

Work Session
Mayor and Council
April 26, 2012

A Work Session of the Mayor and Council was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Mayor Barra who announced that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act were met by the required posting and notice to publications.

The following individuals answered roll call: Council members McSwiggan, Strauch, White, Wilczynski and Mr. Barra were present. Councilman Bernstein and LaMonica arrived at 7:40 p.m. and 7:51 p.m. respectively. Mrs. McCarthy and Mr. Bole were also present.

Public Comments

Laura Grainger, President of the Library Board of Trustees was present to update the Council on several Library issues.

Ms. Grainger said the Library budget is determined by a state mandated formula. New legislation requires the Library to return to the municipality any funds in excess of its operating budget, plus twenty percent surplus of that operating budget, plus any funds that are secured for capital spending. The funds that are earmarked for capital spending must be supported by a three year capital spending plan and the capital spending plan has to be supported by a long term strategic plan.

In keeping with this legislation the Library Board embarked on a comprehensive process to create a strategic plan that ensures that the resources and services provided by the Library will meet the needs of the community at the present time and into the future. It took the Library Board almost twelve months to establish this plan and it included community input, focus groups and a telephone survey.

The Board identified which Library services and resources are the most relevant to the community as well as the Library's strengths and weaknesses. From this analysis a comprehensive strategic plan was developed and then a three year capital spending plan was created. This capital spending plan will enhance the resources that the Library already has.

Some of the changes to the Library will include renovating the upper loft space to create a new meeting room. The community has expressed a desire for additional programs which was one of the issues that came through most strongly in the survey. Some of these programs could be held in the new room.

A new area will be created for quiet reading periodicals or doing homework and Library technology will be enhanced. Complete details of these projects can be found on the Lee Memorial Library website. The budget that allowed for all these enhancements also enabled the Library to return \$330,999 to the Borough to help with taxpayer relief. This money is from taxpayer surplus that accumulated over many years in Library accounts. It does not involve any private donations that have been made to the Library.

The Board is confident that once they have finished implementing the strategic plan they will be able to serve the public more efficiently than ever before.

Mayor Barra commented that the present Board has been phenomenal in terms of its dedication and the work it has done. People who have not been a part of this process may not appreciate the time that has gone into it. He added that everyone on the Board deserves an enormous amount of credit. He particularly thanked Ms. Grainger for her leadership on the Board.

The amount of money given back to the Borough helped considerably toward keeping the budget increase at zero again this year. No Library in the State could have worked more enthusiastically with their Governing Body than this group has done.

Mrs. White thanked the Library Board for the speed at which they moved and the diligence which they used to get through the strategic plan process.

Lynn Novak of Tallman Place said she brought three Boy Scouts with her to the Council meeting this evening who are working on their Citizenship in the Community merit badge.

Ms. Novak asked approximately how much money the Library will return to the Borough next year which can be applied to shortages in the budget.

Mayor Barra said it is not likely that any additional funds will be returned to the Borough next year. The amount that was given to the Borough this year was a one-time accumulated amount.

On a different topic, Ms. Novak commented that when trees fall in town it takes a long time for them to be picked up. She specifically referred to one located on West Crescent Avenue and Brookside and another on Powell Road.

Mayor Barra said Allendale is not alone with this problem. He stated that in fact, Allendale moves much more quickly than most of our surrounding towns. If a tree falls in a resident's yard, it is their responsibility to take care of it. Similarly if a tree falls along a county road, it is the county's responsibility to remove it. Mr. Barra noted that the county has been overwhelmed with the number of trees that have fallen. Most of the Borough trees that have fallen have already been taken care of. The main use of Shade Tree money goes toward removing trees instead of replanting them.

Mrs. Wilczynski explained that trees are removed in bulk and that process removes going to bid to get the best price on tree removal.

Ms. Novak also asked about the status of the traffic light at West Crescent Avenue and Myrtle.

Mrs. White said the money has been appropriated by the County, the design has been created and final easement signoffs have been given by the property owners at that location. She has been told the County will go out to bid for this project within the next thirty to sixty days. Hopefully the signal will be installed during summer when the schools are not in session.

At 8:10 p.m. the Council adjourned to Regular Session.

At 8:28 p.m. the Council returned to Work Session.

Administration

Allendale Senior Housing PILOT

Mr. Barra said the Senior Housing Board met the other night to discuss options available to them with regard to the financial agreement between Allendale Affordable Housing and the Borough. Senior Housing would like to keep the \$10,000 annual payment to the Municipality stable for the foreseeable future.

In 2013 the PILOT will increase to twenty percent and then in subsequent years to forty, sixty and eighty percent. The taxes that will first come due will be about \$3400 (at the 20% increase) and then in a few years that amount will increase to \$6800, then \$9,000+ dollars.

Mr. Bole said the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) could not be negotiated because that is how the State statute works. However there are lease payments on the project which are a negotiable item. The Borough should receive \$10,000 a year in lease payments but the lease can be amended to allow for an offset equal in amount to what the PILOT will increase from year to year. This is the Borough's property and it is a critical component of Allendale's Affordable Housing plan since 1991. Mr. Bole stated that it is the Borough's obligation to make sure that Senior Housing remains a financially feasible project.

Mr. Barra said Senior Housing has already passed a resolution with regard to this issue and the next step will be for Mr. Bole to draft an ordinance.

The Tax Assessor said the PILOT should be predicated only on the improvements since the Borough owns the property. She will also review the assessed improvements on the property to see if that amount should be lowered.

Mr. Bole said he is satisfied with this solution and the Council be receive an ordinance to make these changes.

Mr. Bole said the PILOT couldn't be negotiated because that is how the State statute works. However there is also a lease on the project which is a negotiable item. The Borough should realize \$10,000 a year in lease payments but the lease will be amended to allow for an offset equal in amount to what the PILOT will increase from year to year. However this is set up, this is Borough's property and has been a critical component of Allendale's Affordable Housing plan since 1991. It is the Borough's obligation to make sure this remains a financially feasible project.

Mr. Barra said Senior Housing has already passed a resolution with regard to this issue and the next step will be for Mr. Bole to draft an ordinance.

Discussion of Lawn Watering Policy

Mrs. McSwiggan said she wanted to speak to the Council about how to move forward on a water conservation program in town. This was a snow free winter so there was no water runoff from the snow, and it has been a light spring in terms of rain. With the population growth in Northern New Jersey, water has become a very valuable commodity.

Mrs. McSwiggan said a lawn sprinkling program is the most reasonable starting point. In the past there has been a Phase One water restriction for watering lawns every other day with Monday being a recharge day for the system. In Allendale, wells supply water from an aquifer and water is also purchased from United Water.

Mrs. McSwiggan suggested the Water Superintendent might want to consider putting Phase I restrictions into place at some point. There will always be the opportunity to have accommodations made for new landscaping.

Mr. Bernstein said he agrees it is best to get ahead of this issue instead of waiting for the hot summer months. If we let the public know there will be limits on water consumption then the public can partner with the Council in addressing the issue.

Mrs. McSwiggan said she would like the town to develop a consciousness about water. The Water Committee will continue to monitor the well and usage levels and will keep the Council up to date.

Mr. Bernstein suggested information be presented to the public in an easily understandable way.

Mrs. White said there should be a newsletter shortly after the budget is adopted and water conservation information could be incorporated into that edition.

Mr. Barra recommended the newsletter include information on zero scape Landscaping.

Mrs. McCarthy read the following resolution into the record:

Whereas, the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

Whereas, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist; and

Whereas, the Governing Body wishes to discuss:

Contract Negotiations

Minutes will be kept and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes can be made public.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the public be excluded from this meeting.

On a motion from Ms. LaMonica, seconded by Mr. Strauch, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn to Regular Session at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen McCarthy
Municipal Clerk