

Mayor and Council of the Borough of Allendale  
Work Session Meeting Minutes  
November 14, 2019

PRESENT: Mayor Ari Bernstein and Councilmembers Liz Homan, Matthew O'Toole, Steve Sasso, Jim Strauch and Amy Wilczynski

ABSENT: Councilmember Edward O'Connell

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Attorney Raymond Wiss  
Municipal Clerk Anne Dodd

A Work Session Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Allendale was held in the Municipal Building at 500 West Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ on November 14, 2019. The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Mayor Ari Bernstein who asked that the Municipal Clerk read the open public meetings statement:

"In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. The meeting dates for the year are confirmed at the Annual Meeting, are posted on the public bulletin board in the Municipal Building, published in the Record within the first 10 days of the New Year, and copies are sent to the Ridgewood News and Star Ledger."

**Public Comment:**

Bill Kempey, 555 Franklin Turnpike, congratulated Councilman Sasso and O'Toole on winning the General Election and wished them luck. He also thanked Anne Dodd, Municipal Clerk, for her assistance on election night.

Mayor Bernstein commented that Mr. Kempey's presence at Mayor and Council meetings is always welcomed, noting that he is a valued member of this community.

Walter Widmer, 38 Hamilton Street, echoed Mr. Kempey's comments regarding the election.

**Presentations:**

A. Report from Lee Memorial Library Board of Trustees

Mayor Bernstein expressed his opinion that the Lee Memorial Library is the jewel of Allendale and explained that he has requested that the Board of Trustees present a report to the governing body twice a year.

Patricia Durso, Executive Director of the Lee Memorial Library, explained that the Library Board of Trustees has been holding focus groups to elicit input from residents on services that they would like to see offered and she relayed some of the positive comments that were received. She provided a snapshot of the library numbers which included the percentage of residents who are cardholders as well as the number of visitors, programs, and items borrowed. She then provided a brief overview of programs and services that are offered to residents, noting that, many times, the library serves as a community center for residents. She advised that they offer new services which are not typically associated with the library such as notary services, a tutoring center, and free home delivery. A committee has been formed to develop a 5-year strategic plan which is in the process of being finalized. This plan is being developed based upon a survey that was conducted beginning last November through February to which over 775 responses were received. Input from the focus

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groups and factors that are driving change within the community are also being used to develop this plan. Ms. Durso reviewed feedback that was received on how the library benefits the residents currently which includes products, services, and spaces that are available. She advised that the committee has developed five strategic priorities which are to reinvigorate the library's spaces, collections, programming, professional services and technological infrastructure, grow community awareness of the library's services to drive engagement and support, increase operational excellence, broaden financial resources to increase fiscal stability, and deliver the resources of the library to every segment of the Allendale community. She then reviewed some of the top desired services that were indicated on the community survey which included driver's license renewal kiosks and passport services. She noted that, on average, the library portion of the tax bill accounts for 1.5% of the property owner's total bill which is approximately \$250 a year. She advised that the library is investigating additional sources of revenue due to financial factors that are driving change. She explained that these factors include municipal funding being lower than it was in 2009, \$331,000 in library funds being used to pay for other municipal projects in 2012, and NJ State Per Capita Aid to libraries being reduced by 67% in 2010 and never having been restored. She advised that the board will continue to keep the governing body updated over the coming months and will also be seeking their input on this process.

Members of the governing body commended Ms. Durso and the trustees, commenting on how fortunate Allendale is to have them. Ron Kistner, Administrative Officer/Director of Operations, expressed his opinion that Ms. Durso brings this level of enthusiasm to the library every day as a result of her love for the library and Allendale.

***Administration:***

Due to time constraints, the following agenda items were carried to the Work Session.

- A. Best Practices Inventory
- B. Agenda Review
- C. Council Reports
- D. Mayor's Report
- E. Staff Reports

***Adjournment***

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilman Strauch, second by Councilman Sasso, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Anne Dodd, RMC  
Municipal Clerk