonia's various professionals and employees, gaining an appreciation over her time in the Council for the amount of work that goes into the exceptional job they perform every day.

Councilwoman Davis highlighted the various departments she has had the pleasure of working with as a liaison. Councilwoman Davis spoke as to the pleasure she had working with DPW Superintendent John Villareal and Assistant Superintendent Kevin Malloy as a member of the DPW Committee. Councilwoman Davis also highlighted the exceptional professionalism showcased by the Recreation Department under the leadership of former Superintendent Barbara Davidson and current Superintendent Sean Krakower.

Councilwoman Davis thanked the men and women of the Leonia Volunteer Fire Company for their many years of service to the community. Councilwoman Davis spoke as to her profound appreciation for the exceptional men and women of the Leonia Police Department and thanked Chief Scott Tamagny and other members of the force. Finally, Councilwoman Davis

thanked the residents of the Borough of Leonia who elected her three times to serve the Borough and trusted her to do what was in their best interest.

Councilman Fusco

Councilman Fusco expressed his agreement with all the comments relating to public safety and creating an inclusive community that Councilwoman Davis made during her remarks. Councilman Fusco stated that he and Councilwoman Davis first ran for the Governing Body to address the upheaval that was occurring at the time in the Volunteer Fire Department nine years ago. The Fire Department required a new structure and focus and both he and Councilwoman Davis can agree that in its current state, they can be very proud of it.

Councilman Fusco thanked the DPW for their service in all the years he has served as their liaison, expressing that he believes the department gives so much to the community to increase the quality of life within it. Councilman Fusco spoke as to his involvement with the Fire Department and his gratefulness to work with them.

Part of Councilman Fusco's efforts have been seen through the Planning Board, where he has both served as a member and a representative to the mayor. Councilman Fusco and the Planning Board's work on the redevelopment plan is part of what is being passed down to the new Mayor and Council to continue. Councilman Fusco stated his belief that once the Redevelopment Plan is approved, Leonia will be a much better off community for it.

Councilman Fusco stated that he is fortunate that he has received the support he has from his constituents and fellow council members throughout the years. Councilman Fusco believes that the town is being left in a much better place than when he first took office. Councilman Fusco thanked the Councilmembers who supported him and those others leaving office, getting them through many controversial topics through the years and creating a quality of life for the Borough of Leonia's residents. Councilman Fusco takes great pride in what was able to be done for the town to maintain the quality of life on such a small budget. Councilman Fusco thanked everyone for their support and stated that one day when able he may return to further his service to the borough.

Mayor Zeigler

Mayor Zeigler spoke as to his eight years of service to the Borough as Mayor, reflecting on the various accomplishments and changes made to the Borough since. Some topics spoke to include the various road improvements made to an inherited crumbling infrastructure and the rebuilding of the Leonia Police Department, bringing it back to proper staffing levels. The Governing Body has done what needed to be done and has made hard decisions to do so and maximize every tax dollar.

Mayor Zeigler stated that perhaps in the eight years of his being mayor, the thing that he is most proud of is that there is even stronger protection of the Borough of Leonia's residential character, setting it apart from its surrounding municipalities. Mayor Zeigler stated his pride in all the work that has been done by the Governing Body and Planning Board to maintain that residential character, stating that it is the lifeblood of the community.

Mayor Zeigler is incredibly proud of how the community of the Borough of Leonia came together to do everything that had to be done during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor Zeigler tracked the data of the pandemic daily throughout the pandemic and due to the efforts of Leonians and the Governing Body, there was an incident rate per capita of 33% less than the

Bergen County average. Leonian's saved each other lives in the pandemic and nothing made Mayor Zeigler prouder than walking into the first vaccine clinic created through volunteer resources in a time when local vaccine clinics were unheard of. Through the work of volunteers over 10,000 vaccinations were delivered to Leonians and members of surrounding communities.

Mayor Zeigler is always amazed and thrilled to be a Leonian, with the last eight years solidifying those sentiments. Mayor Zeigler thanked his family for their support, in particular his wife Michelle, and sons Nicholas and Jordan. Jordan Zeigler will be taking office as Councilman during the subsequent January 3, 2024 Reorganization Meeting of the Leonia Mayor and Council. Mayor Zeigler further thanked the Borough Employees, Volunteers, and fellow members of the Governing Body. Mayor Zeigler thanked his fellow residents and stated it has been his pleasure to serve them and will continue his service further in volunteer capacities.

Mayor Zeigler challenged the residents of Leonia to get involved and serve their community as well as get engaged with the Governing Body. Mayor Zeigler asked that they further do everything in their power to ensure that the new Governing Body is successful, as their success benefits the entire community.

Mayor Zeigler left Mayor-Elect Ziegler with some advice originally given to him by General Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., "Do what is Right." This means to do what is right morally, legally, and politically in the best interest of your constituents. This bit of advice has served as Mayor Zeigler's guiding north star through his many years of service to the community and he knows the succeeding Governing Body will continue to "Do what is Right" in 2024.

Mayor Zeigler, wishing to start a tradition, presented Mayor-Elect Ziegler with the gift of a gavel and block. Mayor-Elect Ziegler stated his intention to continue the tradition in the future.

Presentations

Mayor-Elect Ziegler

Mayor-Elect Ziegler stated that there is nothing he can give to Mayor Zeigler to truly appreciate and recognize the service he has given to the community, not only as mayor for the past eight years but also a previous four-year term as Mayor and three years as Councilman before that, looking at 15 years of service to Leonia. Mayor-Elect Ziegler stated that it is his pleasure to recognize Mayor Zeigler's contributions to the community.

Mayor-Elect Ziegler highlighted the various contributions Mayor Zeigler made to the community including getting the Fire Department relationship back on track, bringing police staffing to 20 members from 16 members, all the correct infrastructure investments, and his leadership and skills shown during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Mayor-Elect Ziegler spoke as to the safe-street ordinance, stating that it worked extremely well for the borough before other parties got involved and the courts struck it down. As the ordinance showed the courage and conviction of Mayor Zeigler, as a memento of his time in office Mayor-Elect Ziegler presented him with a "Do Not Enter Sign" used during this time that has been signed by members of the Governing Body and Borough Employees. Councilwoman Davis and Councilman Fusco will also be receiving signed signs as well as a memento of their time in in office.

Mayor-Elect Ziegler also presented Mayor Zeigler with an inscribed crystal plaque to showcase and thank him for his years of service to the Borough of Leonia.

Mayor-Elect Ziegler also recognized and thanked Councilwoman Davis and Councilman Fusco for their service and presented them with inscribed crystal plaques as well. Mayor-Elect Ziegler spoke as to how they were both spurred to service by the turmoil with the Fire Department. Councilwoman Davis was thanked for her work through the Leonia Police Department and for being a champion of diversity and equal opportunity. Councilman Fusco's presence on the Facilities Committee as an architect and service as Fire Department Commissioner were highlighted and thanked.

Public Comment

Representing Mayor Chong "Paul" Kim of Palisades Park was a former Councilman of Palisades Park, Frank Donohue. Councilman Donohue spoke as to how the Borough of Palisades Park wishes to join in the celebrations of acknowledging the service of Mayor Zeigler and the Council. Mayor Zeigler was presented with a plaque from Mayor Kim and Palisades Park recognizing his dedication to the prosperity and development of Leonia and his visionary and inspiring leadership.

Mayor Zeigler spoke as to how he built a friendship with Mayor Kim when he had first taken office in 2023 and his assuredness that the relationship will continue to thrive in the future with Leonia's new Mayor.

Karen Peters, on behalf of the Democratic Municipal Committee, presented Mayor Zeigler, Councilwoman Davis, and Councilman Fusco with a certificate recognizing their service to the Borough of Leonia.

Former Mayor Robert Pacicco recognized Mayor Zeigler's phenomenal work during the COVID-19 Pandemic and his programs as one of the most unique and effective in the entire County of Bergen. Mayor Pacicco also recognized the service of Councilwoman Davis and Councilman Fusco.

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

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Mayor-Elect Ziegler, second by Council President Grandelis, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting sine die. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Mandel,
