

Work Session
Mayor and Council
December 8, 2011

A Work Session of the Mayor and Council was called to order at 7:35 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 Bernstein, LaMonica, Schoepflin, White, Wilczynski and Mayor Barra. Mr. Strauch was absent. Mrs. McCarthy and Mr. Bole were also present.

Public Comments

Mr. Barra opened the meeting to the public for comments.

Judith Friedland of Crescent Bend and **Melissa Bildner** of Sawyer Court said they were present to ask for a menorah to be placed in front of Borough Hall to make Hanukkah a part of the holiday season. They noted there are beautiful Christmas decorations in front of the Borough Hall but a menorah would be a nice addition. The Borough of Allendale is one of only a handful of towns in our area that doesn't have a menorah or any type of Hanukkah decoration. There are a lot of Jewish families that celebrate Hanukkah in Allendale and it would be nice to have their holiday represented in front of the municipal building during the holiday season. The menorah sends a universal message to all.

Mayor Barra said Allendale has a tradition of not having a display on Borough property other than the lights on the trees. The tree in front of the AB&G is the one that is officially lit at the time of the holiday walk and the Mayor and Council are not a part of that lighting tradition. He added however, that it is always appropriate to start new traditions and he feels we should be more welcoming to people of all ethnic and religious traditions. Mr. Barra stated that Allendale does have a small menorah inside Borough Hall in addition to a Christmas tree. There are other towns with a menorah but they are not necessarily in front of Borough Hall. In Ramsey for instance the menorah is located at the main intersection.

Mr. Barra said he would like to meet with those who are interested in determining where a holiday display should be placed and what else should be included to comply with State and Federal law as well as the needs of the community. He would like to talk to the ministers in town to help determine an ecumenical tribute to the season. He will forward this issue to the Facilities Committee of the Council.

Mrs. Wilczynski who is the head of the Facilities Committee said she wants to see the issue handled the right way.

Mr. Barra noted that Allendale is a diverse community represented by different faiths and ethnic groups and he is looking forward to starting a new tradition next year that will be good and pleasing to all.

It was noted that the AB&G will be having a menorah lighting this year since there isn't going to be a menorah at the Borough Hall this year. Mr. Kunisch doesn't think the street needs to be closed for the menorah lighting because there is room to the side of the AB&G for people to stand.

Members of the Council agreed with Mr. Bernstein who stated that it is better to include everyone than to exclude anyone.

John Koster commented that a Federal Judge stated that as long as all religions are represented a holiday display doesn't present an obstacle to any particular religion.

Mr. Barra suggested that the matter be taken up during the month of February.

Mayor's Report

Mr. Barra said he had planned on talking about the menorah during his report but that has already been discussed.

On a motion by Mrs. White, seconded by Ms. LaMonica, the Council voted to adjourn at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen McCarthy
Municipal Clerk