

October 12, 2022

A Work Session of the Borough Council of the Borough of Avalon was held on Wednesday, October 12, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room, 3100 Dune Drive, Avalon, New Jersey.

In-Person Attendance: Public - - - - - 4

Reporters - - - - - 0

Remote Attendance: Public - - - - - 2

Reporters - - - - - 1

The Meeting was called to order by Council President Wierman.

Pledge of allegiance.

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| <u>Roll call:</u> | Council President Wierman | Present |
| | Councilwoman Coskey | Present |
| | Councilman McCorristin | Present |
| | Councilman McDermott | Present |
| | Councilman Wierman | Present |

Also present:

James Waldron, Assistant Business Administrator
Nicole Curio, Esquire, Borough Solicitor
Jeffrey Christopher, Police Chief
Thomas R. Thornton, P.E., Borough Engineer, Mott MacDonald
Paul E. Short, Sr., Code Enforcement Official
James Craft, Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Camp, Operations Coordinator, Department of Public Works
Douglas Rohmeyer, CME Associates
Eleanor Cifaloglio, Tax Collector

Council President Wierman read the Open Public Meetings Act Announcement.

Notice of this Regular Meeting was included the annual Schedule of Meetings dated June 22, 2022. It was given to the news media and posted on the Official Bulletin Board as required by law.

Council President Wierman announced the recent passing of past Planning/Zoning Board member and long-time Avalon resident David Knoche, and held a moment of silence to honor his memory and his commitment to Avalon.

Discussion regarding Resolution adopting a Cyber Incident Response Plan.

James Craft explained the JIF and the MEL have adopted a set of requirements for all participating municipalities as it pertains to cyber insurance. The adoption of the proposed Cyber Incident Response Plan, along with the current cyber regulations currently in place within the Borough of Avalon, will assign Avalon to a tier 2 designation within the program. He briefly overviewed some of the required cyber regulations and procedures required and in place by the Borough, such as employee training, performing data backups, and the implementation of anti-malware software. In order to meet tier 3, separate IP addresses would be required for individual departmental networks of the Borough, which is expected to be implemented in 2023.

Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for the October 26, 2022 Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding Resolution authorizing an increase in 2023 season beach tag fees.

James Craft requested Council consider increasing the cost of seasonal beach tags by two dollars per tag, which would generate an estimated \$95,000.00 in additional income to the Borough, which would be used to offset increased costs of salaries and wages.

After brief discussion, Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for the October 26, 2022 Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding Resolution authorizing Professional Engineering and Land Surveying Services for Stormwater Management System Investigation at Dune Drive.

Douglas Rohmeyer introduced himself to Council and gave a brief overview of his professional history, as well as the credentials of CME Associates, which qualify the firm for undertaking this project. He indicated CME Associates has provided a proposal to conduct an investigation to identify potential improvements to the flooding along Dune Drive, specifically between 19th Street and 33rd Street. In order to prepare this proposal, maps in the custody of the Borough's engineering firm, Mott MacDonald, were reviewed and on-site observations were conducted during recent storm events. The relationship between storm water runoff and tidal surges was also evaluated. Anticipated activities to be implemented under the proposal were reviewed, including review of system characteristics and identifying possible deficiencies, tidal fluctuation impacts, creating a simplified model of the system, evaluating tail water impacts, and other field survey work associated with a full evaluation and study of the system. There are hopes this study will help provide a complete understanding of the system and its performance in varying scenarios so that comprehensive solutions can be compiled, evaluated, and recommended. Several recommendations are expected to be made regarding improvements that can reduce the frequency and intensity of the flooding. Cost estimates associated with implementing each recommended change, as well as beneficial cost impacts are expected to be given, as well. Grant programs will also be explored once solutions are identified.

Councilman McCorristin noted flooding in this area is very common after both rainfall and tidal events. While recent pump station improvements have helped alleviate the problem, more solutions are needed.

Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for the October 26, 2022 Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding Resolution authorizing a Facility Use Agreement with APP, LLC.

Discussion pertaining to this item was deferred to the October 26, 2022 Work Session.

Discussion regarding Resolution supporting an increase in the Shore Protection Fund.

James Waldron indicated the Borough has supported this initiative in the past. There has been a concerted effort on an annual basis to convince the sitting administration that the Shore Protection Fund should be increased, as it has not been materially increased over the last number of years. An effort is being undertaken with neighboring municipalities to drive home that there is a continuing need, which is increasing, not lessening. Shore communities are suffering with high frequency due to coastal storms. Recent storm events have materially and substantially impacted the beaches of New Jersey, which has reignited discussions to increase funding dedicated to the Shore Protection Fund. Additionally, recent storm impacts to Avalon's beaches have resulted in talks concerning increasing the amounts to be placed on Avalon's beaches during the upcoming beach fill project.

Councilman McCorristin noted the recent storm event caused severe erosion to the beaches of Avalon, which unfortunately took away the sand that was placed during the recent backpassing project.

James Waldron voiced the opinion that now is the time to stress the importance of this Fund being increased.

Council President Wierman agreed that it is imperative to try to get as much help to restore the beaches as possible.

James Waldron expressed hope that the timing of the Resolutions of support from Avalon and other municipalities, the pleas will be heard, and relief will be given.

Councilman McCorristin stressed the importance of restoring the beaches for the betterment of the community.

James Waldron mentioned many beach communities were severely impacted, which leaves those municipalities vulnerable to upcoming storms in the upcoming aggressive storm seasons. The shore of New Jersey protects not only the beach communities, but the mainland of New Jersey, as well. These damages have a state-wide impact.

Council agreed to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for the October 26, 2022 Regular Meeting.

Discussion regarding participation in the State Health Benefits Program.

James Waldron reported the New Jersey State Health Benefits Program has proposed a very substantial increase in premiums for 2023, which caused the Borough to evaluate alternatives to provide employees with same level of coverage while containing the cost of these benefits to taxpayers. Currently, the Borough utilizes the NJ Direct 2030 plan as its base plan for all employees, the cost of which will be increasing by approximately 24 percent in 2023. In order to lessen the impact and provide the same level of coverage, it is proposed to move to the NJ Direct 2035 plan, which has substantially higher deductibles and co-pays in exchange for a lower premium. It is believed that by increasing money on HRA card to employees, they will have same level of benefits, with no increased out of pocket cost. To the employee, this health benefits change will be a seamless transition. The Borough will add more funds to each HRA card to cover the higher deductibles and co-pays. Even with this increased expense, there is a net decrease to the Borough in terms of cost.

James Craft added the cost difference in premiums from the current 2022 plan rate to the 2023 plan rate for NJ Direct 2035 is approximately a two percent increase. With the additional funding being added to the HRA cards, the overall exposure to the Borough is approximately 10 percent higher than what was paid by the Borough in 2022, which is lower than the projected 24 percent increase to the NJ Direct 2030 plan. Additionally, employees will have a smaller increase to their payroll contributions due to the lower premium.

James Waldron explained if Council agrees with this change, all Borough employees will be sent a letter explaining the health plan changes, and meetings will be available to help employees enroll in the new health plan. Each individual employee must enroll themselves, as a mass migration is not permissible. The deadline for all employees to switch plans is October 31, 2022.

Councilman Wierman commended all involved in these efforts for their creative problem-solving, which resulted in a benefit to the Borough, its employees, and the taxpayers.

Council agreed to authorize this transition and to proceed with a Resolution to be prepared for a future Regular Meeting.

Public Comments:

Lizanne Tracy, 1 First Drive, Stone Harbor, expressed disappointment at discussions regarding a recent Planning/Zoning Board meeting where suggestions were made to hire a feasibility expert prior to moving forward on official action concerning allowing boutique hotels within the business district. She shared her vision of a rejuvenated downtown within Avalon and expressed hope the Borough shares in this vision and moves forward with allowing boutique hotels, as proposed, while suggesting that hotels could be permitted as a conditional use for individual review and potential approval with each application.

Martha Wright, 632 7th Street, commended the Avalon Planning/Zoning Board for doing their due diligence in evaluating and exploring all possibilities associated with allowing boutique hotels as a conditional use within the downtown business district. She noted the Borough has a Master Plan, which must be reexamined every 10 years; however, the Planning/Zoning Board chose to amend the Master Plan only as it pertains to these hotels. She expressed the opinion that this amendment was not fully comprehensive and stressed the importance of contemplating the notion of obtaining a professional to evaluate how best to approach this initiative. She urged Council to consider looking favorably upon contracting with a consultant to do so. She thanked Council President Wierman for honoring the memory of David Knoche and spoke fondly in his memory.

Council to check over the agenda for the Regular Meeting.

Council proceeded to check over the agenda for the Regular Meeting.

October 12, 2022

Motion made by Councilwoman Coskey, seconded by Councilman McDermott to adjourn the Work Session.

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| <u>ROLL CALL VOTE:</u> | Councilwoman Coskey | Aye |
| | Councilwoman Juzaitis | Aye |
| | Councilman McCorristin | Aye |
| | Councilman McDermott | Aye |
| | Council President Wierman | Aye |

Work Session adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


C. Danielle Nollett, Borough Clerk


Samuel D. Wierman, Council President