

DRAFT MINUTES

These are the Draft Minutes of the Agenda Conference of the North Plainfield Borough Council held on Monday, May 24, 2021. Every attempt has been made to make these as comprehensive and conclusive as possible. However, as it is a draft document, it is not to be construed as a formal depiction of the official conduct of business and is subject to revision up to and following the Governing Body's actual approval of same. If changes are necessary, revised minutes will be posted to the website.

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference (virtual) of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Monday, **May 24, 2021** at 7:33 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo
Suzette Given
Steven McIntyre
Everett Merrill
Keiona R. Miller
Wendy Schaefer
Frank "Skip" Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
David Hollod, Business Administrator
Phil George, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
Patrick DeBlasio, Chief Financial Officer
Kathleen Intravartolo, Treasurer, CTC, QPA
Richard K. Phoenix, RMC, Borough Clerk
Stephanie Sherwood, RMC, CMR, Deputy Clerk

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Merrill.

A moment of silence was observed for the men and women serving in our Armed Forces.

The Council President read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This virtual meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 28, 2020 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Frank D'Amore, 40 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, commented on the deterioration of the property at 120 Sycamore Avenue. The speaker urged for the Borough to utilize the vacant property ordinance and make the necessary repairs to salvage the structure. Assuring of an ongoing investigation into the matter, Mayor La Ronde offered to reach out directly with further details.

Michelle Robertson, 676 Denninger Road, North Plainfield, voiced concerns about pedestrian safety at the Middle School and High School and called for more signage in those areas.

Dave Liebau, 587 Rockview Avenue, North Plainfield, shared his displeasure with the amount of vehicles speeding throughout the Borough, especially those with the loud mufflers. Mr. Hollod rejoined that similar concerns had been shared at previous meetings about vehicles with loud mufflers. He explained that State statute would allow for the Police Department to step-up enforcement.

Mayor La Ronde presented the following Mayoral Proclamation:

WHEREAS, every day, more than 100 Americans are killed by gun violence, alongside more than 230 who are shot and wounded; and

WHEREAS, on average there are more than 13,000 gun homicides every year and Americans are 25 times more likely to die by gun homicide than people in other developed countries; and

WHEREAS, in New Jersey, 25% of completed suicides are by gun; and

WHEREAS, protecting public safety in the communities they serve is the Mayor's highest responsibility; and

WHEREAS, support for the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens goes hand-in-hand with keeping guns away from dangerous people; and

WHEREAS, gun violence prevention is more important than ever with the increase in suicide and domestic violence exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic; and

WHEREAS, in January 2013, Hadiya Pendleton, a teenager who marched in President Obama's second inaugural parade was tragically shot and killed just weeks later, and would now be celebrating her 24th birthday; and

WHEREAS, to help honor Hadiya - and all Americans whose lives are cut short and the countless survivors who are injured by shootings every day - a national coalition of organizations has designated the first Friday in June as National Gun Violence Awareness Day; and

WHEREAS, a group of Hadiya's friends, asked their classmates to commemorate her life by wearing orange; the color hunters wear to announce themselves to other hunters when in the woods; and

WHEREAS, anyone can join this campaign by pledging to Wear Orange on June 4th, 2021, to help raise awareness about gun violence; and

WHEREAS, we renew our commitment to reduce gun violence and pledge to do all we can to keep firearms out of the wrong hands, and encourage responsible gun ownership to help keep our community safe.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor of the Borough of North Plainfield declare the first Friday of each year as National Gun Violence Awareness Day. I encourage all citizens to support efforts to prevent the tragic effects of gun violence.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Budget Amendment** – D.E.H. (Patrick DeBlasio, CFO and Kathleen Intravartolo, Treasurer, CTC, QPA, were present) Mr. DeBlasio explained of the need for a budget amendment due to a reduction in the amount of the Safe and Secure Grant monies. The Public Hearing on the 2021 Budget would be held this evening with the Budget adoption scheduled for the first meeting in June. Responding to Mr. Merrill, he noted that the reduction in grant monies appeared to be statewide.

2. **Presentation by US2 Inc.** – L.L.R. (Megan Fuciarelli, Kevin Jones, and Kenny White were present) Ms. Fuciarelli explained that North Plainfield crafted an Action Plan Committee to empower the voices within the community. US2 joined the committee seven times to work towards improving areas of social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). Ms. Fuciarelli briefly detailed their summary of recommendations including operational equity, equitable access to resources/information, and diverse representation. Ms. Miller inquired after the additional two languages requested for translating; Mr. White indicated Arabic and Vietnamese were requested. Mr. McIntyre questioned how to intentionally increase diversity without discriminating against other groups; Ms. Fuciarelli suggested inviting members of certain groups to join the Borough. Mayor La Ronde indicated his support of the plan while Dr. Aquino and Ms. Given agreed to sit in on the sessions to learn how to move forward with implementation.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS:

Ms. Corzo detailed certain findings of the Sub-Committee tasked with researching the legalization of marijuana. Municipalities have until August 21 to welcome, ban or set limits for the types and numbers of dispensaries. The State, not the municipalities, will issue a number of licenses for a two-year timeframe along with regulations for same. Municipalities could see a gain in tax revenue and enjoy redevelopment and potential jobs growth and business

opportunities. Marijuana is still illegal at the Federal level which would mean all cash transactions potentially leading to a rise in break-ins and robberies. Mr. McIntyre shared the results of the 2020 Ballot question which confirmed that sixty-seven percent of Borough residents supported the legalization of marijuana. A questionnaire for Borough residents would determine where North Plainfield stands with respect to medical cannabis and cannabis wholesale facilities.

Mr. Merrill reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee held its first in-person meeting at the Community Center. The Hometown Heroes banners are up throughout the Borough and the summer camp registration numbers are on the upswing which is wonderful to see.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Schaefer and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President