

BOROUGH OF PITMAN
WORK SESSION MINUTES
MAY 23, 2022

Call to Order

Time: 7:00 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 6, 2022, posted on the Borough Hall front door, and advertised on the Borough of Pitman website continuously since January 6, 2022.

Roll Call

Council President Fitzpatrick: Present
Councilman Kelly: Absent
Councilwoman Milward: Present
Mayor Razzo: Present
Clerk O’Donnell: Present

Councilperson James: Present
Councilman Mazzola: Present
Councilman Weng: Present
Borough Solicitor Vigilante: Present

Discussion

Motion to Open Discussion: Weng
Time: 7:00 p.m.

Second: Milward

Zoning, Licensing, Registration & Regulations for Cannabis Establishments

Councilperson James reminded everyone in attendance that in 2021 Council chose to opt out of issuing any form of legalized cannabis license within the Borough, choosing to take a “wait and see” stance based on what other local municipalities were doing. On May 11, 2022, a small group of Borough representatives met to discuss the activities of other towns who opted-in last year, or who are now choosing to opt-in to issuing cannabis licenses where in the past they had chosen to opt-out. Councilperson James expressed her opinion that since the Borough no longer has the ability to sell liquor licenses, cannabis licensing may be an option to generating income for the Borough.

In addressing the rumor of the former Wawa site on Woodbury and E. Holly Avenue as being a proposed location for cannabis sales, Councilperson James said that she is not in favor of utilizing that site and is also not in favor of any location in the Uptown area. She said that in general she is open to the idea of cultivation, but not sales, and feels that it may be worth investigating non-retail facilities within the Borough. Councilperson James said that the Borough can levy a 2% local tax on sales as well as collect application and license renewal fees which are payable to the Borough.

Councilman Weng agreed that the idea is worth exploring and suggested that a Planning and Zoning Board study should be performed on the former Sony and Armory properties, as well as on the Andbro property for feasibility before moving forward. Councilman Weng said that there are presently municipalities that have annual renewal fees in place ranging between \$10,000 to \$40,000, amounts which are within recommendations made by the State of New Jersey.

Councilman Mazzola said that he agrees that the Borough needs new sources of revenue and feels that any fees charged by the Borough should be reasonable in nature.

Councilman Fitzpatrick said that he has heard speculation that there is someone intending to purchase the Andbro property, and that the individual is not interested in cannabis sales or cultivation.

Mayor Razzo said that he has looked into cannabis licensing in other states, and that it has been reported that the revenue from cannabis sales is not as high as what it was proposed to be initially.

Borough Solicitor Vigilante mentioned that in addition to sales, Monroe Township and Woolwich Township have approved licensing for cultivation, and she cautioned Council that the State of New Jersey can rewrite the cannabis laws at any time. Councilperson James said that West Deptford has also opted in, but not for retail, and also reserves the right to change their local ordinances in the future.

Councilwoman Milward said that in the State of New Jersey legislation, mention is made of Special Designation Zones pertaining to cannabis. She recommended that the Borough take those areas into account when making decisions that could affect Pitman. Councilwoman Milward specifically mentioned pages 49, 94, and 101 as being of particular interest in discussion of Special Designation Zones.

Mayor Razzo said the Borough Economic Development Committee has voted to explore the budgetary impact of cannabis for Pitman, and to perhaps find a component of licensing that the residents can be comfortable with.

Councilperson James asked members of Council to send any questions they may have when reviewing the packet of information she distributed to Borough Solicitor Vigilante.

Councilman Mazzola stated that he would be interested in having a presentation with an impartial review on all financial aspects of the several types of cannabis licensing. Councilperson James said that she will seek to find a speaker for the June 13, 2022 meeting.

Foreclosure of 125 Tenth Avenue

Councilman Fitzpatrick reported to Councilmembers that the municipal tax lien on the lot located at 125 Tenth Avenue has gone up for public auction twice this year, with no proposed bids. He suggested that the Borough foreclose on the Tax Sale Certificate, and then move forward with a public auction for the lot itself. Members of Council approved **Resolution No. 112, 2022**, authorizing an In Rem Foreclosure of the Tax Sale Certificate held by the Borough of Pitman, to be added to the Agenda for the Formal Meeting this evening.

Meeting Attendance Policy

Councilman Mazzola suggested that a policy be put in place to guide Councilmembers who would like to attend the meetings of the various Boards, Committees, and Commissions of the Borough. The concern is that the presence of a quorum would give the perception of Council doing business outside of the guidelines of the Open Public Meetings Act.

Mayor Razzo suggested that in the event of four or more members of Council being present, the Council Liaison or Alternate Liaison if standing in for the Liaison, should always remain in the meeting and the other members in attendance should work together to not have a quorum in such a way as to be fair for all, such as by taking turns attending meetings.

Sewer Bill Relief Request

Borough Administrator O'Donnell presented the request of the resident living at 511 Elm Avenue for financial relief of the first quarter 2022 sewer bill. The Daily Consumption Analysis Report shows a significant spike in water usage between February 18, 2022 and February 23, 2022 totaling 19,518 gallons. The normal usage for the resident is approximately 5,000 gallons per month. The resident said that this

spike was caused by an outdoor hose left running. The sewer credit is requested because the water went into the ground and did not pass through the Borough's sewer system. Administrator O'Donnell suggested a credit of \$157.68 be applied to the sewer bill for the first quarter of 2022. The amount is based on what was the calculated charge for 19,518 gallons of water through the sewer system.

Mayor Razze approved adding Resolution No. 113, 2022 to the agenda for action by Council.

Resolution No. 113, 2022 – Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Pitman, County of Gloucester, State New Jersey Authorizing a Credit to the Sewer Charges for 511 Elm Avenue, Block 211 Lot 3, on the Tax Map of the Borough of Pitman

Motion: Weng

Second: Mazzola

Roll Call

Council President Fitzpatrick: Yes

Councilperson James: Yes

Councilman Kelly: Absent

Councilman Mazzola: Yes

Councilwoman Milward: Yes

Councilman Weng: Yes

Mayor Razze: _____

Motion to close discussion: Weng

Second: Mazzola

Time: 7:36 p.m.

Miscellaneous

Councilman Weng asked for an update on the flooding problem on Oakland Avenue. Administrator O'Donnell reported that PWM Fred Rodi is soliciting quotes from contractors and advice from the Borough Engineer on installing drainage in the area. Mr. Rodi believes that the work can be performed by Water and Sewer Division employees with the assistance of Highway Division employees.

Public Portion

Motion to open to the public: James

Second: Fitzpatrick

Time: 7:36 p.m.

Barry Owen, 508 Pitman Avenue – Mr. Owen stated that the motion approved by the members of the Economic Development Committee was to “continue to explore” the feasibility of cannabis licenses in Pitman. He also stated that Jesus Alcazar, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Director, is willing to come and speak to Council and answer questions on this topic.

Sharon Morton, 407 Ardmore Avenue - Ms. Morton suggested that the Borough find other ways to disseminate information to the public other than the Borough's Facebook page.

George Esgro, 371 E. Holly Avenue – Mr. Esgro expressed his concern about a letter he received which stated that the former Wawa at the corner of E. Holly Avenue and Woodbury-Glassboro Road is being considered as a site for a cannabis retail store. He said that the area is a residential area, a high traffic area, as well as a school crossing zone for children attending Pitman Middle School and Pitman High School. All of which make it an inappropriate location for such a business.

Jeff Knauss, 222 Embury Avenue – Mr. Knauss suggested that someone should fact check the forty-six minute video sent to Council relating to cannabis before it is shared publicly.

