

MINUTES
WORKSHOP MEETING
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL – BOROUGH OF RED BANK
February 3, 2021
6:30 P.M.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

Mayor Menna requested the minutes reflect that, in compliance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231 (Open Public Meetings Act), notice of this meeting has been provided by notifying the Asbury Park Press, the Two River Times and the Star Ledger and by placing a notice on the bulletin board and filing same with the Borough Clerk on December 16, 2020.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Menna and Council Members Yassin, Triggiano, Ballard, Yngstrom, Zipprich and Horgan.

ALSO PRESENT: Administrator Shehady, Borough Clerk Borghi, Attorney Cannon, Engineer Neumann and Department Heads.

ENGINEERING

Engineer Neumann said not much work had occurred due to weather and the asphalt plants being closed. She offered updates on various projects. She said the snow melt system at the apron of the White Street Parking Lot had worked well in the recent storm. She said the park projects had been reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Committee and the Environmental Commission. She said those projects should be moving forward shortly.

Councilman Zipprich said he was glad to hear that the heated portion of the White Street lot had helped during the snow event. He said he knew she had just said that the park projects had been approved by the Parks & Recreation Committee and the Environmental Commission and said he wanted to make sure that it went through the DPW Committee.

Engineer Neumann said she wasn't sure if the plans had been submitted to them but said, if not, she would make sure that they were. She said she spoke with the DPW Director on a regular basis but was unsure if the plans had gone to the committee

Administrator Shehady said they had not. He said they had gone to the other committees for the citizen input.

Councilman Ballard asked about the grant received in 2019 for the Shrewsbury Avenue Streetscape project. He said he understood that the grant would expire in May of this year if the Borough didn't do anything.

Engineer Neumann said she would confirm but said it was not that the Borough wasn't doing anything. She said they were getting design assistance through the DOT. She reviewed the details on the matter from her report. She said most of the 2018 grants had only gone to construction in 2020 so there seemed to be a lag. She said most were large scale projects. She noted the Borough had received a million dollars in funding so she would follow up to ensure that the Borough did not lose that funding and said they were proactively moving forward with the DOT Consultant.

Councilman Ballard asked if there would be input from the residents or the Council on the design.

Ms. Neumann said she would follow up and said she did not think that the design had been done. She said the organization funding the engineer costs was doing the design and said she would make sure that the consultant was aware that typically the design reviewed with Council and the respective committees.

Councilman Ballard said he would hate to get too far down the line to find that they did not find the design aesthetically pleasing.

Mayor Menna said the Borough had previously set up a Streetscape Enhancement Committee and said they wanted to get that Committee actively involved as soon as possible.

Councilman Zipprich asked for more information regarding the meter project.

Engineer Neumann said she would have to follow up with the DPW Director regarding the status of the remaining meters to be replaced.

BUILDING

Construction Official Neibert confirmed that the Council had received his report and asked if there were any questions.

Councilman Ballard asked about the fact he had mentioned something about moving paper files to storage and asked if those items could be scanned.

Construction Official Neibert said they were looking into that. He said he had had conversations with the Administrator on the matter and said they would have to get a specialized scanner to handle large format plans. He reviewed what they had done so far to make space in the office.

Councilman Yngstrom asked if his office was accepting plans via PDF, etc.

Mr. Neibert said they were.

Councilman Yngstrom said they may not need the scanner for long if most drawings get submitted electronically.

Mr. Neibert said plans were being sent electronically but said the DCA requires the office to maintain hard copies.

Councilman Ballard asked if they were required to maintain the hard copies.

Mr. Neibert said there was a schedule in the Uniform Construction Code.

Councilman Zipprich asked if they could use a service to scan in the large plans.

Mr. Neibert said there was and said he had used it in the past. He said it was something they were going to consider in the future.

ADMINISTRATION

Environmental Commission Membership—Councilwoman Triggiano reviewed a proposed ordinance to amend the Environmental Commission ordinance to recognize that all members of the Environmental Commission were also members of the Green Team. She said it would not remove or change the other existing Green Team members.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the change would benefit the Borough through the Sustainable Jersey Program.

Councilwoman Triggiano confirmed that it would.

Councilman Zipprich asked her to explain how.

Councilwoman Triggiano said the members of the Green Team were the people that worked on the Sustainable Jersey Program. She said it was boilerplate legislation that other towns were adopting.

Attorney Cannon added that towns designate the entire membership of the Commission as members of the Green Team so there was an institutional memory from year to year to assist with certifications.

Councilwoman Horgan said she felt it would enable the Environmental Commission to gain more points in the program and do more environmentally friendly projects in the Borough.

Rivercenter By-Laws—Councilman Yassin said he had been having conversations with the RiverCenter Executive Board. He said when they had first proposed changes to their by-laws to the Council, Council members had not been too happy with it. He said he was happy to report that they had acquiesced to all of the changes the Council had requested. He said when it came before the Council on February 10th, everyone should be happy with it.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the by-laws were changing or if they were staying the same.

Councilman Yassin said some parts were changing and some were staying the same.

Councilman Zipprich asked if they would be reducing the number of members of the Board.

Councilman Yassin said they were not reducing any of the Borough representatives but were reducing a member that was not.

Councilman Zipprich asked if they were only reducing the members by one in total.

Councilman Yassin said that was correct.

Mayor Menna said the ordinance would be listed on the agenda for the meeting of February 10th.

Grants Report—Mayor Menna asked if there were any questions on the Grants Report.

Councilman Ballard asked about the section on the report titled “Submitted/Not Awarded” and said, under that, it stated \$250,000 for Mohawk Pond Development. He asked what that meant.

Administrator Shehady said it meant that the Borough had submitted for it but it had not been awarded.

Mayor Menna asked if they had offered an opinion on that.

Administrator Shehady said they had not. He said it was his understanding that the Monmouth County Open Space Grant was not typically awarded to a municipality two years in a row. He said the Borough had received it the previous year and they figured they would submit for the grant anyways. He said if they didn’t get it, they would submit for the next cycle.

Mayor Menna said he thought most of the Open Space Grants award were for amounts significantly larger than what the Borough had been requesting.

Administrator Shehady disagreed.

Mayor Menna reviewed the projects he was referring to.

Administrator Shehady said those projects were for land acquisition which was different from development/construction.

Councilman Yngstrom said, a couple of years ago when the Borough had gotten turned down for this grant, they had met with County Officials to get feedback. He said they had been approved for the grant the following two years. He suggested they schedule a meeting for feedback.

Administrator Shehady said the Grant Consultant would often request feedback after the fact. He again said that getting two years in a row would be very uncommon.

Attorney Cannon noted he also served on the Council in Aberdeen and said they had had successful applications. He said he understood that many municipalities had issues with the state of their parks and said the applications had been double the usual amount.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the Grant Consultant had applied to the Municipal Open Space Program which would be funding for the redevelopment of the park.

Mayor Menna said that was correct.

Councilman Ballard asked if that had been to move the park playground next to the pond.

Councilman Yngstrom said he believed that was the plan that they had not funded. He said they already had funding for Phase I and Phase II of the project.

Councilman Zipprich asked if it had anything to do with the shade structures that had been planned at one time.

Councilman Yngstrom said it did not.

Councilman Zipprich asked if it was only for the relocation of the playground.

Councilman Yngstrom review details of the proposed relocation but noted it had been rejected.

Councilman Ballard said he thought it had been a very bad idea.

Councilman Yngstrom asked if the Grants Consultants would be keeping the Borough up to date on the body camera money available through the state.

Administrator Shehady said they would.

Health and Wellness Committee—Councilman Yassin noted that the Council had recently taken action to name Red Bank as a stigma free community and said he wanted to take the next step to facilitate resources. He said he wanted to create a Health & Wellness committee to take on that task. He said he would like to see a process where they could develop an application for people to apply. He said he was looking for medical professionals and people involved with various communities.

Councilman Zipprich said he thought it would be a great extension of the Mayor's Wellness Campaign.

Councilman Yassin said he would like to see the committee designated with the sole task of the stigma free issue. He added that, while he appreciated the Mayor's Wellness Campaign, he would like to see the focus on mental health.

Councilman Zipprich said he thought it would be important to add a mental health component to the Mayor's Wellness Campaign. He said he also thought there was funding available through the State for Mayor's Wellness programming.

Mayor Menna said there was funding at one time. He also said he did not feel the two campaigns were opposite each other but rather complemented each other.

Councilwoman Triggiano spoke in support of a Health & Wellness committee.

Councilman Zipprich asked if there had been a Mayor's Wellness Committee in the past.

Mayor Menna said there had been.

Councilman Zipprich said some of those members might be interested in participating.

Mayor Menna agreed and said it had been done through the Parks & Recreation Department.

Councilman Yassin said he encouraged anyone to apply.

Councilman Ballard asked how it would jive with the Board of Health and asked if those members would be invited to be part of the Stigma Free Committee.

Councilman Zipprich said that was a good point and said some of those members were medical professionals that could be invaluable to the Mayor's Wellness and mental health components.

Broadwalk Committee—Councilman Yassin said they felt the Broadwalk had been a success last year and would like to see it repeated for this year. He said wanted to get a head start on getting concept plans together and wanted to recreate the Broadwalk Committee from last year. He said he was hoping to improve and expand the program. He said he hoped to have something on the next Council agenda.

EMS Agreement—Administrator Shehady reviewed an agreement to renew ambulance services for the Borough. He said the agreement would be for the same terms at the same price as the previous agreement. He said the professionals within the Borough think they have been providing excellent service. He said he hoped to have a resolution to approve on an agenda at one of the next two meetings. He said he was waiting to hear back from their legal team.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the ambulance services were being provided by Hackensack Meridian.

Administrator Shehady said that was correct. He clarified that it was a subsidiary.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the Borough had previously contracted with a smaller organization.

Administrator Shehady said the Borough had previously contracted directly with Alert Ambulance which was not part of the Hackensack Meridian Group. He said that had happened before the contract expired.

Councilman Zipprich asked if the Borough would realize any savings going forward.

Administrator Shehady said the cost would remain the same and noted the Borough had not seen an increase in the last three years. He said, if the agreement went through, the Borough would not see an increase in the next three years.

Mayor Menna said the resolution should be on the next Council Meeting.

Citizen Petition regarding Senior Center—Mayor Menna noted that all of the Council members had received a copy. He asked the Administrator if he was going to address the issue.

Administrator Shehady said he felt it had been addressed sufficiently at numerous Council meetings. He said it was up to the Council to discuss further.

Councilman Ballard said he wanted to put it on the next agenda for a vote. He noted the number of residents who were in favor of the repairs. He said he wasn't sure why they were being disrespectful to the residents.

Councilwoman Triggiano said the matter was currently with the Redevelopment Agency and suggested the petition should be sent to them so they were aware of it.

Mayor Menna suggested it should be put on the next agenda for discussion.

Administrator Shehady clarified that it was on tonight's agenda for discussion. He added that the resolution drafted was not in proper form and he said he wasn't sure what the Council would be voting on with the resolution. He said the resolution did not do anything.

Councilman Ballard said he had read it and said he thought it was asking the Council to allocate the money to fix the Senior Center.

Administrator Shehady said he was confused by what the impact of that vote would be.

Councilman Ballard said he did not think that any of the over 200 residents that had signed the petition were attorneys but said they had put together what they thought would be a call to action for the Council to allocate money to fix the Senior Center. He said, if it was not in the proper form, he asked the Borough Attorney to put it in proper form.

Administrator Shehady asked what would be accomplished.

Councilman Ballard said it would be to fix the Senior Center.

Administrator Shehady said a resolution would not do that. He said it would not appropriate funding.

Councilman Ballard said it would move the Council to include it in the budget or bond for it. He said that was what they were asking for.

Councilman Zipprich said he thought that, the last time they had discussed it, the Borough Administrator had agreed that it needed to be tightened up and that it was not as skillfully crafted as it should have been. He suggested they tidy it up and put it on the agenda.

A discussion followed on the content of the proposed resolution.

Councilman Yassin said the Council could not vote on the resolution as presented because there was no action called for.

Councilman Ballard questioned what was wrong with it.

Attorney Cannon said the resolution just called for the Borough to fix the Senior Center. He said that was not possible as the action would require budgeting, bonding, down payments, etc. He said, if they wanted to pass a resolution to express support, that would be up to the Council.

Councilman Ballard said he understood but said he read the resolution to mean that the resident was asking the Governing Board to take whatever steps necessary to fix the Senior Center.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she wanted to make it clear that there was progress being made and that there was a better way to go about this. She said she believed that most people understood that the Redevelopment Agency had been created because they were facing massive issues within the Borough. She said she believed there was overwhelming respect for that agency and a want for it to be successful. She said it was unfortunate that this was one of the issues that had to be so blatant and out there that the agency had to navigate. She pointed out that the Council had put the matter in the agency's court to give them the best recommendation. She said, as a returning member to the Agency, she had been thinking about how the Council could express to them what they had been hearing. She thought they should consider a resolution outlining the major issues and how they had gotten to this point. She said she also thought it should unequivocally state what the Council believed in so that it would be taken into consideration in the Agency's findings. She cited the importance of waterfront property as an issue to be considered. She said she was not comfortable jumping over them on something the Council had put in their court.

Councilman Ballard said there were 200 residents that had expressly stated what they want. He said they were ignoring the 200 and listening to a few. He said he felt the Council needed to act.

Councilwoman Horgan agreed that they did not want to ignore 200 residents but noted there were more than 12,000 people in the community. She said she agreed with Councilwoman Triggiano that they needed to let the Redevelopment Agency do its job. She said that did not mean they were ignoring the Senior Center or the concerns of the community. She said they also did not want to commit a sin of the past where corners had been cut which was why they were in the situation that they were in now. She said they should make sure that what they were going to do would be done right. She said she also agreed that waterfront property was very important. She again said they should let the Redevelopment Agency do its job and said the proposed resolution would be moot.

Councilman Ballard asked why he had not been put on the Redevelopment Agency while other Council members had had two terms.

Mayor Menna said he had specifically asked him last year and he had said that he did not want to serve.

Councilman Ballard said he felt he should have been appointed this year and felt it had been unfair.

Councilman Zipprich said he wanted to correct something that Councilwoman Horgan had said when she had referred to the sins of the past being the reason the building was having existing problems. He said the reason for the current problems was because a pipe had frozen in fire suppression system and had blown a hole in the side of the building two years ago. He also said, regard to a statement made by Councilwoman Triggiano where she had referred to residents being members of the Redevelopment Agency, there was also a Board of members of the Senior Center who also had voices and had signed petitions. He said they should listen to all residents, not just a select few.

Councilwoman Triggiano said there was a petition for a skate park in town right now which had more resident signatures than the one for the Senior Center. She asked Councilman Zipprich if he felt it would be right for her to come to a Council meeting and ask for an unhealthy process to move forward with that and just skip over an entire agency that had been tasked to do work. She said the petition was an example of something that people wanted in the town that they cared about very deeply. She said she did not like the notion that there was someone on the Council that didn't care about people as much as somebody else. She said everyone on Council was serving and trying to get positive change. She said everyone on Council knew that there were not bound to the Redevelopment Agency's suggestion. She spoke of her vision for the town and said she wanted them to continue to work together on the foundation that they all cared equally for the residents.

Councilman Zipprich said he wanted to remind all of his colleagues that there were seven members for a reason and they all brought something different to the table. He noted there were not always going to agree.

Councilman Yassin agreed that there were going to be differences of opinion but to characterize a different opinion as someone who didn't care was unprofessional and incorrect. He said he also felt there was some misunderstanding about what had actually happened at the Senior Center. He asked the Administrator to review what the actual cause of the damage to the Senior Center was.

Administrator Shehady had heard a discussion on consensus but said two people who didn't agree with the consensus kept rehashing the same point. He said Councilwoman Horgan was correct in that there are other problems with the building. He said what had unveiled those problems was what Councilman Zipprich had said regarding the burst pipe. He said that was not the issue. He said they had gotten insurance money to fix that but, in the process of fixing it, other problems were discovered. He said those cost estimates had turned into a larger than anticipated expense. He said that had caused them, at many Council meetings, to come to a decision on what to do and how to do it. He reviewed the issues that needed to be addressed and the expenses involved.

Councilman Zipprich asked if, prior to the pipe bursting, the building had been useable.

Administrator Shehady said he did not want to misspeak but said Tommy Welsh was the Fire Marshal and he had issued the Notice of Imminent Hazard. He said he would say that it should not have been used.

Councilwoman Triggiano pointed out that the discussion was supposed to be about the citizen petition and that they were once again spending the meeting explaining the mass casualty that they had had to endure regarding the Senior Center. She said she had absorbed this information in previous meetings and said she did not understand why it was not being absorbed by others. She noted that she had suggested the proposed resolution should be forwarded to the Redevelopment Agency for their review.

Councilman Yngstrom said he agreed with Councilwoman Triggiano that it should be passed on to the Redevelopment Agency and that they should continue with the process. He added that the process was in place to try to get the best possible solution for all of the Borough facilities, not just the Senior Center.

Councilman Ballard said it should be put on the agenda and, if they didn't want it, they could vote it down.

Councilman Yassin called for a poll of Council members to see if they wanted it sent to the Redevelopment Agency or if they wanted it on a Council agenda.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she agreed with Councilman Yassin and asked if they would be interested in considering a resolution that she had described earlier to stress the importance of the agency, to express the fact that the Council understood that waterfront was priceless and to give healthier parameters.

Councilman Zipprich said that was all well and good but said they were looking at a senior population that was anxious to get back together and socialize after the pandemic. He said the amount of time that it would take the Redevelopment Agency and government in general meant that they would be looking at seven to ten years to build a new facility. He said many of the people will have passed on without a place to enjoy their golden years.

Councilwoman Triggiano said no one should be trying to show that they care more about the people in the town than other people did. She also she did not know where he got the number "seven years" from.

Councilman Zipprich referred a previous project that had taken over seven years. He also noted that neighboring municipalities were having projects taking multiple years and said it was a slow process. He reviewed his previous relationship with the Senior Center and the concerns of its members.

Councilman Yassin again noted the Council had two options to considerer one of which was to forward the proposed resolution to the Redevelopment Agency and continue the process they had started. He said the second option, since the proposed resolution was not moveable, would be to put together a package of ordinances, etc. that would be required to fix the Senior Center now. He again called for a poll of Council members.

Mayor Menna asked each Council member to express their opinion.

Councilman Yassin said his opinion would be to not sell the property and to build a better Senior Center in that current location. He said he felt there was a lot of damage to the current building and said he would like to see a brand new better facility. He clarified that he did not want to make a decision without all of the data so said he would agree with sending the petition to the Redevelopment Agency. He said, when they received back the data, they could make a decision.

Councilman Yngstrom said he agreed that they should send the petition to the Redevelopment Agency for their opinion. He said, once they had all of the data, they could make a decision as a Council.

Councilman Zipprich said he was delighted to hear Councilman Yassin say that he did not think they should sell the Senior Center. He said he believed they could adaptively reuse the building. He said the Borough was responsible for the management of its assets. He said he felt the current use of the Senior Center needed to be tweaked and possible added on to. He said it was a valuable piece of waterfront property. He noted the number of residents that had spoken in recent weeks asking that the property be preserved and repaired.

Councilwoman Horgan said she agreed with Council members Yassin, Yngstrom and Triggiano that the petition should be sent to the Redevelopment Agency. She said they should also move on the proposed resolution offered by Councilwoman Triggiano.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she was in fierce defense of the process. She said the Redevelopment Agency had been created to take politics out of these decisions. She said the Agency deserved respect and that Council should listen to their advice and take it into consideration moving forward. She said she would make sure to have resolution prepared that would outline the parameters for moving forward.

Councilman Ballard said he was against selling the Senior Center property and was in support of the residents who had expressed their opinion and had asked the Council to do something with the current building. He said, if the Seniors were open to building a new building at that location, then he was behind them. He said he did not understand why the Council was turning a deaf ear to those residents. He again said he was fine with either repairing or rebuilding but stated that he felt the property needed to stay in Borough hands.

Councilman Yassin said Councilman Ballard had made a good point. He said if they went to the residents with a concept for a better Senior Center and they wanted that, he felt the Council would be on board. He said they did not have that concept to show them at this time because the process hadn't been completed. He said, if they fixed it now but then came up with a new concept, they would have to spend more money. He said he was agreeing with Councilman Ballard's point which was why he wanted the process to play out.

Mayor Menna said there would be a resolution at the next Council meeting. He also noted that he had said on January 1 that the Senior Center was not for sale and that there were no plans to sell it.

Councilman Zipprich said the Mayor had actually said there were no plans "at present" to sell the Senior Center which had set off a lot of alarm buttons. He said he also wanted to comment on the fact that several Council members had talked about a resolution and said he wanted to make sure that there had not been any violation of the Open Public Meetings Act.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she believed other Council member were referring to what she had detailed earlier regarding a proposed resolution.

Councilman Zipprich asked if she was saying that there had been no discussions behind closed doors.

Attorney Cannon reviewed the Open Public Meetings Act and said the action that Councilman Zipprich was describing would not be a violation.

Councilman Zipprich said he was raising the point because of some information that had been leaked during the summer where there had been discussions among members of the Governing Body with Attorney/Client privileged information exposed.

Attorney Cannon said he was aware of that episode.

Mayor Menna said Councilman Zipprich could follow up with the Borough Attorney and said the matter would be carried to the next Council meeting.

Councilman Yassin said there was a second issue he wanted to make the Council aware of which Councilwoman Triggiano had alluded to. He said there was a petition circulating that had been started by Middle School Students regarding a skate park. He had said it had not yet been submitted but said he wanted to make the Council aware of it and said he thought it was a great idea.

CLERK

Mayor Menna said there would be a proclamation on the upcoming agenda regarding Black History Month. He told Councilman Ballard he had checked with the Clerk regarding his question on Count Basie Way and confirmed that formal action had been taken many years ago. He said he, when the signs were changed on Mechanic Street, evidently the Count Basie Way sign was not replaced.

Councilman Ballard said he wanted to clarify that they were talking about naming Mechanic Street as Count Basie Way.

Mayor Menna said it had already been done but said the sign needed to be replaced. He suggested a formal rededication.

Councilman Ballard also suggested moving the Count Basie statute from the Red Bank Train Station to a more appropriate location.

Mayor Menna said he agreed with the suggestion. He said they would address the matter with NJTransit as well as the need to clean up the plaza area.

Councilwoman Horgan said the bust had originally been at the Count Basie Theatre which seemed like an appropriate place especially now that it had expanded.

Councilman Zipprich asked if it had at one time been located inside the station house.

Councilwoman Horgan said she did not remember.

Borough Clerk Borghi reviewed the Public Hearing that were scheduled for the next regular meeting.

Administrator Shehady said there was an item that should have been discussed under Administration that had just come to his attention that day. He said they would have to add a resolution to the next meeting to award a contract to Fairview as the Borough's insurance broker. He said the appointment had been overlooked on the Reorganization agenda.

Mayor Menna said it was a standard resolution and should go on the agenda.

FINANCE

Mayor Menna reviewed the reports received from the CFO, the Tax Collector and Tax Assessor. He asked for details on the Realty Data Systems issue.

Administrator Shehady said Realty Data Systems was the outside vendor that had helped with the Countywide Demonstration Program. He said the contract was expiring and said the service needed to continue. He said they may need to issue an RFQ or take some action to procure the services.

Attorney Cannon confirmed that it was part of the Assessment Demonstration Program that replaced the revaluations every 10 years. He said this would be the continuing inspection contract. He said it was a professional service so they could either award it through the non-fair and open process or through the fair and open process with an RFQ.

CFO O'Reilly said he was working on a resolution that would extend the temporary budget through the end of March.

Councilman Zipprich asked about the County tax appeals. He reviewed the number of appeals and asked what the impact would be on the budget.

Mayor Menna said that question should be addressed by the Tax Assessor. He asked CFO O'Reilly to follow up with the Tax Assessor on the question.

CFO O'Reilly said a resident had requested similar information and said he believe the Tax Assessor was working on it.

Councilman Ballard asked if it would include a comparison of how many appeals they had received last year versus this year.

Mr. O'Reilly said he would touch base with the Tax Assessor as he was not familiar with the report he was providing.

Mayor Menna said the Assessor should be able to give the CFO a comparison to report back to the Council.

OEM/FIRE MARSHAL/CODE

Mayor Menna thanked Fire Marshal Welsh for the enforcement actions taken by the Code Department. He said it was greatly appreciated by the residents.

Fire Marshal Welsh said they were doing their best and said it had been quite a few years since the Borough had seen this much snow. He said they could critique the event and look for ways to improve. He said he thought the town had done a good job overall.

Councilman Yassin said he had spoken with DPW Director Keen who had said that his Department was able to do their job due to the assistance of the Code Enforcement Office.

Fire Marshal Welsh said they were trying to get caught up on fire inspections that had been unable to get done in the last year due to COVID and business closures. He said Code Enforcement was continuing to work on the plastic bag enforcement. He said Environmental Commission Chair Blackwood had asked for a synopsis on their efforts. He added that he felt the majority of the town was in compliance.

POLICE

Councilman Ballard asked about the fact that the Chief's report said there had been 1300 calls for service in the month of January which equated to about 42 per day. He asked what 1300 calls for service meant.

Chief McConnell said that meant that officers responded to or handled 1300 calls during the month which ranged from serious crimes to false alarms or a motor vehicle accident. He said the average was usually around 1600 to 1800. He added that winter was normally a little lower and said COVID had lowered the calls for service as well. He said, if they dispatched two officers to the call, it just counted as one call for service.

Councilman Ballard asked for confirmation that not every call resulted in a report being written by the officer.

Chief McConnell said a report was required on every single call an officer responded to. He also noted that he had kept his report brief the previous month due to the fact that they were having back to back meeting. He said he wanted to go back to his year-end report and point out the crime had been down which he said was a trend that had been going on since he joined the Department 30 plus years ago. He added that violent crime had risen but said that seemed to be a national issue this year where crime dropped overall but violent crime had risen. He said it was an anomaly but noted it was a nationwide anomaly. Regarding the bodycam grants, he said they were still waiting to see how that would play out. He said he had completed a survey from the Attorney General's Office on the matter and had met with vendors for estimates so they would be ready when the grant funding came out.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

DPW Director Keen said he wanted to thank his crew for their efforts over the past few days in preparing for and managing the snow storm. He said he wanted to confirm what Councilman Yassin had said earlier noting that Code Enforcement has been vital during the snow storm and said the Police Department had assisted as well. He said he felt residents were starting to understand that, if cars were off the road, it made the Department's job easier. He said it wasn't just street parking. He said he felt this was the first time that residents stayed home which meant there were less people competing with snow plows on the road. He reviewed highlights of his report including the fact that parking revenue was back up to 2020 numbers. He said that number included the extended hours but said it was still a really good sign. He said he hoped it would continue for the rest of the year.

Councilman Zipprich asked for clarification that the parking revenue was up to the 2020 standard which was based on hour of 9am to 6pm.

Director Keen said that was correct. He said they had actually made a couple of thousand dollars more in January of 2021 as compared to January of 2020.

Councilman Zipprich noted that that included the extended hours.

Director Keen confirmed that it did and also noted that they were dealing with a downtown that wasn't as vibrant as it had been last year at the same time. He also said most of the lots were now pay by plate and that they were looking to expand the Mpay app. He said the app was currently available on almost all of the Borough's meters. He said the Department had picked up 950 Christmas trees so far and would continue to do so for a while. He also reported that the amount of brush and leaves collected in 2020 was more than double 2019. He credited a couple of strong storms. He said there had also been a couple of strange water main breaks in December/January which he said had been repaired and were up and running. He said the meter project was down to about 150 meters left to install and said they had been working on finalizing the remaining meters last year but did not want to expose employees once COVID hit. He said, as the vaccine rolls out, they will try to get back on track.

Councilman Yassin said he wanted to thank Director Keen for being responsive to resident concerns during the storm. He commended the Department on their efforts.

RECREATION

Director Hoffman asked if there were any questions on his report. There were none.

SENIOR CENTER

Mayor Menna asked if any Council members had any questions for Director Reynolds. There were none.

Director Reynolds said they had started doing COVID signups and reviewed the numbers.

Administrator Shehady said he and Director Reynolds had reached out to the VNA to try and facilitate a special vaccination program for Red Bank seniors. He said, unfortunately, they had been unable to set up a special clinic for them but said they had given a number of slots to Red Bank to help them get vaccinated and back to normal.

He reviewed the process to sign up. He said he hoped they could roll it out to more members of the community in the future.

Councilman Ballard asked if the initial slots were for Red Bank residents only or any member of the Senior Center. He said he was aware that there were out of town members.

Administrator Shehady said, right now, the priority was for Red Bank residents who were also in the senior program. He added that he thought they could fit in all active participating members.

Councilman Yassin asked how many Red Bank residents were members of the Center.

Director Reynolds asked if he was referring to those who came to the center on a daily basis or in total.

Councilman Yassin said both.

Director Reynolds said there were about 150 that came to the center on a regular basis.

Administrator Shehady asked her to clarify that they were not all coming at the same time but were coming at different times for different purposes.

Director Reynolds said there were about 400 Red Bank residents who were signed up.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she remembered from reports that had been provided pre-COVID that that included participants in various activities and said the average activity had about 12 participants.

Director Reynolds said it would depend on the activity and reviewed some of the larger and smaller programs.

Councilman Zipprich said he had gotten really good feedback on the calls she had made earlier in the day. He thanked her and her staff for their continued efforts.

LAND USE

Mayor Menna thanked Director Ebanks for her report.

Red Bank Affordable Housing Agreement—Administrator Shehady said the matter had been discussed in Executive Session and said the agreement was due for renewal. He said he expected it would be on the agenda for the next Council meeting.

Yellowbrook Maintenance Bond—Mayor Menna said he saw no issue with the release of the bond.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Holiday announced a recent graduate from the Fire Academy and said Councilwoman Triggiano had applied to attend in the spring. He said the new fire apparatus was on the assembly line and said he hoped to have photos shortly. He said there were only 30 calls in the month of January which was down 30 percent from last year. He reviewed the nature of the calls.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Beth Maida—84 Branch Avenue—said she wanted to comment on the Senior Center discussion. She said she found it amusing that they were shocked that it could take seven years to build a building when it had been more than two years since the building had gone out of service. She said she agreed that, if the building could not be repaired, that they should knock it down and replace it. She reminded the Council that they serve at the pleasure of the residents and the Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Council. She said it seemed that the residents were taking a back seat. She said she did not understand why the analysis of the Redevelopment Agency should take precedent over that of the residents of the town. She said it was clearly the passion of the town to fix the Senior Center where it was. She said she was mystified why they could pass a resolution for Medicare for All and other resolutions that sounded nice but had not real impact. She assess blame for the situation and said there was lack of trust. She said she did not agree that there was great respect and admiration for the Redevelopment Agency. She said most people she had spoken with thought the Agency was a joke. She said the town had an excellent Planning Board and excellent Zoning Board and didn't understand why they did not let them do the work. She asked what would happen if the Agency rejected the resolution. She said the center should be fixed regardless of the cost.

Cindy Burnham—71 Wallace Street—asked who maintained the Senior Center building. She asked if the heat was on and if the building was secure. She asked what had caused the recent water leak. She read a statement that she had seen on Facebook that said all redevelopment activity should be put on hold until in person meetings resumed. She said Zoom meeting do not allow adequate public response. She said she felt they were doing things behind the public's back. She said she or another member of the public should be allowed to go into the Senior Center building with professionals to see what needed to be done.

Tiffaney Harris—1 Cedar Crossing—said she agreed with Councilman Yassin that they should repair or rebuild the Senior Center at the existing location. She said she was glad to hear that they were not going to sell it. She asked how long the process would take for the Redevelopment Agency to come up with an answer. She said the residents want it fixed now. She also asked about the Affordable Housing applications that had been previously submitted and said people were now being told to reapply. She said snow removal in the Housing Authority developments had not been done well.

London Ebbins—Oakland Street—said she was a new resident and wanted to thank the Council for the lively discussion regarding the Senior Center. She said she disagreed with the speaker and the comments on Facebook about accessibility and putting business on hold until the Council can reconvene in person. She said she thought the electronic meetings were an accessible form. She said she had been learning about the Senior Center issue pretty recently and said she did not feel that 200 signatures were a lot but said she did agree with the comments about the pace of work. She said she felt they had a responsibility to know the cost to the town and the options available. She said she hoped the Redevelopment Agency would deliver a report in a timely manner.

No one else appearing, Councilwoman Horgan made a motion to close Public Comment, seconded by Councilman Zipprich.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Yassin, Triggiano, Ballard, Yngstrom, Zipprich and Horgan.

NAYS: None.

There being six ayes and no nays, the motion was declared approved.

Councilman Yassin said he wanted to address some of the questions. He said someone had asked what would happen if the Redevelopment Agency suggested they sell the property. He said he wanted to clarify that the Agency would give the Council suggestions but the Council had the final say. He said he had already stated that he would not be in favor of selling. He said there were two speakers that had been in favor in the past of repairing the facility but said they were also in favor of a new/better facility. He said that was his point. If they had just fixed it and then came to a decision that they wanted a newer one, they would have wasted that money. He said that was why they needed to let the process play out. He said, in regard to accessibility, the Redevelopment Agency had taken up the charge and a lot of residents had stated that it had taken a lot of time. He said suspending the meetings would be counterintuitive. He said he felt the Zoom meetings had a much higher attendance than the in person meetings.

Councilman Ballard said he wanted to make it clear that there had never been discussion about rebuilding on the current site. He said there had been discussion about a new combined community center possible at a different location. He said now that there was a possibility of building new on the current site, he expected most residents would be in favor. He said he wanted to be clear on how the dynamics had changed.

Councilman Yassin said the initial discussion had not had all of the specifics. He said they all wanted the same thing and just needed to keep the options open.

Councilwoman Triggiano said there had also been a questions about the Affordable Housing application process. She said Director Ebanks had reported that some of the prior applications had expired and had said that she would assist them with the reapplication process.

Administrator Shehady clarified that any resident that had a concern about the process should not be seeking guidance from other people who did not know what they were talking about. He said applicants had been contacted or would be contact by Pastor Porter and the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation if they were affected. He said there were a lot of rumors that were causing problems. He said applicants would have to be recertified but did not have to reapply. He said those people should not be listening to other residents but should be listing to the point of contact which was the Red Bank Affordable Housing Corporation.

Councilwoman Triggiano said the speaker had also mentioned snow removed in Cedar Crossing.

Administrator Shehady said if they had an issue they should have been the ones to relay it. He said they had not and said the spokesperson for that development had texted to thank the Borough for the snow removal.

Councilman Ballard and Councilman Zipprich said there had been a question about water lead at the Senior Center and maintenance.

Administrator Shehady said the Department of Public Works maintained the building as they did for all municipal buildings.

Councilwoman Triggiano said she had been contacted the day of the leak and, in looking into it, had been told that someone had been dispatched to address the issue. She said she wanted to make clear that the town had addressed it in a swift manner despite the fact that it had been a holiday.

Councilman Ballard asked why the water had been running.

Administrator Shehady said the water had not been running and said someone had turned it on. He said there had been a lot of convenient and happenstance things surrounding the circumstances which had been brought to light on Facebook for questionable reasons. He said he did not know why it had been turned on or who had turned it on. He said the water remained on because employees access the building for certain reasons. He said they make sure that it is heated and that the pipes are working.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

21-50 The Borough Attorney read a resolution to adjourn to executive session to discuss Personnel and Contract Negotiations. No action to be taken.

Councilman Yassin offered a motion to adjourn to Executive Session, seconded by Councilman Zipprich.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Yassin, Triggiano, Ballard, Yngstrom, Zipprich and Horgan.

NAYS: None

There being six ayes and no nays, the motion was declared approved..

ADJOURNMENT

Councilwoman Triggiano offered a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Horgan.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Yassin, Triggiano, Ballard, Yngstrom, Zipprich and Horgan.

NAYS: None

There being six ayes and no nays, the motion was declared approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Borghi