

Borough of Tenafly

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

SPECIAL WORK SESSION

MINUTES

WENDESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Rustin and Council members Nadia LaMastra, Jon Warme, and Mark Zinna

ABSENT: Council members Anthony Barzelatto, Barry Honig, and Martha Kerge

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Administrator Jewel Thompson-Chin

At 3:30 p.m. Mayor Rustin read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, chapter 231, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates for the year are listed in the Annual Agenda; copies are sent to the Record, Suburbanite, and Northern Valley Press and posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center. Notice of this meeting by the December 5, 2013 Sunshine Notice has been sent to the Record, Suburbanite, and Northern Valley Press and has been posted on the public bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center and Borough Website."

Mayor Rustin thanked the Committee for the invitation and looks forward to establishing a better dialog between the Committee and Council.

Ms. Villafuerte, Senior Citizens Center Director explained that the four main issues that were raised in the survey involved property taxes, emergency support in the event of a disaster, transportation services, and home related services. She elaborated that seniors live on a fixed income and would like to remain in the homes, but are concerned about property taxes. The Tax Assessor and Tax Collector conducted an education session at the Center this past September. With regards to emergency support, they requested that Council look into purchasing generators for the Library and the Senior Center so the locations can be used as shelters. They also requested transportation to the shelters and to keep pressuring PSE&G for quicker responses to power outages. Councilman Barzelatto, as the Emergency Management Coordinator conducted a preparedness seminar at the Center this year.

Ms. Villafuerte noted that seniors are seeking transportation services to the Center and to locations throughout the Borough. Thursdays are a big day at the Center since speakers and luncheons are usually scheduled on that weekday. In reference to home related services, seniors would like the Borough to make arrangements with local contractors to provide discounts to seniors. Other comments listed on the survey involved the need for additional handicapped parking, variety in stores in the downtown, and affordable senior housing.

Mayor Rustin advised that he understands the concerns regarding property taxes. He explained that the governing body works to stay within the 2% cap while remaining a full service community, which makes Tenafly a unique community. The items requested in the survey that are not currently being provided do cost a significant amount of money, which would affect the tax base. Also, there are liability issues that are associated with the providing transportation services.

Mrs. Thompson-Chin reported that grant funding for generators is being restored by the state; however, the Borough is waiting for official confirmation in writing.

At this time, Mayor Rustin opened the floor for public comment. Residents were not required to provide their name and address.

Female resident – thanked Council for supporting the Senior Center, which is a cost-effective program, requested Wi-Fi service be installed, noted that the Rt. 84 service from

Red & Tan is no longer being provided, and requested that Council advocate more with NJ Transit and PSE&G.

Mayor Rustin responded that the Borough has advocated on behalf of the residents to NJ Transit and PSE&G. Since these entities are overseen by the state, he recommended that residents reach out to Senator Weinberg, Assemblyman Johnson, and Assemblywoman Huttel for advocacy assistance. He stated that Red & Tan was an independent bus company, which is not regulated by the state.

Council-elect Basch explained that Council-elect Park has spoken with PSE&G, which is working on installing higher grade cables that should minimize power outages.

Mayor Rustin advised that the Borough does need to provide shelters for its residents in the event of disasters. He will speak with the Superintendent of the Board of Education to determine if high school students can provide shoveling services for senior citizens. He will look into the feasibility of sharing a van with another municipality, but the issue involves who will drive the vehicle. However, the residents do deserve a better transportation system. Unfortunately, Council is unauthorized to negotiate rates with contractors.

Johanne Gambrill – commented that there are street lights that have been out since Hurricane Irene and that the funding for lighting the soccer cage should be allocated to senior needs.

Mayor Rustin requested that Ms. Gambrill e-mail the locations where the street lights are out and he will contact PSE&G. He advised that it would make no sense to have a soccer cage without lighting to ensure the safety of the participants.

Jeff Levene – explained the state's Senior Freeze program and offered to help residents apply for the program. He requested that there be an aggressive enforcement program regarding crosswalk safety and the cell phone ban while driving.

Mayor Rustin directed the Borough Administrator to include an updated article on the Senior Freeze program in the next newsletter.

Male resident – discussed the problem of Lyme Disease and vehicular dangers caused by the deer problem and requested population control.

Mayor Rustin advised the gentleman that hunting is regulated by the state and deer hunting is not authorized.

Male resident – commented that the county has a volunteer handy-man program called CHORE.

C. Warms noted that the issue of emergency generators will be a topic of discussion in the 2014 budget. He encouraged residents to e-mail their specific issues to the Mayor and Council, who will do their best to fix the problems residents face.

C. LaMastra requested that as part of the 2014 budget, funding be set aside for communication to the community.

Ernie Kollitidies – stated that the best way to help residents is to enforce violations.

Female resident – advocated the continuation of rear yard garbage collection.

Male resident – requested additional alternate dates for recycling pickup in the event a scheduled pickup falls on a holiday.

Female resident – inquired if a new senior center will be built in the next 5 years and if residents can have register for programs before registration is open for non-residents.

Mayor Rustin stated that the next facility project is the DPW. The Senior Center is next on the list, but a time table cannot be provided. He requested that the Borough Administrator contact the Borough Attorney for an opinion on priority registration for residents.

David Burstein – Senior Citizens Services Committee – thanked Council for attending this afternoon's meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

As there was no further business to come before the Council, on a motion by C. Zinna, second by C. LaMastra, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lissette Aportela-Hernandez, MPA, RMC
Borough Clerk