

MINUTES FOR COUNCIL MEETING FEBRUARY 5, 2025

The Meeting was called to order by Council President Gross at 6:00 P.M. The City Clerk read the Opening Prayer, all recited the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call was taken.

PRESENT: Councilman Conrad, Councilwoman Dato, Councilman Lenahan, Councilman Reilly and Councilman Gross

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Fred A. Henry, Dan Balka, CFO, Deborah Brooks, City Clerk, Mark Rasimowicz, City Engineer, Christopher Zingaro, Esq., and BA Kales. Additionally the following department representatives were present: OEM Director Herdman, Actin Chief Kanecke, Capt. Mike Kelly, Zoning Officer Valetutto, DPW Supervisor Krass, Construction Official Czoch and QPA Manion.

The Clerk read the Certification of Meeting Notice.

CONSENT AGENDA:

The following items are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be acted upon in one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member so requests. In this event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in the normal sequence of the Agenda.

MOVED by: Ms. Dato of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution NO. 25-063 through NO. 25-067 are hereby approved. **SECONDED by:** Mr. Conrad **ROLL CALL VOTE: All in favor.**

- NO. 25-063 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING BUDGET TRANSFERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A. 40A:4-59
- NO. 25-064 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A POWER PRO2/POWER LOAD 2024 STRETCHER
- NO. 25-065 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A MATRICE 350 RTK (NA) SP 2Y DRONE, EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING PREP COURSE
- NO. 25-066 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A JOHN DEERE Z930M MOWER AND VARIOUS OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT
- NO. 25-067 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF A NON-FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT FOR RENOVATIONS AT THE SOUTH AMBOY FIRST AID BUILDING

RESOLUTION NO. 25-068

A RESOLUTION HONORING AND RECOGNIZING THE MILITARY SERVICE OF RESIDENTS IN THE CIVIC AFFAIRS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH AMBOY

Although Mr. Reilly had some questions on the resolution content President Gross called for an immediate motion. Mr. Reilly noted the resolution was changed without his knowledge.

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution No. 25-068 is hereby approved. **SECONDED by:** Ms. Dato **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: Conrad, Dato, Gross Nays: Lenahan, Reilly**

RESOLUTION NO. 25-069

APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF MINUTES

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of South Amboy does hereby approve and release the Council Minutes of the January 22, 2025 Council Meeting.

MOVED by: Ms. Dato of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution No. 25-069 is hereby approved. **SECONDED by:** Mr. Conrad **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: Conrad, Dato, Lenahan, Reilly Abstain: Gross**

RESOLUTION NO. 25-070

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of South Amboy does hereby receive and approve the payment of the bill list dated January 31, 2025, as presented by the Chief Financial Officer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the bill list be appended to the official minutes.

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution No. 25-070 is hereby approved. **SECONDED by:** Ms. Dato. **ROLL CALL VOTE: All in favor.**

ORDINANCE

INTRODUCTION/FIRST READING

ORDINANCE 2025-04

AN ORDINANCE ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 158 TO THE CODE OF THE CITY OF SOUTH AMBOY "TREE PRESERVATION"

Mr. Gross thanked Chris Smiga for his help in putting together this ordinance.

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad, that Ordinance #2025-04 be introduced on first reading and advertised for second reading which is scheduled for the March 5, 2025 meeting.

SECONDED by: Mr. Lenahan, **ROLL CALL VOTE: All in favor**

ORDINANCE 2025-05

ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOUTH AMBOY, COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING A GRANT OF EASEMENT FOR PARKING ON BLOCK 138, LOT 20 IN FAVOR OF STEVENS DALE REALTY CO., INC., AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT IN CONNECTION THEREWITH

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad, that Ordinance #2025-05 be introduced on first reading and advertised for second reading which is scheduled for the March 5, 2025 meeting.

SECONDED by: Mr. Lenahan, **ROLL CALL VOTE: All in favor.**

ORDINANCE 2025-06

AN ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14)

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad, that Ordinance #2025-06 be introduced on first reading and advertised for second reading which is scheduled for the March 5, 2025 meeting.

SECONDED by: Ms. Dato, **ROLL CALL VOTE:** All in favor

ORDINANCE 2025-07

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE XI OF THE SOUTH AMBOY CITY CODE TO ESTABLISH LEVELS OF STAFFING AND CREATE ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE SOUTH AMBOY POLICE DEPARTMENT

MOVED by: Mr. Conrad, that Ordinance #2025-07 be introduced on first reading and advertised for second reading which is scheduled for the March 5, 2025 meeting.

SECONDED by: Mr. Lenahan, **ROLL CALL VOTE:** All in favor.

COMMENTS:

Mr. Reilly:

- Clarified his no vote for the Veteran Resolution was based on his thinking that the Purple Heart recipients were not going to receive permit/licensing fee waivers. After rereading the resolution and seeing it in the resolution he is satisfied.
- Thanked the first responders and food pantry volunteers.
- Sent his condolences to the family of Eileen Ryan and Joe Rudy.
- Received a status update from Mr. Kales regarding the TNR Ordinance. Mr. Kales stated he has a meeting scheduled with the TNR group on February 10th at 3pm.
- Stated Government week will be celebrated at the April 16th meeting with the usual open house at Independence Fire House, the High School essay contest and recognition of individual volunteers.

Mr. Lenahan:

- Thanked the volunteers, especially as it is difficult in this weather.
- Reported that NY Waterways is adding a stop at the 11th street pier.
- Sent his condolences to the Ryan family.

Mr. Conrad:

- Sent condolences to the Ryan and Rudy families noting they were both exemplars of community service. Highlighted the continued need for new volunteers.
- Thanked the first aid and first responder volunteers noting it is difficult in the current weather conditions.
- Reported he and Mr. Reilly had met with the Fire Chiefs and continue to work toward solutions for increasing recruitment.
- Noted he was happy to see the agenda items that highlight that the City is committed to the health and safety of its residents.
- Reminded everyone that February is Black History Month and that it should be both recognized and celebrated. He noted the black immigration experience, a forced immigration, is not the same as for other immigrants. It is fitting that we take note of the contributions and history of the black community.

Ms. Dato:

- Sent condolences to the Ryan family.

- Recommended people get informed about the upcoming Board of Education Referendum vote on March 11th. There are public meetings being held as well as tours given at the two schools to show where the funding will be going.
- Wished all a Happy Valentines Day.
- Reminded everyone to clear their sidewalks in a timely manner as our school children have to walk to school.

Mr. Gross:

- Thanked the first responders for their continued efforts.
- Commended Kevin Wiater for his ongoing efforts with the County OEM department.
- Thanked the various department heads for attending this evening's meeting.
- Sends condolences to the Ryan family.
- Thanked Mr. Kales for his continued work on putting together the TNR Ordinance, which is a thankless task.
- Stated that although the Veteran resolution might not be exactly what the American Legion wanted it is moving forward with accommodating our Veterans to the best of our ability – we don't want to kick the can down the road any longer.

Mayor Henry:

- Thanked the people for coming to this evening's meeting.
- Sends his condolences to the Ryan family.
- Stated he is happy to see the authorization to purchase the power stretcher and noted that there are upcoming changes to the first aid building as well as some renovations at the senior center.
- Reported the State has received our application for funding aid for the Raritan Street Pump Station and is happy the project will be moving forward.
- Noted the previously mentioned changes to the ferry schedule and is hopeful as ridership increases NY Waterway will be able to add excursion trips on weekends.
- Stated that St. Mary's blood drive is February 16th.
- Recognized the importance of Black History Month especially as a former history teacher and noting both the good and bad must be acknowledged.
- Noted that moving forward, if necessary, the Veteran resolution can always be amended.

Mr. Kales:

- Reported that the City had added a Tab to the website which would list any charity organization. Please reach out to Patricia Polomene at the Senior Center to register your charity.
- Thanked the department heads for attending the meeting. They will be at the first meeting of each month.
- Stated the new hours (M,T,TH 8:30 to 4pm, W 8:30 to 6pm and F 8:30 to 1pm) went into effect on Monday.
- Noted that the drone that is going to be purchased will be used by the OEM, Fire Department and Police Department. Each department will have 3 people trained in its use.
- Congratulated Mr. Balka on getting the budget together and is hoping to introduce it at the first meeting in March.

Mr. Zingaro, Mr. Rasimowicz had nothing to report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Joe Szaro, Commander of Luke A. Lovely Post #62, stated that the Veteran resolution was missing the statement regarding committing to using veterans for 6% of the contracts. Without this statement the City would not be eligible for the certification of Veteran Friendly City. Mr. Gross stated that the Council would follow the advice of Mr. Womack by not including that statement and it was better to have moved forward then kicked the can down the road. Mr. Kales noted it would not be feasible for him to carry that out. Ms. Dato commented that the City is currently already in compliance with most of the resolution and had added all but that one statement on advice of Counsel.

Brandon Russell, 1355 Schindler Dr., stated he thought that Mr. Gross had been unprofessional in his handling of the passing of the Veteran resolution and he shouldn't have cut Mr. Riley off. He agreed with Mr. Szaro and found it ironic that Mr. Gross was concerned now about kicking it down the road when that has been his past practice with the request to move forward with the Environmental commission, the tree ordinance and TNR ordinance. He accused Mr. Gross of controlling the "voting bloc" of the council without the council members speaking out with their opinions. Mr. Gross stated firmly that he didn't control the Council votes in any manner and there isn't a voting bloc. Mr. Russell asked for status of the Veritas Lawsuit and Venetian settlement. Mr. Reilly added a statement noting it has always been that resolutions and ordinances were discussed amongst the Council at the meetings before a vote was taken. Mr. Lenahan agreed if clarification was needed by a Council member, time should be taken to give it. Mr. Russell stated he had taken the tour of the school to get informed about the referendum. He had previously stated he was against it, but now believes about 80% of the requested funds are justified. He wondered about receiving state aid. He stated he believes the referendum would fail but there are definitely areas that need to be addressed immediately, especially regarding student security. He requested funds from the PILOT be used to accomplish this.

Mary Szaro, 370 Fifth St., noted she had worked in a highly regulated industry for the past 25 years and recognized the difference between the words may, shall and should in regards to the Veteran resolutions statement about committing a percentage of contracted work to the veterans. She believes the Council made a mistake in passing the current version and wished the City had met with the Veterans to discuss it and make it work instead of taking a "this is how it's going to be" attitude.

Greg Babilak thanked Mr. Gross for his prayers for his son Kyle and his entire family. He asked if now that Mr. Reilly had clarification about the Purple Heart recipients receiving fee waivers whether the Council could re-vote so it reflected the change. He received clarification about the number of COAH units that the City would be required to build. He asked if the PILOT funds could be committed to the American Legion and what the timeline for that commitment looked like. Mr. Zingaro reviewed the timeline for him.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Ms. Dato, seconded by Mr. Conrad and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Brooks
Municipal Clerk
Approved February 19, 2025