

BOROUGH OF PITMAN
WORK SESSION MINUTES
MARCH 22, 2021

Call to Order

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement – Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, I hereby announce that adequate notice of the time and date of this meeting was published in the South Jersey Times on January 7, 2021, posted on the Borough Hall front door, and advertised on the Borough of Pitman website continuously since January 7, 2021.

Roll Call

Council President Blass: Present
Councilwoman James: Present
Councilwoman Rudley: Present
Mayor Razzo: Present
Borough CFO Considine: Present

Councilman Fitzpatrick: Present
Councilman Mazzola: Present
Councilman Weng: Present
Borough Solicitor Krachun: Present
Clerk O'Donnell: Present

Discussion

Motion to Open Discussion: Mazzola
Time: 6:30 p.m.

Second: Weng

2021 Municipal Budget Preparation

Borough CFO Steve Considine stated that as of today an additional \$15,329.00 must be cut from the budget for it to be legally adoptable by State of New Jersey requirements. With appropriation cuts totaling that amount, the result will be a 06.1 cent tax increase for 2021, an amount acceptable to stay within the 2% CAP.

Council President Blass said the Department of Public Works Highway Division has many unknown costs throughout the year such as for vehicle repair and tipping fees. For that reason he said that he is reluctant to reduce many of the appropriations within the budget. However, \$2,000.00 was removed from the salary line, and the amount to cover the cost for recycling was reduced by \$10,000.00.

As a result of discussion between Councilman Fitzpatrick and Mr. Considine, the appropriation for Worker's Compensation coverage was reduced by \$3,300.00.

Councilwoman Rudley said that she was looking for the appropriation that was added in 2020 for an additional \$1,000.00 to the Parks and Recreation budget for Senior Outreach trip expenses such as tolls and parking fees.

CFO Considine responded to a question from Councilman Weng by saying that \$348,000 of revenue would be needed to not have an increase in the municipal tax rate over the 2020 rate. Currently, there is approximately \$4,169,000.00 in surplus funds. Mr. Considine expressed concern that the trend over the last few years has been for surplus to continue dropping due to using funds from what is available to balance the budget. He cautioned Council that continued reliance on surplus funds will adversely affect the Borough's credit rating and cause eventual depletion of the surplus funds.

Councilman Fitzpatrick stated that he would like to see half of the revenue generated by the annual registration of vacant properties with ProChamps used for the acquisition/renovation or demolition of abandoned properties. Mr. Considine said that a Dedicated Trust account for that purpose is not on the State of New Jersey's list of approved trust accounts. Council President Blass expressed concern about demolishing vacant properties, and Councilman Weng said that when Council sees the final budget, they can then decide about a surplus withdrawal at the meeting on April 12, 2021. Councilwoman James asked if the liquor license bids coming in will help with next years' budget.

CFO Considine summarized the discussion by saying that he will incorporate the appropriation reductions from tonight into the budget and withdraw \$300,000.00 from surplus to balance the 2021 budget. He said that he will also prepare a Dedication by Rider Resolution for the next meeting asking the State for permission to allocate funds from the vacant property registration fees to be used for the acquisition/renovation or demolition of abandoned properties in the Borough.

Installation of a Metal Fence at the Edward J. Campbell War Memorial in Ballard Park

Councilwoman Rudley introduced a request from the members of the Garden Club to replace the hedgerow surrounding the Edward J. Campbell, Jr. Memorial in Ballard Park and replace it with a three foot high black aluminum fence. She said that the Garden Club has donors that have offered to pay for the fence which is estimated to cost approximately \$3,300.00. Jim Fortney, President of the Garden Club, said that the members believe that the fence will help protect the area and make watering the annual plantings easier. CFO Considine advised that the options for acquiring the fence would be to have the VFW or Friends of the Garden Club purchase the fence and donate it to the Borough or donate funds to the Recreation Department for deposit in their Trust Fund account to be used for the purchase of the fence.

Council President Blass reminded everyone that the Memorial is in the Historic District and that the type of fence should be appropriate to the Historic Commission Guidelines in place. CFO Considine asked if the Borough's insurance carrier would be on board with a fence around the area. Mayor Razzo said that he will investigate any safety issues that may be associated with installing fencing.

Mr. Fortney thanked the Garden Club volunteers and the employees of the Borough's Public Works Department who assisted in cleaning out the overgrown shrubs in the First Avenue garden. Flowers have been ordered for the hanging baskets and gardens that they tend in the Borough.

Extension of Outside Seating and BYOB Guidelines Under COVID-19 Guidelines

Councilwoman Rudley said that the resolutions passed by the Borough last year relating to outdoor seating and the extension of the BYOB ordinance are set to expire on March 31, 2021. Members of Council expressed no opposition to extending the outdoor seating resolution.

Councilwoman Rudley said that she has been contacted by the owners of Merryman's Pub about using Ballard Park as an extension of their restaurant by offering delivery of food and alcoholic beverages there. The owners proposed that they would provide tables and musical entertainment there as well. The entertainment in the park would be instead of the music that was performed in the parking lot behind their building last year, although they would still like to have tables set up in the areas outside of the building, both behind and in front.

Councilwoman Rudley stated that the increased number of tables in the park would benefit all the businesses in the area, but the increase in trash could be a problem. Councilman Mazzola and Councilman Weng expressed concern about alcohol consumption in the park and Councilman Weng stressed that servers must use the crosswalks and crossing signals when going back and forth to the park.

Councilwoman James stated that the Greater Pitman Chamber of Commerce is in favor of using Ballard Park for this purpose and mentioned that the picnic tables that were set up in the back parking lot for public dining were unknown to many people so mostly remained unused.

Mayor Razzo and Chief McAteer discussed enforcement of the guidelines, particularly those related to alcohol consumption. Also discussed briefly was the liability issue for the Borough with Chief McAteer mostly concerned about the servers and customers safely crossing Broadway, stressing that the crosswalks must be the sole pathway between Merryman's Pub and Ballard Park.

Councilman Weng stated that Merryman's should not be permitted to monopolize all the tables in the park, saying that they should have a designated area, or no designation, leaving the entire area open to all.

Councilwoman Rudley asked Mr. Merryman his plans for scheduling the music. Mr. Merryman proposed Wednesday through Sunday, ending at either 10 p.m. or 11p.m.

Council President Blass said that he was nervous about serving alcohol in the park, preferring the way it was approved last year, using the area behind Merryman's and Theatre Ave. as was designated in the Event Permit submitted by the Chamber of Commerce. Councilman Mazzola agreed with Council President Blass but suggested that if it is to be extended into Ballard Park he feels that the logical place would be in the triangular area bordered by sidewalks at Pitman Avenue and Broadway. Councilman Fitzpatrick was in favor of the area suggested by Councilman Mazzola.

Councilwoman Rudley clarified that the request being made by the owners of Merryman's Pub for the use of Ballard Park is in addition to the tables outside in front and behind the pub, stating that all issues last year connected to the dining in the back were related to the volume of the music.

Mayor Razzo asked would there be an alternate plan if the COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, and the guidelines change for the better. Would changes then be made to the seating areas? Councilwoman James replied that she feels it would be good for everyone to keep it going for the summer regardless of the Governor Murphy's loosening of restrictions. Councilwoman Rudley suggested an end date of Labor Day or sometime in September with Councilwoman James saying she preferred the end of September. Mayor Razzo reminded everyone that the Fall Craft Show has been scheduled for September. Chief McAteer asked if the music would be approved via a resolution or as part of an Event Permit Application, saying that music and noise enforcement is an issue for the Police Department.

Councilman Mazzola suggested a resolution spelling out the dates, times, etc. He said that he likes the idea of a designated space with specific dates. Chief McAteer agreed that he would prefer specific guidelines be put in writing because Borough Code has the park closing at dusk, and what has been proposed would go beyond that closing time.

Mayor Razzo suggested that a resolution be prepared for the April 12 meeting with Councilwoman Rudley suggesting that she would like to have something put in place at this meeting.

Discussion followed on the closing times on each day of the week that the park would be used, and the end date of October 3, 2021 was agreed on.

Motion to close discussion: Blass
Time: 8:07 p.m.

Second: Mazzola

Resolution No. 49, 2021 – Resolution Authorizing the Consumption and Possession in Open Containers of Alcoholic Beverages in the Specified Area of Ballard Park in Compliance with State

Law, Municipal Code, and New Jersey ABC Regulations from March 22, 2021 Through October 3, 2021

Motion: Rudley

Second: James

Roll Call:

Council President Blass: Yes

Councilman Fitzpatrick: Yes

Councilwoman James: Yes

Councilman Mazzola: Yes

Councilwoman Rudley: Yes

Councilman Weng: Yes

Mayor Razze: _____

Public Portion

Motion to open to the public: James

Second: Mazzola

Time: 8:07 p.m.

Bill Merryman, 106 S. Broadway – Mr. Merryman stated that there still may be nights when they will have music performed in the lot behind Merryman’s Pub. He said that music has been a great experience in the past, and that he is trying to accommodate everyone. Also, regarding the lights in Ballard Park, Mr. Merryman said that he is willing to pay for them and agreed to have the park cleaned and trash cans emptied nightly.

Motion to close public portion: Mazzola

Second: James

Time: 8:07 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion: Blass

Second: Rudley

Time: 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith O’Donnell
Borough Clerk/Administrator