Borough of Bellevue

Incorporated 1867

Borough Pre-Council Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2024 7:00 pm
Municipal Building
2nd Floor Council Chambers

Call to Order

President Cerminara called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The call to order was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

Roll Call

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were Ms. Mule, Ms. Templeton, Mr. Ellis, Mr. McKelvey, Ms. Denton, Mr. Disney, Mr. Hrynda, and President Cerminara. Ms. Sloane was not initially present for roll call, but entered at 7:02 p.m. A quorum was established.

Also, in attendance were Junior Councilperson Andrew Beckas, Mayor Val Pennington, DAS Pro Tem Andrea Contes, Firefighter Lt./Interim Fire Chief Bill Hartman, Library Director Ellen Goodman, BCO/Zoning Officer Shawn Jacobs, DPW Superintendent Jim Kelly, Police Chief Matthew Sentner, Sargeant Matthew Lucas, HRG Engineers Rob Arnold and Dan Barna, and Solicitor Matt Racunas.

Public Contribution on Agenda Items

- Joe Scioscia Jr., 260 Lincoln Avenue: Said that he was dismayed that the alley is still on the agenda and that it was because of "lying and incompetence." "I told you I lived there and that it was the Borough's property."
- Jane Braunlich, 31 E. Roseridge Avenue: Said that she had sent information pertaining to the guardrail to Council and that she believed Bellevue should take possession.
- Connie Rankin, 116 Arch Avenue: Stated that Pre-Council meetings were held for a reason. It is for Council to discuss matters ahead of formal votes at Council meetings. She asked about the motion to appoint Jim Kelly as DAS. "We need to know things and we hope we get our questions answered." Asked whether he was resigning his post as DPW Superintendent; asked what he was being paid; and asked if he will have a probationary period. She asked Council to delay their vote until after her questions were answered.
- Erin Gratner, 428 Hallet Place: Stated that she was there representing Northgate Cross Country Team and that they were seeking approval for their 5k, which is co-sponsored by NHCO. She thanked the Borough, the Police, and the Fire Departments for their past support and she provided information pertaining to the event.

Reports

Mayor's Report (written report was included with Council packet)

- Mayor Pennington had nothing to add to the written report, which was distributed via email. There were no questions.

Treasurer's Report (written report was included with Council packet)

- Mr. Scioscia had nothing to add to the written report, and there were no questions.

Financial Reports (Budget, Tax and Services reports were included with Council packet)

- No comments were made, or questions asked.

DAS Report

- There was none provided.

Library Report (written report was included with Council packet)
- Ms. Goodman had nothing to add to her submitted report. Ms. Templeton offered her congratulations for the library obtaining RAD funding for their projects.

Public Works Report (written report was included with Council packet)
- Mr. Kelly stated that his report was as submitted, and there were no questions.

Code Enforcement Report (written report was included with Council packet)
- Mr. Jacobs talked Council through his report, and he stated that his department was trying to terminate their relationship with Granicus, as Granicus had never provided proper training or support.

Fire Department
- Lt. Hartman reported he had nothing to add to his written report, and there were no questions.

Police Chief Report
- Chief Sentner commented on the addition of turning arrows on Route 65 and he said that he'd like to see more PennDot changes for safety on 65.

Northwest EMS Report
- No representative was in attendance. Ms. Templeton did ask about the response time categories and had questions. Chief Hartman explained.

Engineer's Report
- The engineers had nothing to add to their written report, and there were no questions.

Joint Planning Commission
- Ms. Dingler reported that there would be a public meeting held on February 26 at 7:00 p.m. in Avalon's Council Chambers.

Shade Tree Commission
- Mr. Beckas stated that he had nothing to report.

Quaker Valley Council of Governments Report (Executive Director's written report provided to Council)
- Mr. McKelvey stated that the QVCOG had formed a 4 member committee to study 65 and find ways in which to make it safer. He said that they would begin by identifying stakeholders and he reported that Rep. Valerie Gaydos had already reached out to QVCOG regarding the project.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee; Jodi Cerminara, Chair

1. Motion to Approve Payment of the February 13, 2024 Bill List.
   Moved: President Cerminara   Second: Ms. Sloane
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

2. Discussion: Authorizing Employee #102 to Roll Over 150 Sick Days Accrued While Working in Another Department of Bellevue Borough.
   President Cerminara stated that this item would be moved to Executive Session.

3. Motion to Accept the Resignation of Catherine Tulley as a Bellevue Representative to the Joint Planning Commission.
   Discussion: President Cerminara encouraged interested persons to apply for vacancies.
   Moved: President Cerminara   Second: Mr. McKelvey
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

4. Motion to Adopt Resolution 04-24 Appointing James E. Kelly as Director of Administrative Services.

Moved: President Cerminara Second: Mr. McKelvey
Discussion: President Cerminara stated that Council would be advertising for the position of DPW Superintendent soon. She spoke about the interview process leading to the decision to hire Mr. Kelly. Mr. McKelvey seconded Ms. Cerminara's comments and said that Mr. Kelly was the best applicant and that his institutional knowledge would be valuable. Ms. Templeton echoed the sentiments of President Cerminara and Mr. McKelvey and said that they had conducted a "thorough and efficient process" and that "Jim Kelly absolutely rose to the top."

Mr. Ellis, Ms. Denton, Ms. Templeton, Mr. Disney, Ms. Sloane, Ms. Mule, Mr. McKelvey, and President Cerminara voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Hrynda voted against the motion. Motion carried, 8-1.

Parks and Recreation Committee; Jennie Denton, Chair

There was no business for this committee in the agenda. Ms. Denton informed Council that she had met with some members of Avalon's Council and that they had discussed offering residential rates to Avalon community members at the pool in the upcoming season, as Avalon's pool would not be opening. This item will be discussed at the next Parks and Recreation Committee meeting.

Public Safety Committee; Amanda Sloane, Chair

1. Discussion: North Hills Community Outreach 5K Run/Walk
   President Cerminara said that Council appreciated the information that Erin Gratner had shared. Chief Sentner advised that the route would remain the same as previous years year. This item will be voted on at Council.
2. Discussion: Rhythm & Brews Event
   Mr. McKelvey provided information about the event and said that the road closure would remain the same. The event is slated for August 17, 2024, and the road closure would be scheduled for 3:00 – 10:00 p.m. Chief Sentner stated that there had been no issues with this event in the past. This item will be voted on at Council.
3. Discussion: Lincoln Avenue Stop Signs
   Chief Sentner said that he had looked at intersections along Lincoln Avenue's business district which didn't currently have stop signs. He said that the addition of five stop signs was being considered. Chief Sentner asked that Council consider parking in this ordinance. President Cerminara agreed that we should consider all issues at once. Mr. Kelly estimated that the cost per sign would be between \$200 and \$250 and that the total cost of the expenditure would be around \$1200. Ms. Sloane stated that she would like to discuss the issue more thoroughly next month. Chief Sentner advised Council to look at the intersections in question and talk to their constituents. This item will be discussed at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.
4. Discussion: Taser Replacement
   Chief Sentner stated that the Police Department's current tasers had been purchased in 2010 and 2011 and that the tasers were outdated. He asked that they be replaced at once, as they are the only less lethal option for officers to carry on their person. He stated that the items had been included in his budget and that the total cost would be \$68,843. He discussed financing terms. Council and Chief Sentner discussed the safety, efficacy, and the cost of the tasers. Chief Sentner stated that he believed that not equipping officers with tasers would expose the Borough to more lawsuits. Council questioned the Chief on the amount of times the police had used tasers in recent years. Sergeant Lucas spoke about his experience with tasers. Mr. Disney cited two health studies regarding the effects of tasers and said that he had shared them with Council. President Cerminara stated that Council had veered into debating the ethical use of force and that they would not come to an agreement on that topic, but that the issue before them was a replacement or upgrade about existing tools. Ms. Templeton asked if the Borough could possibly purchase used tasers, and Sergeant Lucas and Chief Sentner said that was not possible. Mr. Disney and Ms. Templeton asked to see studies. Chief Sentner said that he would "provide more information." This item will be voted on at Council.
5. Discussion: Fire Department Software

Interim Chief Hartman provided information about the need to purchase reporting software, as the current software the Borough utilizes (currently provided for free by the State, but with no current plans to continue that program) expires this summer. This would be a new cost, according to Interim Chief Hartman. They are looking at a program that would allow them to track calls and provide more information to Council about their calls, as well as allow for use by the Code Department with their rental inspections. He provided information and answered questions about the software's capabilities. The initial cost is $10,700 for the first year and $9,200 for every year after. Mr. Kelly added that this type of reporting is required to apply for any grant funding. This item will be voted on at Council.

6. Discussion: Volunteer Firefighter Tax Credit

   Interim Chief Hartman provided information about the tax credit and his experience with it in Oakdale, where it is currently offered. He stated that this could serve as a recruitment tool. Council would set the criteria under which one would be eligible. Solicitor Racunas stated he had experience with this through other municipalities for whom he had worked. This item will be discussed at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.

7. Discussion: Fire Department Remodeling

   Interim Chief Hartman was seeking permission to remodel the Fire Department to add an office and remove a wall for possible future quarters, which would allow for females to work in the department. Mr. Kelly stated that he would provide an itemized cost list before the Council meeting. Ms. Templeton stated, "This sounds absolutely essential for gender equity." This item will be voted on at Council.

8. Discussion: Billing Insurance Companies for Firefighting Services

   Interim Chief Hartman provided information regarding the use of PA Recovery Services, LLC to act as a third party agent to bill insurance companies for calls by the volunteer fire department. The company would take a cut and the rest would go to the volunteers to pay for expensive foam and oil dry. President Cerminara asked whether there was a partnering fee and was told that there was not one. Solicitor Racunas asked for an opportunity to understand this arrangement better through more information, and Interim Chief Hartman said that he would provide that. This item will be discussed at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.

9. Motion to Direct the Civil Service Commission to Initiate the Process for Hiring a Fulltime Firefighter

   Moved: Ms. Sloane Second: Mr. McKelvey
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

10. Motion to Direct the Fire Chief to Advertise for Parttime Firefighters at a Cost Not to Exceed $400 (01.406.341)

   Moved: Ms. Sloane Second: Mr. Hrynda
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

11. Motion to Approve Release of the 2023 Relief Funds to the Bellevue Volunteer Fire Company Relief Association

   Moved: Ms. Sloane Second: Mr. Hrynda
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

12. Motion to Adopt Resolution 05-24, Appointing Lt. Firefighter Dave Johnson as Deputy Fire Marshal

   Moved: Ms. Sloane Second: Mr. Hrynda
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

Public Works Committee; Dan McKelvey, Chair

1. Discussion: Vacating the Alley Between North Fremont and Dakota Avenues

   Mr. McKelvey provided back story and said that it is clear that this alley is being used. He said he wanted to clarify that the Borough was no longer considering vacating, but that the question before Council was now how the alley should be maintained. He said that Council needed to discuss options. Mr. Kelly said that the alley is not totally passable at the moment. He said that tree removal needs to happen. He stated that a "rough" job (gravel) could be done for $10,000 and that paving would cost around $50,000. He said that we are only paving alleys in 2024. Mr. Kelly estimated, when asked by Council, that approximately 65-70% of the alley was not currently paved. This item will be discussed at the next Public Works Committee meeting, and it will be listed as, "Maintaining the Alley Between North Fremont and Dakota Avenues."

2. Discussion: E. Roseridge Guiderail

   Mr. Kelly stated that the existing guardrail is not regulatory. He is still waiting for a quote. President Cerminara stated that it "makes sense to make this area safer." This item will be discussed at the next Public Works Committee meeting.

3. Discussion: CONNECT Solar Program

   Mr. Kelly stated that there was nothing to report, as there would be a meeting the following week. He said that he would like to talk to Solicitor Racunas about his knowledge of other municipalities' involvement with solar power. This item will be discussed at the next Public Works Committee meeting.

4. Discussion: Engineering Services on the Streetscape Project (HRG)

   Mr. Kelly said that the Borough had hoped to have the contract available tonight, but that they are still waiting for information from CEC. He said that he and HRG were still hopeful that they can get this out to bid next month. Mr. Barna stated that HRG did not have enough information to put together a proposal; HRG needs CEC to provide information and plans. Solicitor Racunas offered to enter this discussion with CEC, if necessary. This item will be moved to Council in hopes that HRG receives the necessary information.

5. Motion to Accept the Bid from Allegheny Global Environmental, Inc. to Test 3 Properties Slated for Demolition for the Presence of Asbestos, at a Cost Not to Exceed $1,500 (01.430.740)

   Moved: Mr. McKelvey Second: Ms. Denton
   All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried, 9-0.

Unfinished Business:

- Mr. McKelvey said that Mr. Hrynda had asked about Waste Management fees. He said that the Borough now has a billing and collection fee, on top of the Waste Management contract, and the Borough's billing and collection fee is what has increased.

New Business:

- President Cerminara introduced Leann Chaney, who is a Bellevue resident working for SPC and who is also a member of Bona Fide Bellevue. She shared information about a possible grant opportunity and she provided paperwork. The goal, she said, is to improve conditions for biking and walking in Bellevue, making it safer. The grant deadline is March 22. Bona Fide Bellevue would prepare and submit the grant application and help with plan development, but there would need to be a Resolution passed at the next Council meeting in order for the Borough to sign on. Council asked questions of Ms. Chaney, who provided information. President Cerminara stated, "We are in on this. We will read through this before Council and we will choose someone from Council to be on the Steering Committee." It was decided that this Resolution would be voted on at the next Council meeting.

Public Contribution on Non-Agenda Items (limit of 2 minutes)

- Joe Scioscia Jr., 260 Lincoln Avenue: In regards to the discussion about the alley, "Do you people even live in Bellevue?" "How lazy and stupid do you have to be?" "This is all bullshit." He was of the belief that the residents along the alley were not asking the Borough to do anything to maintain or improve the alley.
- Dionisia Dingler, 45 S. Bryant Avenue: Stated that she was very excited about the interest in the transportation grant, and she wanted to voice her support and her interest. She is interested in helping with this and would possibly serve on the Steering Committee. She said that she hopes Council will consider accessibility.
- Dave Wisnewski, 418 Forest Avenue: Said that maybe doing a portion of the alley one way "might be okay." He said that the "Borough has always maintained the alley." He also spoke in favor of "stun guns."
- Jane Braunlich, 31 E Roseridge Avenue: She stated that she had previously been "against tasers," but that she has since changed her stance. She stated that being tased was "better than getting beat."

Executive Session:

- Council adjourned to Executive Session at 9:37 p.m. and returned to the Legislative meeting at 10:06 p.m.; no action was taken as a result of the Executive Session.

Adjournment

There being no further business, President Cerminara adjourned the meeting at 10:06 p.m.

ATTEST

Andrea Contes, Secretary Pro Tem

Jodi Cerminara

Jodi Cerminara, Council President