

Fairness In Taxes

Meeting Minutes 10-2-15

Board Attendance: Leo Burke, Sheila & Bill Hartranft, Michael Hinchman, Vic Staniec & Jim Tweed

Meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance by Michael Hinchman at 3:00 P.M.

Guest – Pete Madden, City Council Vice President

The topics Michael asked Pete to speak on were the Baker Study, Dredging, the Skate Park and the now vacant seat on City Council.

Baker Study:

- The study is still in progress and Pete stated that more information would be available at the next council meeting.

Dredging:

- To begin soon; Snug Harbor has already begun.

Skate Park:

- Opened to large crowds but had to close because they were not obeying the rules, i.e.; not wearing pads or helmets. They are hoping to have a monitor for the park. There is already adequate signage.
- One comment was that kids being kids, they would just climb the fence after hours. A suggestion was made to do what Galloway Township did; install motion lights. He noted that they do have cameras.
- Michael Hinchman suggested allowing 15 minutes/hour for younger children.
- Another suggestion was to have the Fire Department monitor the park activities.
- Another comment was that if the gate is open, the kids may just fly out of the park on their boards into sidewalk and automobile traffic.

Vacant Council Seat

- There will be a special meeting on October 6th to decide who will fill Mike Allegretto's seat. Members were mixed on whether to fill the seat now or wait for an election; 3 for & 3 against.
- Interviews for those interested will take place the night of the special meeting. Asked if he supported filling the seat now, Pete stated he personally would rather wait for an election; but some "fights are not worth fighting".
- Michael Hinchman commented that it didn't "smell right" and deprives residents of the opportunity to vote for a new council person and that he did not feel it was the council president's decision to advertise for candidates.
- Did they question the solicitor as to this process, and was the response based on a personal opinion or the result of following the appropriate process?
- Asked whether they had a formal council meeting to discuss, move and second this decision Pete stated they advertised in the press and posted it on e-mail, and at the last meeting decided to begin the interview process.

Additional Comments/Questions from Michael Hinchman & Other FIT members.

- What would costs be for dredging vs beach replenishment? There is funding for beach replenishment. The current dredging situation seems to be overwhelming the city's ability to do the job and the city never says outright what is involved. A study should be about what may be needed and then the plans should be developed.
- With regard to a spoil site I was told one could not be found close enough to be practical. What constitutes an approved site? Could a site be found along the Tuckahoe and use barges as opposed to trucks? It would seem to be more cost effective. If there are no sites, prove it. As a council member he felt Pete should openly ask the administration "what they are doing & why".

Additional Comments/Questions Cont'd

- With regard to paying the Wildwoods to cap their landfill with the dredged soil; why are they not paying us to provide the cap? Vic commented that Sea Isle City also bid on using the Wildwood landfill but Ocean City outbid them.
- The city seems to have a capital list but no capital plan.
- Leo Burke asked about “eminent domain” with regard to the gas stations at 9th Street & Bay Avenue. Would the owner receive fair market value? What about the tax loss if it is no longer a commercial site? Are they doing anything about inspections, etc. ?
- Michael asked about the theater and whether the city is not “breaking the law” regarding the repairs from taxes for an “as is” lease for the building. Pete Madden stated that he did ask about it, just not publicly.
- Jim Tweed commented that Pete Madden may know the answers, but the questions should be asked at council meetings so all answers are on the record.

Education – Vic Staniec

- The air conditioning (HVAC) system in the High School at a cost of \$2.5m is not working properly.
- The new HVAC system in the Primary School is causing condensation and some classrooms are 5 degrees warmer than they should be. They did have a general manager for this work.
- They School District did receive a \$2500 refund on the painting of the dome on the High School.
- For sending municipalities the state has a 2% cap on tuitions.
- Lonport is \$150,000 in the red but are not using their \$400,000 surplus. This was approved by the taxpayers.
- Mr. Ianese asked the School Board why Christine Lentz resigned and it was stated that it was for health reasons. Christine, however states she was forced to resign and has filed a suit against the school system for not treating her fairly.
- In October formal charges will be brought against Christine by the Cape May County Prosecutor’s office.

Treasurer’s Report – Bill Hartranft

- We have only received dues from a little more than 40% of our membership. The current membership is at 850+ households. Michael Hinchman felt it would be worth the additional cost to send out a “dues reminder” to the members we have not heard from.
- It was also recommended that we put together a list of those who have provided their e-mail address to send our correspondence over the web and reduce the overall printing and postage costs.

Miscellaneous

- Leo Burke asked if FIT would have a table at the public meeting scheduled for October 28 to distribute information on our organization. As we are a local public organization, it would be free.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 P.M.

Next meeting will be our Annual Membership and Business meeting on November 6, 2015.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sheila Hartranft
Secretary