

**BOROUGH OF BERLIN**  
**WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES**  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 05, 2019**  
**MUNICIPAL BUILDING**  
**59 SOUTH WHITE HORSE PIKE**  
**BERLIN, NJ 08009**  
**7:00 P.M.**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

**FLAG SALUTE:**

**SUNSHINE NOTICE:** Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act, Pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice has been advertised in the Courier Post and posted on the Borough Hall Bulletin Board showing the date, place and time of said meeting.

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Bilella, Council President Pearce, Council Members Miller, Badolato, Rocco, Buchanan, & MacDonnell.

**ABSENT:** Councilman MacDonnell – Active Duty

**PRESENT ALSO:** Solicitor John Moustakas, Administrator William Behnke and Municipal Clerk Lois J. Sahina

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

- **BUILDINGS, PARKS, & RECREATION, Chairman Len Badolato** - No Report
- **PUBLIC WORKS, STREETS & ROADS, Chairman Dan MacDonnell** - No Report
- **WATER & SEWER, Chairman Ron Rocco** -
  - **Reports** - No formal department reports given on any projects. After the budget is finalized, he will have a better idea of what projects can be moved forward on.
  - **Community Disputes Resolution Committee** - Councilman Rocco explained the reasoning and why there is a need for this committee. Mediation would help to free up the court system and help resolve neighborhood issues that are being presented at Council Meetings. He will be working with the new Code Enforcer and his enforcement of ordinances, along with the resident's submission of a property complaint forms which will help with issues presented to the committee. If anyone would like more information, Cindy Gunther from the County can be contacted. Councilman Miller would like to see how the new Code Enforcement Officer addresses problems before this Mediation Committee is formed. He feels that there may not be a need for this committee. John Moustakas also interjected his legal advice and suggestions as to how other municipalities in the surrounding area handle these same situations. Councilman Badolato asked "What is the difference between going to mediation and going to court?" Councilman Rocco explained that the issues brought to mediation would not be of serious manner, however they still to be addressed. Once a resident has filed an official complaint, the Code Enforcement Officer will address this matter first with a letter and give him/her 30 days to rectify the problem. If not addressed in this time span, a summons can be issued and it could go into mediation. The Court Clerk will determine if it goes to mediation or is a court matter.

- **Code Enforcement Duties** - The Code Enforcement Officer should be addressing conditions of buildings that need to be repaired, over grown grass and to help with the elevation of complaints with residents in the community.
  
- **PUBLIC SAFETY, Chairman Jim Pearce** -
  - **Closed Session** - There is a need to enter into closed session tonight to interview two candidates for the position of Chief of Police.
  - **OPRA Police Reports** - The police department would like to appoint the police matron to take care of all of their police OPRA requests. Mr. Behnke said this is fine, however, this is how it is presently done. The Clerk is the custodian of all municipal records. She needs to keep track of all requests. She needs to keep them logged as to when and what requests has been received, and when it is answered. They all must be documented.
  
- **COMMUNICATIONS, Chairman Rick Miller** -
  - **Community Center** - Councilman Miller has been approached by the YMCA who is interested in running the Community Center. This idea would allow the Community Center to be open more hours to the public and residents. It would also provide consistent staffing and would take the burden off of the Borough to find an attendant to monitor events. They would need to abide by the Borough rules and regulations but would run it more like a business. Council was very receptive to this idea.
  - **Website** - Councilman Miller has done research in regards to revamping our website. He just received a 62page proposal from a company located in Michigan, called Revize. This same company services other Camden County municipalities. Their program would make the website more user friendly and compliant with ADA standards. Currently we are not compliant with the states ADA standards. For example: A sight impaired individual could roll over any picture and script and it will be relayed back in audio response. The agendas would also be updated differently. The startup cost is \$3,975.00. For the 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> years the cost would be the same. The fourth year cost would be \$1,975.00.
  - Councilman Miller would like Council to consider implementing this program when finalizing this year's budget.
  
- **FINANCE, Chairman Mike Buchanan** -
  - **Website** - Councilman Buchanan stated that the revamping of the website should be discussed at tomorrow nights meeting. There will be no action taking place at tomorrow night's budget meeting.
- **Debt** – Financially, the Borough is in a very good place. There will be a lot of debt rolling over in 2020. This will free up funds which are needed to spent on larger projects. As a municipality we have an AA rating
  
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REAL ESTATE, Mayor Jim Bilella** -
  - **Borough Owned Land Parcels** - Mayor Bilella addressed a rumor that has been circulating on Facebook. The land located behind Franklin Avenue is not being sold for development. The parcels in question are lots 501,509, 510, located off of Maine Avenue. I would like to consider using this land as open space. This land really can't

be used for anything else. Councilman Buchanan suggested creating a dog park in this area. In the recent past, Mayor Bilella stated that there were interested residents who wanted to purchase this land as part of their existing back yards, but it was not sold. We are now in a position to negotiate to interested parties and could subdivide. There will be no action taken tonight, as the rest of this discussion must be held in closed session as it relates to real estate and land matters.

- **ADMINISTRATOR Bill Behnke**
  - **Verizon Lease** - The area on top of our water tower is leased to Verizon. The new lease has now been finalized.
  - **Tax Payments** - There has been a problem lately with tax payments. The payments were sent and we never received them. These checks are from a number of different banks. It has been determined that the problem is occurring at the post office level. Mr. Behnke contacted the postal inspector in Washington, D.C. and reported this problem. An investigation is now being done. He proposed that any late fees that residents receive be waived through resolution.
  - **Utility Road Openings** - I would like to see this revisited. The utility companies are opening up the roads to do their service and not closing the roads properly. We currently do not have anyone to do these inspections. I have spoken to our existing engineer, Pennoni, and they are interested in this job. All utility road openings will need to be inspected after closures. This will insure that they are closed properly. Council President Pearce asked to table this discussion until Councilman MacDonnell was present to comment.
  - **DPW Hire** - The Water Accountability Act will require us to hire another employee in the DPW department. The current part timer will be moved to a fulltime position and then a new part time employee will need to be hired. Councilman Buchanan stated that there has been money allocated for this new hire. A resolution will need to be created.
- **SOLICITOR, John Moustakas** - No report was given

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

**Steve Clyde**

**305 Stockton Blvd.**

**Berlin, NJ 08009**

Mr. Clyde would like to encourage council to make the land parcels of 501, 509 & 510 behind Franklin Avenue, open space. He did at one time show interest in purchasing this property but the price was too high. If this area is deemed as open space, then he and the other homeowners effected can't put up different fencing to enclose this open area up. Myself and other neighbors have started to clean up these area's behind our homes and it is really starting to look nice. People already use this area for walking the trails and the kids are always biking and building tree forts in the woods.

There was discussion by Council as to what “Do Not Knock” decal they would prefer. Two samples were provided for them to choose from. Council chose and said to get them processed. We will have them available to residents who would like to put them on their doors. It was also decided not to charge the residents for this sticker. Mr. Clyde a resident in the audience spoke up and said he would be happy to fund the cost of the decals.

**Motion to go into Executive Session** - Council President Pearce

**Sec.;** Councilman Buchanan

All present were in favor

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Motion to come out of Executive Session** - Councilman Buchanan

**Sec.;** Council President Pearce

All present were in favor

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER**

**Motion to adjourn;** Councilman Miller

**Sec.,** Councilman Buchanan

All present were in Favor

Lois J. Sahina

Registered Municipal Clerk

March 5, 2019