

Mayor and Council of the Borough of Allendale
Work Session Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2020

PRESENT: Mayor Ari Bernstein
(*in person*)

PRESENT: Councilmembers Liz Homan, Edward O’Connell, Matthew O’Toole, Steve Sasso,
Jim Strauch and Amy Wilczynski
(*via teleconference*)

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Attorney Raymond Wiss
(*in person*) Acting Municipal Clerk Michelle Ryan

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 April 30, 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to the general public was provided via GoToMeeting teleconferencing only, with adequate notice of access information posted for public viewing. The meeting was called to order at 7:32p.m. by Mayor Bernstein. Mayor Bernstein reminded the public to mute their phones so as not to distract from the business of the meeting but advised that they would have several opportunities at appropriate times throughout this meeting to be heard.

Mayor Bernstein asked that the Acting 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:

No one from the public came forward.

Administration:

A. Agenda Review

Mayor Bernstein stated the first item listed is the approval of minutes from the April 16, 2020 Work, Closed and Regular Sessions. Mayor Bernstein noted that all Councilmembers were present and eligible to vote. The next item, Ordinances 20-03 and 20-04, are scheduled for second reading and public hearing however in light of the uncertainty and financial difficulties this pandemic has caused, he advised that the committees were now recommending that these ordinances not be adopted at this time. He advised that further discussion would take place at the Regular Session. Ordinance 20-09, which fixes the 2020 salary range for the DPW employees in line with the new contract, will be introduced. Moving to the Consent Agenda, the full Finance Committee has reviewed the list of bills on Resolution 20-125, Resolution 20-126 verifies the designation that the Bond Anticipation Note rolled over in a note sale last week is tax exempt, and Resolution 20-127 authorizes the purchase of a hydraulic lift through our membership in the ESCNJ Cooperative Pricing System.

With no further discussion on Agenda Review items, Mayor Bernstein moved to Council Reports.

B. Council Reports

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Councilman O'Connell – Public Safety Committee

Councilman O'Connell advised that OEM continues to meet twice a week with the committee's information being reported during Mayor Bernstein's weekly video address. He thanked Ron, Alissa and Mayor Bernstein for getting back to him with the answers to his budget questions.

Councilman Sasso – Land Use and Construction Code

Councilman Sasso reported that the Land Use Committee met telephonically on April 20th with the construction code official, engineer, legal counsel, Ron Kistner, Mayor Bernstein all discussing amendments to some existing ordinances and possibly a new ordinance pertaining to noise and other quality of life issues. Input was received from the police department too. On the engineering side, business is going along as normal. Construction permits through March are only slightly lighter from this time last year which is encouraging, but we'll have to see what April's numbers will look like. He noted that as he walks around town, he sees the Property Maintenance Officer Mike Limatola out enforcing the code. He praised Mike Limatola and Ron Kistner for their efforts. The next Land Use Committee meeting will be May 18th.

Councilwoman Homan – Water, Sewer and Public Utilities

The Water Committee held a virtual meeting on April 21st and Councilwoman Homan thanked them for their diligent work. She noted that DEP water quality testing is ongoing for tetrachloroethylene however results continue to be at non-detect levels. The committee is working with the DEP to make sure that the letter, which is required to be sent out, is clear about this. She provided an update that there are some personnel changes at Suez taking place. Jeff Picinich does a great job as Allendale's Water Operator.

Councilwoman Wilczynski – Facilities Committee

Councilwoman Wilczynski updated everyone that due diligence continues on 220/230. There have been three meetings already this week with one more scheduled for tomorrow. It is a great project for Allendale and they are continuing to work to move the project forward, especially at this challenging time. The committee is still discussing Crestwood Lake and no decisions have been made yet. They are consulting with other pools and lakes in the area in case state restrictions get lifted. Councilwoman Wilczynski thanked the OEM team and Allendale staff for all their efforts.

Councilman O'Toole – Administration, Finance and Human Resources

Councilman O'Toole advised everyone that the committee has had a few calls since the last Mayor and Council meeting, mostly regarding the effects of the pandemic on the borough. One was a very productive call with the department heads to check in and see how the departments and staff are holding up. Operations are continuing with hardly any interruption. There were also several calls to discuss the impact of the governor's executive order regarding tax payments which Mayor Bernstein will discuss during his report. He thanked all the borough employees for keeping the borough going.

Councilman Strauch – DPW

Councilman Strauch recognized the OEM team for the great job they are doing disseminating information through texts, emails and Mayor Bernstein's weekly videos. He thanked Mayor Bernstein, the Council and the entire borough team for keeping the town functioning. The DPW has the town looking good with Crestwood preparations proceeding and fields being maintained. His work with Mark Savastano to recommend improvements to the recycling program continues. Goose Patrol has suspended their registration program until this crisis passes however the current vests are valid

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through December 31, 2020. He expressed support for the new hydraulic lift on Resolution 20-127 as a good investment.

C. Mayor's Report

Mayor Bernstein thanked Tatiana Marquis, Tyler Yaccarino, Michelle Ryan and Ron Kistner for their efforts putting the meetings together and making it look so seamless.

Mayor Bernstein made the following address to the public:

As of last night, Allendale's numbers are 54 presumptive positive cases of COVID-19. Although the numbers continue to go up, they are on the lower side of Bergen County communities. The numbers in the county, state, country and world have been staggering and almost incomprehensible. At this time, I'd like to take a brief moment of silence for those suffering and who have lost their lives to this horrific virus. Please join me with a brief moment of silence.

This continues to be a very difficult and uncertain time for Allendale and the whole state. Governor Murphy has continued the social distancing measures and closure of non-essential businesses, and he has announced that schools will remain closed through May 15th. There is hope that the governor will be taking action to open up businesses and schools, but at this time there is no date set. As I say every Friday, please continue to stay home if you do not need to go out and to continue adhering to the social distancing measures and personal hygiene recommendations that are in place. They are for the health, welfare and safety of you and everyone. We will get through this Allendale, but we will stay the course and continue to do the right thing. I speak for all of us and for the whole council to say that let's remain strong and hopefully soon that this will be a memory for all of us.

We have tried to pass along the information from the state and county as it becomes available. The state's website www.nj.gov has the latest info on the pandemic, including testing site info, executive orders and briefings from the governor as well as info on unemployment, disability, and financial and other assistance available during this time. We also have the this link up on our website www.allendalenj.gov.

I am also setting up a Mayor's Task Force consisting of two separate committees - one to assist residents and a separate one to assist businesses. Both will act as local resources to help those who need extra support due to this pandemic by providing information and helping to navigate programs that are available and to provide community outreach as appropriate. I will be moving forward with these committees starting next week and they will have some councilmembers on it and some other members from the public, clergy, etc. As we move forward, and the lights start to go on and life starts to go back to normal, etc. there will be people and businesses that will be in need. I want to have a central task force committee to help both groups.

Our administrative offices are still operating. A special thanks to all our employees. A list of contact information by department is available on our website.

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I will be continuing to do my weekly video messages. A tremendous thanks to Ron Kistner, Councilman O'Toole and Tyler Yaccarino for helping me do this. There is a tremendous amount of work that goes into these videos. The three of them have been invaluable to me.

For those that don't have internet access, please feel free to call Michelle in the Clerk's Office at 201-818-4400 ext 216 to get the latest message. I've called some of the seniors to find out whether or not they get the message and most do. For those that haven't we've discussed at the OEM meetings to try to deliver paper packets to them. We are trying to reach out to everyone to make sure that everyone can get that important information. And please always check our website for updates on services and official messages.

I have been speaking about the importance of the 2020 Census for the past several meetings now and why it is essential for our entire community to complete this. As of April 28th Allendale's response is listed as 69.6% on the census website, which is good but we need everyone in Allendale to be counted! As I have previously mentioned, we have received a \$2,000 grant from the County of Bergen to help us increase census participation. Over the next few weeks, we are going to be working with our business community to help us spread the word as well as putting out promotional signs. Please help us reach 75% completion rate before the end of May.

Property taxes are due May 1st with a grace period until May 11th to pay without the penalty. On Tuesday, April 20th Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 130 pertaining to property tax payments. That executive order permitted the governing body of a municipality to adopt a resolution instituting a grace period, including on a date no later than June 1, 2020. We have received inquiries as to whether or not we're going to adopt that and extend the grace period through June 1st. We are not going to be doing that and I want to give some insight and some background as to why we can't.

Executive order signed by Murphy did not extend the date for the payment of county taxes, which are due in May, or the payment to the schools, which are also do monthly, which, as many of you know, are the biggest portions of your tax bill. Additionally, the other expenses for the borough, including the sewer authority, are largely unchanged. The borough still needs to pay those bills. I've discussed this issue several times with our CFO, the tax collector, and the finance committee and it's very clear to me that extending the grace period is just simply not an option for Allendale. In order for the borough to meet its financial obligations, we will need to collect the second quarter taxes as scheduled. To everyone who has inquired, I've responded back to them with pretty much the same message. I know it's not the message that everyone wants to hear. but we are the stewards of the ship. We consulted with the CFO and the tax collector, and the finance committee and this is the right decision. I'm happy to discuss it with anyone and we will mention it again in the video on Friday.

At our next Council meeting on May 14th our Auditor Paul Lerch and CFO Alyssa Mayer will be presenting the 2020 budget at a public hearing prior to adoption. I invite the public to join us through teleconference for that presentation.

Lastly, the Postmaster reached out to us with information and guidelines for visiting the post office, which I discussed in detail at our last video. Those guidelines are also found on our website www.allendalenj.gov on the COVID-19 page. The post office is open, it's functioning, but there are some guidelines that will be helpful if you intend to use the post office.

D. Staff Reports

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Borough Attorney Ray Wiss reported that much of the work his office has been involved with is reflected on the evening's agenda.

Acting Clerk Michelle Ryan, CFO Alissa Mayer and Director of Operations/Administrative Officer Ron Kistner did not have anything to report at this time.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilman O'Connell, second by Councilman O'Toole, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Michelle Ryan
Acting Municipal Clerk