

July 12, 2017

A Work Session of the Borough Council of the Borough of Avalon was held on Wednesday, July 12, 2017 at 4:05 p.m. in the Meeting Room, 3100 Dune Drive, Avalon, New Jersey.

Attendance: Public ----- 3

Reporters ----- 2

The Meeting was called to order by Council President McCorristin.

Pledge of allegiance.

<u>Roll call:</u>	Council President McCorristin	Present
	Councilman Covington	Present
	Councilman Dean	Present
	Council Vice President Deever	Present
	Councilwoman Hudanich	Present

Also present:

Scott Wahl, Business Administrator  
 James Waldron, Assistant Business Administrator  
 Stephen D. Barse, Esquire, Borough Solicitor  
 Paul Short, Code Enforcement Official  
 William Macomber, Director of Public Works/Utilities  
 Police Captain Jeffrey R. Christopher  
 Thomas R. Thornton, P.E., Borough Engineer, Hatch Mott Macdonald, LLC  
 James Craft, Chief Financial Officer  
 Nina Ranalli, Director, Avalon History Center

Council President McCorristin read the Open Public Meetings Act Announcement.

Notice of this Work Session was included in the Annual Schedule of Meetings dated June 28, 2017. It was given to the news media and posted on the Official Bulletin Board as required by law.

Discussion regarding Ordinance amending Chapter 14 (Water & Sewer) to increase water rates.

Jim Craft explained the proposed Ordinance is to increase the water and sewer rates by \$50.00 per year, which will generate an additional \$376,000.00 in revenue. The rates were last increased in 2012. The revenue is needed to offset MUA fees, which increased in 2016 by over \$400,000.00 and to fund capital projects. Debt in the amount of \$185,000.00 will be coming off of the budget in 2018, however there will be a new debt issued in a larger amount that is expected to put pressure on the rates. The rates may need to be revisited in the future due to large capital projects completed in recent years, including Ocean Drive improvements, the 78<sup>th</sup> Street Pump Station, various water and sewer main replacements, and SCADA system upgrades.

Councilwoman Hudanich mentioned the water and sewer utility fund is a separate budget and should be self-liquidating. She asked what the transfer was from the general fund last year.

Jim Craft responded the transfer for 2016 was extraordinarily high at \$676,000.00 due to the 2016 budget funding the capital projects, additional funding required for the Ocean Drive improvements and additional MUA fees. However, there is a deficit in normal circumstances as well, which is the reasoning for the rate increase.

Councilwoman Hudanich stressed the importance of maintaining the potable water and sanitary sewer system. She inquired if SCADA is still a proprietary software and if the SCADA system upgrades were to update the program to the next generation.

Jim Craft responded yes and added that more pump stations are now online due to the upgrade.

Bill Macomber noted the sewer stations were recently added to the SCADA system as well.

Councilman Covington questioned what impact the rate increase will have on the current fund transfer.

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Jim Craft expressed hope that the next transfer will be less than \$150,000.00, and stated again that rates will be revisited in the future.

Councilman Covington noted the main goal of the fund is to obtain self-liquidating status.

Scott Wahl asked if the rate increase will be in effect for the 2017 billing year.

Jim Craft responded yes, the increase will be effective for the final quarter of 2017, which will generate approximately \$94,000.00 in additional revenue for the year.

Council agreed to proceed with an Ordinance to be prepared for first reading at the July 26, 2017 Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding Resolution concerning the 2016 Audit.

Jim Craft announced there were no audit comments in the Audit Report for the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

Councilwoman Hudanich noted employees doing their due diligence helps the Borough receive a clean report.

Scott Wahl added that the Borough recently received a AAA bond rating from Standard and Poors, which is typically difficult to maintain. Because of that bond rating, the Borough will be able to save a generous amount of money and continue to be in good financial standing. He commended Jim Craft and his staff as well as the direction provided by Council for the rating.

Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be considered at tonight's Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding Shared Services Agreement with the County of Cape May for Dispatch Services.

Scott Wahl reported this would be a three year renewal of the current agreement between Cape May County and the Borough for the dispatching of emergency calls for the Borough of Avalon as well as Stone Harbor. Calls handled by the County in this agreement are all fire calls and emergency medical services. This agreement saves the Borough money as well as provides an elevation of services to the citizens. The calls handled by the County are handled by one dispatcher from the time the call is received through to the resolution of the issue, which has proven to be a very valuable benefit. In the initial agreement, the Borough was responsible for paying \$12,000.00 annually to the County, which has been deemed undervalued. In the new agreement, the Borough will be responsible for paying \$20,000.00 for the first year, with an additional 2% annual increase for each remaining year of the contract.

Captain Christopher added he and the Chief are in full support of this agreement. When multiple calls come through, the dispatch center can become chaotic. Participating in this agreement has helped alleviate that issue.

Council President McCorristin asked if the radios are working well.

Captain Christopher responded there are still some areas of concern throughout town.

Scott Wahl added that the County is responsible for any necessary technology upgrades for their portion of the contract, which is an additional savings realized by the Borough.

Councilman Covington inquired if the County-wide dispatch center could affect this agreement.

Scott Wahl reported construction on the County Joint Dispatch Building being built in Lower Township could be completed as early as Labor Day, however there will be an exhaustive testing period from Labor Day through the end of the year to ensure any joint dispatch would be handled properly with seamless transition to avoid dropped calls. It is possible with the completion of that building, the agreement could be affected. If the Borough elects to join with the County for all dispatch services, a new agreement would be required.

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Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for the July 26, 2017 Regular Meeting.

Presentation by Paul Short regarding elevation of code enforcement procedures.

Scott Wahl reported discussions have taken place with the Code Enforcement Officer, Paul Short, regarding ways to improve code enforcement for both the Code Enforcement Officer and the public. A goal was to allow easier ways for the public to raise any questions or concerns as well as promote communication, tracking, responses, and better service. During the meetings, Paul Short expressed a large obstacle is the use of antiquated software. He introduced Paul Short, who will be making a presentation on a new software to be used for code enforcement.

Paul Short explained conversations have taken place to discuss taking a more proactive stance on code enforcement. As a result, the Borough has been separated into three different code enforcement zones which mirror the trash and recycling zones set by Council in the past. Three days are set aside each week to allow the Code Enforcement Officer to evaluate each zone for violations. Since the implementation of this new regime, contractors and property owners have become noticeably more diligent to avoid violations. In addition, permission was granted to investigate different programs to help reach the new goals of the department, and a decision has been made to utilize Citizen Serve, which is a web-based program that can be accessed from anywhere. It is a streamlined program that issues violation notices with the push of a button, and the violation notices can even be emailed.

Scott Wahl added if the public elects to use this program, they will get notifications of the Code Enforcement Officer receiving the complaint, a violation or warning being issued, and an abatement of the issue.

Paul Short noted this portal also allows for a member of the public to apply for dewatering permits and sign permits as well as questions or requests. The experience with the customer service of Citizen Serve has been positive and efficient. The portal allows an individual to register with an email address and password or to submit complaints anonymously. When a complaint is submitted, the Code Enforcement Officer is notified immediately. An announcement of the portal will be posted on the Borough's website tomorrow.

Councilwoman Hudanich suggested encouraging citizens to register with their actual information rather than submitting complaints anonymously.

Paul Short also noted complaints must include Avalon addresses to ensure all complaints fall within Avalon's jurisdiction.

Discussion regarding Ordinance prohibiting the intentional release of balloons and paper sky lanterns.

Scott Wahl reported a number of coastal communities have begun to address the issue of the intentional release of balloons or paper sky lanterns, which are largely done during celebratory events, weddings, and the like where there's a massive release of balloons. The Borough of Avalon informally addressed this issue in the spring by adding information regarding the dangers to marine life these actions present to the Information and Recreation Guide. Typically, marine life can often mistake balloons for food and ingest them, which can be harmful or fatal. Dr. Lenore Tedesco from The Wetlands Institute has been consulted and is in full agreement with this initiative. Sue Keen has reported many requests to release balloons, however the Borough typically denies the requests by citing littering laws. Fire Chief Ed Dean was also consulted, and it was his suggestion to also include the release of paper sky lanterns, which are powered by a fuel source similar to a candle, and could pose a threat to the maritime forest and the dunes. Dr. Tedesco agrees with this action as well. To clarify, this proposed amendment does not pertain to the accidental release of balloons, as does not prohibit the use of balloons within the Borough.

After brief discussion, Council agreed to proceed with an Ordinance to be prepared for first reading at the July 26, 2017 Regular Meeting.

Public Comments:

Janet Cass, 1100 Ocean Drive, Unit 203, commended and thanked Borough Council for their attention to the threat balloons pose upon marine life and their consideration of an Ordinance prohibiting the intentional release of balloons. She brought to Council's attention the efforts she is taking along with Martha Wright, where they paddle in kayaks daily around Cedar Island to remove trash from the waterway. The trash collected during these trips is photographed and cataloged. This year, 52 balloons, 193 plastic bags, 93 plastic bottles, and 218 additional plastic items have been picked up from that area. It takes between 450 and 1,000 years for plastic to decompose. In the United States, 2.5 million single use plastic bottles are used every hour. She suggested promoting reusable bags and water bottles in local shops, as well as public water bottle refilling stations. She stressed the importance of environmental responsibility and education.

Council President McCorristin noted Cape May County has been adding grating to drains that go into the bay to avoid large items from washing into the bay.

Martha Wright, 632 7<sup>th</sup> Street, commended and acknowledged work done by the Public Works Department in installing turtle fencing at the Bay Park Marina, and thanked Council for their attention to the matter. She agreed with comments made by Janet Cass, and suggested the Borough market Avalon branded reusable shopping bags and water bottles. She also mentioned grants may be available to replace current water fountains throughout the Borough with fountains able to accommodate water bottles.

Scott Wahl added during National Night Out when Avalon branded bags are given to attendees, Avalon requires the vendors making the bags use 100% recycled materials.

Councilwoman Hudanich thanked Ms. Cass and Ms. Wright for their comments and mentioned that she will make an announcement at the Auxiliary Meeting at the Avalon Yacht Club on Saturday, July 15, 2017 to educate the young sailors about littering and trash in the waterways.

Elaine Scattergood, 75 30<sup>th</sup> Street, encouraged legislation prohibiting the use of balloons by realtors or business owners to advertise. She also noted that birds are threatened by plastic bags as well as marine life. She suggested putting water filters on any water bottle refilling stations.

Motion made by Councilman Covington, seconded by Councilman Dean to adjourn the Work Session.

<u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u>	Councilman Covington	Aye
	Councilman Dean	Aye
	Council Vice President Deever	Aye
	Councilwoman Hudanich	Aye
	Council President McCorristin	Aye

Work Session adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Danielle Nollett  
G. Danielle Nollett, Deputy Borough Clerk

John M. McCorristin  
John M. McCorristin, Council President