

**WORKSHOP MEETING  
OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LITTLE FALLS WAS  
HELD THIS EVENING IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**Monday, July 11, 2022**

Council President Sgobba called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following members present: Albert Kahwaty and Christopher Vancheri. Also present were Mayor James Damiano, Township Administrator Charles Cuccia, and Municipal Clerk Cynthia Kraus.

Absent: Councilmember Christine Hablitz, Councilmember Tanya Seber and Deputy Clerk Melissa DePiro.

Township Employees present: Deputy Police Chief Bryan Prall.

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE:**

Take notice that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-8 and N.J.S.A. 10:4-10 as follows: A notice of the meeting was prominently posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Building, located at 225 Main Street, Little Falls, N.J. on March 11, 2022. A copy of the notice was mailed to the North Jersey Herald and News and The Record on the same date. Additionally, a copy of the notice was filed in the office of the Township Clerk on said date. **A link and a telephone number to join the meeting virtually can be accessed on the Township website at [www.lfnj.com](http://www.lfnj.com). Electronic provisions have been established for the public to participate during the public comment portion of the meeting.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT – ALL MATTERS**

Anyone wishing to address the Township Council may do so through the Council President. Please give your name and address for the record. Comments are to be limited to three minutes, however, if appropriate, you may be granted additional time in the sole discretion of the Council President.

Members of the public who have joined the meeting virtually and desire to provide comment shall raise their virtual hand in the Zoom application. The Meeting moderator will queue the members of the public that wish to provide comment and the Council President will recognize them in order. Members of the public who have joined the meeting by calling in must press \*6 to mute and unmute themselves and \*9 to raise their hand. Members of the public who have joined the Meeting via the Zoom application must click the Reactions icon and then the Raise Hand icon. Please give your name and address for the record. Once the process is complete, we will return to the regular order of business.

It was moved by Councilmember Vancheri, seconded by Councilmember Kahwaty, that the meeting be and it was opened to the public.

Poll:               Ayes:   Kahwaty, Vancheri and Council President Sgobba  
                      Nays:   None

The Council President declared the motion passed.

At this time, Council President SGOBBA explained the format for tonight's Meeting, noting the purpose is to listen to resident comments, questions, or complaints.

Al Attianese – Centered comments on the integrity of the sanitary sewer system to handle capacity in consideration of the Singac redevelopment. Mr. Attianese questioned whether the snaking process was conducted and whether sewer fees collected were escrowed for the project. Mayor Damiano explained the process of televising lines, however, he was unsure if Boswell Engineering had addressed the area of concern, and offered to follow-up to obtain the information. The Mayor then added that the best information on our sewer systems is from our sewer maintenance individuals in the DPW. While there are currently no issues that would cause a backup, when an issue would arise it would be known quickly. The Mayor then commented on infrastructure, stating the cast iron pipes have not had any issues and are not at capacity in those areas. The Singac pump station is not at or over capacity, and additional gauges are being added to monitor capacity as well. Regarding the collection of sewer fees, Mayor Damiano responded that the prior administration had approved funding which is available for this area and particular pump station. I&I funds are used throughout the Township to make improvements which represent about 50% of the sewer fees collected.

Tom Barone – Made inquiries regarding the continuation of sidewalk near Wilmore Road, timeline of the Francisco Avenue traffic light, and the completion of the walking path over the Peckman River. Mayor Damiano responded that funds from a Safe Routes to School Grant may be utilized for such sidewalks and noted that an Engineer has been assigned to the project, which will span from Wilmore Road to Prospect Street to East Lindsley Road. Councilmember VANCHERI indicated the timeline for the traffic light installation and the Mayor added this project is fully funded by the Township. Lastly, the Mayor discussed the fully funded County project to connect portions of the Morris Canal which may include a bridge over the Peckman River. Councilmember KAHWATY expressed his belief that this project was in its final stages of design.

Norman Scherzer – Raised concerns regarding COVID-19, including surveillance, data, monitoring, and dissemination of information. Mr. Scherzer also requested information on the number of vaccinated Township employees, whether environmental reports were done at the schools and public buildings to assess for sufficient ventilation and wanted to know who is coordinating the effort. Mayor Damiano responded he did not have the information sought by Mr. Scherzer at this time but would obtain available information and provide it to him. The Mayor elaborated on the monthly COVID-19 reports provided to the Township. Councilmember VANCHERI

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suggested perhaps the Health Officer could hold a session with the residents. Mayor Damiano inserted many of the questions posed by Mr. Scherzer can be found on the State's website. Councilmember KAHWATY made comments regarding the management of the disease and guidance from professionals in the Township.

Frances Schultz- Questioned the status of the application for the proposed new development across from the fire station on Paterson Avenue. Ms. Schultz also requested more information on storm water drainage and queried whether there was a green space requirement for the project. Lastly, she commented on traffic, making special mention that traffic studies were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and were not accurate. Council President SGOBBA discussed traffic issues and noted he has yet to experience it personally. Mayor Damiano offered to meet with Ms. Schultz to observe traffic at the Mill to determine if there was an issue to address. The Mayor noted the forty units that were approved and developed since his election have not added to the traffic. He discussed his perspective on contributing factors to increased traffic such as WAZE diverting traffic from Route 46/3 construction to the Township, and factors to mitigate traffic such as updating the timing of traffic signals. Mayor Damiano stated the Township has approved the application for the Paterson Avenue redevelopment, however approval by Township and County engineers to address many of the concerns raised has yet to occur. In response to the concerns of increased traffic due to developments constructed and to be constructed, Mayor Damiano relayed while he did not think it was a major issue, should it become an issue he would want to address it. Councilmember KAHWATY commented the notion the roadways are at peak capacity is flawed, as major traffic would have been an issue when the Township had 140 more homes in the Singac area that are now demolished. Per Councilmember VANCHERI's request, Mayor Damiano described how traffic increases during the occurrence of an accident on Route 46. Lastly, Councilmember VACHERI commented on how social media has contributed to speculation on traffic concerns.

Faith Klele – discussed similar concerns of traffic at the Mill. Councilmember VANCHERI reviewed mitigation measures for blocked intersections. Mayor Damiano indicated he would meet with Ms. Klele to observe traffic in the area of concern to which Ms. Klele agreed. Councilmember KAHWATY made comments regarding increased traffic due to construction on Route 46/3 and that upon the opinion of Township employed experts, the infrastructure can accept the amount of building occurring. At Ms. Klele's suggestion, the Mayor agreed to hold a meeting with Mill residents. Ms. Klele then identified developments in Town and requested information on unit size and occupancy level. Mayor Damiano provided available information and indicated he would follow-up to complete Ms. Klele's request.

Emily Abdy- Commented that traffic is not a new issue and highlighted the benefits of tax revenue from development.

Resident #1– provided his perspective and appreciated the administration investing in keeping the community growing while maintaining the feeling of a small town. Inquiries were made regarding traffic studies and the impact on schools. Mayor Damiano elaborated upon Type II school budgeting and its relation to the municipality's budget. The Mayor explained that of the 108 units that have been constructed and now have been occupied, there are two new students. The Mayor also provided information on number of classes and teacher to student ratios in an effort to explain how the schools are capable of absorbing more students without a significant impact. Councilmember KAHWATY discussed how the new development will stabilize taxes. Councilmember VANCHERI and Mayor Damiano added the FEMA buyout homes had more than one bedroom whereas many units in the new development have one bedroom. The Mayor then responded to the resident's concern regarding flooding, indicating the redevelopment has a substantial reduction in impervious coverage and a substantial floodwater retention system.

Luis Fernandez- Disagreed with the Council and asserted there is an increase in traffic. He stated his agreement with Councilmember KAHWATY regarding benefit of \$1.3 million in taxes from the redevelopment but was not in favor of a PILOT program. Discussion ensued with regard to the purpose of PILOT and PILOP programs, and the options presented for the parcels of concern. In response to Mr. Fernandez's concerns on parking for the new residents of the 80 units, Mayor Damiano referred to the PNC Bank purchase. Mr. Fernandez also queried whether the number of police officers has increased and whether flood insurance for homes in Jackson Park would be eliminated once the culvert is completed. Mayor Damiano responded the number of police officers has not changed; new hires were to replace vacancies. While the maps and flood hazard area lie under the purview of FEMA, the Mayor stated as the flooding in that area would be greatly reduced or eliminated, he believed the flood insurance would be reduced.

Mike Murphy – requested clarification regarding the number of units that have been approved and occupied. Mr. Murphy questioned whether studies were conducted to determine how many new students would be expected in consideration of the 477 units approved under the Mayor's administration. Mayor Damiano stated the report can be obtained through an OPRA request. Mr. Murphy further commented on the impact on schools. Mr. Cuccia then responded to Mr. Murphy's request regarding the dollar amount of CARES funds received by the Township and how the funds were allocated. Mayor Damiano added the Township was fortunate to be able to purchase a new CAD system for the Police Department using the COVID relief fund. Mayor Damiano then responded to Mr. Murphy comments on traffic. Lastly, Mr. Murphy thanked the Council for having this forum, and noted that for some individuals, coming to the podium may be intimidating. Mayor Damiano discussed the opportunity to hold meetings in tonight's format and reviewed the various ways residents can contact the Mayor or Councilmembers anytime. Councilmember VANCHERI added the Council is always accessible and the Township's ability to hold hybrid meetings enables residents access at home. Councilmember KAHWATY stated the Councilmembers are also out in the community as well attending community events.

Peggy Olivi – Thanked the Council for recognizing diverse groups that are meaningful to those who live in the Township and for making Little Falls an inclusive town.

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Sam Sheber – Discussed methods to communicate information between the health officials, Council, and residents. Mr. Sheber expressed his comments on the aesthetic versus density of the Singac redevelopment, traffic issues, and the role of the Planning Board. Mayor Damiano explained the density of the project was necessary to make the project possible. The Mayor stated he did not agree the impacts Mr. Sheber was most concerned with would come to fruition in the Township.

Frances Schultz- made additional comments on traffic as to whether the traffic studies have taken into consideration the additional units to be added to the Township. Councilmember KAHWATY emphasized the source of traffic should be considered as it is temporary. Ms. Schultz agreed with some of Mr. Murphy’s statement on growth but stated she did not agree to shoehorn in as many units as possible without adding green space. Council President SGOBBA commented on the Mill. Mayor Damiano explained almost every site has increased green space and decreased impervious surface. Under current NJ DEP regulations no development is permitted to occur without reducing or having zero additional runoff that currently exists from that site. Councilmember KAHWATY added his comments. Lastly, Ms. Schultz questioned if there will still be a river channel in existence when the Peckman River flood tunnel project was completed. Mayor Damiano explained the purpose of the flood tunnel and stated the flow of the river would be similar.

Luis Fernandez- Agreed with Mr. Sheber’s comments regarding variances and the role of the Planning Board. Mayor Damiano responded that when Inwood and the Mill were developed it was purchased on vacant land, not previously developed land. Mayor Damiano stated the number of single-family applications to the Planning Board outnumber the redevelopment applications. If reasonable, the Planning Board accommodates those requests. Mayor Damiano, Council President SGOBBA, and Councilmember KAHWATY then reviewed the purpose and process of the Planning Board.

Norman Scherzer – stated his belief the residents do not like the way the redevelopment looks and commented on transparency to facilitate and offer citizens opportunities to give feedback. Mayor Damiano and Councilmember KAHWATY disagreed with Mr. Scherzer’s comments and stated the opportunity for residents was provided at several meetings and a photo was provided for residents to review.

Resident #2– Questioned whether the Council would host more meetings with this format in the future and whether the capacity limit of 25 attendees was still in effect. Council President SGOBBA confirmed that the Council will hold a similar meeting to tonight’s format in August. Mayor Damiano stated he would consider hosting quarterly Town Hall meetings; however, he would not favor replacing a meeting where Township business is conducted. Mayor Damiano confirmed there is no limitation on attendees anymore. In response to the resident’s comments on the Shoprite parking lot, Mayor Damiano explained the fire zone can be ticketed by ordinance; however, the remainder is private property and therefore the Township is not permitted to enforce. In the event the property owner calls to report a violation on their property, then the Township can then enforce it. Lastly, the resident asked the Council to consider the previous comments made with regard to future developments and to not approve variances. Mayor Damiano elaborated upon the factors that must be balanced when considering redevelopment.

Sam Sheber – questioned if various lot sizes have requirements. Mayor stated each zone has requirements. In response to Councilmember KAHWATY, Mayor Damiano stated the Transit Village does not have density requirements but has other requirements which the Mayor then listed.

Al Attianese – queried whether the public is allowed to attend Planning Board meetings. Council President SGOBBA stated the Planning Board Chairman has opted not to have in person meetings, however, the Planning Board meetings are virtual. Mayor Damiano stated why he preferred virtual planning board meetings as the applicants share their screen, making it easier to view what is being presented. Council President SGOBBA encouraged Mr. Attianese to express his sentiment at the next Planning Board meeting. In response to Mr. Attianese’s question, Mayor Damiano stated there were businesses that were interested the Singac redevelopment that could have had tractor trailers.

No one further having come forward to be heard, it was moved by Councilmember Kahwaty, seconded by Councilmember Vancheri, that the meeting be and it was closed to the public.

Poll:           Ayes:   Kahwaty, Vancheri, and Council President Sgobba  
                  Nays:   None

The Council President declared the motion passed.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was moved by Councilmember Vancheri, seconded by Councilmember Kahwaty, that the meeting be and it was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.