



MINUTES
BOROUGH OF EMERSON
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
April 7, 2020
7:30 P.M.
Borough Hall-Council Chambers
Emerson, NJ 07630



This meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Emerson will be held via the teleconferencing app GoToMeeting on April 7th, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency.

REVISED ACCESS INFORMATION:

Tue, Apr 7, 2020 7:30 PM

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I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor DiPaola called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the April 7th, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Emerson Governing Body. She said the meeting was being held by teleconference due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak. She noted that the meeting was being videotaped and could be viewed from a link on the Borough website as well as on Verizon FIOS Channel 36 and Cablevision Channel 77. She read the Sunshine Statement announcing that the meeting of April 7th, 2020 had been adequately noticed and was in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. Further, notice of this was sent to the Record and Ridgewood News on April 5th, 2020 and noticed to said newspapers; posted at the entrances to Borough Hall, on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building and has remained continuously posted as required under the Statute.

Access was provided to the general public via teleconferencing on the GoToMeeting application and a link and phone number to access the meeting was posted for the public.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor DiPaola (in person)

Present via teleconference: Council President Hoffman, Councilwoman Argenzia, Councilman Bayley, Councilwoman Dinallo, Councilman Gordon, Councilwoman McGuire

Also present were Borough Administrator Robert Hermansen and Borough Attorney John McCann (via teleconference) and Borough Clerk Jane Dietsche (in person).

III. EXCUSED ABSENCE OF GOVERNING BODY MEMBER

Mayor DiPaola said no members of the Governing Body had been absent from the previous meeting.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS & CITATIONS

- April is Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month
- Autism Awareness Month – April 2020

Mayor DiPaola announced the above proclamations and said they would be posted on the Borough website and on the bulletin board in Borough Hall.

V. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

Mayor DiPaola announced that there were no appointments or resignations.

VI. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

- Regular Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2020

☞ **Motion** to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2020 was **moved** by Councilwoman McGuire, **seconded** by Councilwoman Dinallo and carried by a roll call vote of 6-0:

Roll call:

YES: Bayley, McGuire, Dinallo, Hoffman, Gordon, Argenzia

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Discussion of Open Space Tax Referendum – Mayor DiPaola said that at this time, the Governing Body did not want to levy any additional taxes on taxpayers due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Council President Hoffman concurred, stating that any further discussion should be postponed until next year. Councilwoman McGuire agreed, stating that she appreciated the Open Space Tax as a tool, but adding that this was not the time for it. Governing Body consensus was to table this item until 2021.
- Phone system – Mr. Hermansen said the Borough was upgrading its current phone system and would see a savings moving forward. The new system would allow staff members to forward incoming calls to their homes so they would not miss a beat. Additional equipment would be required to finalize the project.

- 2020 Municipal Budget discussion – Mayor DiPaola said Mr. Hermansen and CFO Lauren Roehrer had gone over the budget line by line in the past week and noted that the Council approved of their efforts. Mr. Hermansen said there had been a discussion of postponing the adoption of the budget based on concerns by members of the Governing Body about how the State budget might affect it. He and Ms. Roehrer had removed \$5,000.00 from the gas line item and \$8,000.00 from Police Department overtime as they felt those were reasonable areas to reduce. He added that three revenue producing areas would be greatly affected by the impact of the virus – the Building Department and Municipal Court, as well as tax revenue based on the economic impact on residents.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- Food delivery – Mayor DiPaola said that a Swiftreach message had been sent out informing residents about Pascack Valley Meals on Wheels and a food delivery service for people over 60. She would provide more information during her report.
- Suspension of Certificates of Occupancy during State of Emergency – Mayor DiPaola said this item did not need to be addressed because the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs had issued guidelines to all inspectors. They had recommended that inspectors not enter homes and provided guidelines on issuing Certificates of Occupancy. Emerson’s requirements related to smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Personnel Policy revision re: State of Emergency guidelines for employees – Mr. McCann stated that due to the COVID-19 crisis, an emergency action plan needed to be implemented. An ordinance was being prepared for introduction.

IX. INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Mayor DiPaola announced that this ordinance was being pulled based on the release of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs guidelines.

First Reading:

~~**1611-20 EMERGENCY ORDINANCE TO SUSPEND REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUED CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**~~

X. ADOPTION OF ORDINANCES

Second Reading and Public Hearing:

1610-20 BOROUGH OF EMERSON BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CALENDAR YEAR 2020 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK

☞ **Motion** to open the meeting to comments from the public on this ordinance only was **moved** by Councilwoman McGuire, **seconded** by Councilman Gordon and carried unanimously.

Hearing no requests for comments from the public on this ordinance only, Mayor DiPaola asked for a motion to close the meeting to comments from the public on this ordinance only.

☞ **Motion** to close the meeting to comments from the public on this ordinance only was **moved** by Councilman Bayley, **seconded** by Councilwoman Argenzia and carried unanimously.

☞ **Motion** to adopt Ordinance 1610-20 on second reading was **moved** by Councilwoman McGuire, **seconded** by Councilwoman Dinallo and carried by a roll call vote of 6-0:

Roll call:

YES: Bayley, McGuire, Dinallo, Hoffman, Gordon, Argenzia

XI. REPORTS

- Good and Welfare – Councilmembers

Councilman Bayley thanked Mr. Hermansen for his continued efforts to fix the firehouse floor. He said the project was on schedule due to his hard work and determination to get the best prices for the Borough. He added that Mr. Hermansen's oversight was helpful and cost effective and noted that everyone needed a pat on the back when they did a good job.

Councilwoman McGuire thanked the medical community and first responders and essential personnel who were out there each day to ensure that Emerson residents were cared for, safe, and had essential items during this time. She also thanked all the helpers in the community who were stepping in, in big and small ways. She said that their efforts have shown friendship, compassion and support to our essential personnel and residents in need. She said that everyone should continue to follow recommended safe practices and by doing so, would make an impact. She closed her report by stating that for all who celebrated a holiday at this time, may they find peace, love and comfort this holiday season and stay safe.

Councilwoman Dinallo reminded everyone that Cork and Keg and Esposito's were open for business and provided curbside pickup as well as delivery. She said that Dan O'Brien, owner of Academy Electric, was working on electrical needs for the naval hospital. In addition, Cradles to Crayons was open to provide childcare services for first responders. M & T Bank was providing a payroll protection plan to help local businesses. She reported on the Board of Education and said that the district was grateful for all the hardworking teachers who were providing at-home learning.

Council President Hoffman said the Arbor Day Ceremony had been postponed to a future date, most likely in the fall as summer was a bad time to plant a tree. He said 13-15 trees were being planted in coordination with the Shade Tree Commission. He asked that residents who were requesting a tree removal or planting be patient and provide a phone number as they were not able to meet face to face with anyone at this time. He had reached out to the State Forester about Tree City USA requirements and was waiting to hear back.

Councilman Gordon gave the monthly report of the Department of Public Works and noted their metal recycling totals. The Emerson Public Library sign had been painted and they had done a beautiful job. Mr. Hermansen, DPW Superintendent Perry Solimando and Recycling Coordinator Liz Morris had attended a training class on air quality in Mahwah. Mr. Solimando and Ms. Morris had also attended a training class on completing the annual tonnage grant application in Westwood. The members of the department were also working on completion of the temporary ambulance building. The DEP had completed their inspection of the DPW yard and had passed the inspection successfully.

Councilwoman Argenzia said the Volunteer Ambulance Corps had obtained decontamination equipment to clean the ambulance between patients. They were not taking any calls for COVID-19 patients; they all went to mutual aid. However, towns with a mutual aid agreement would not take a call from Emerson for a COVID-19 patient. They were still waiting on the new temporary building and it looked lovely. Board of Health Officer Angela Musella was working tirelessly to report statistics and resident lists of presumptive positive and positive COVID-19 cases. The Office of Emergency Management was also working tirelessly with Mayor DiPaola to make sure that residents were safe and keeping everyone alert and aware of what was going on. The reverse 911 calls were very helpful. She addressed the differences in reported COVID-19 cases between Bergen County and the Mayor's reports. She explained that the Mayor's reports listed positive cases whereas the County's reports included presumptive positive and confirmed positive cases. She said everyone was working very hard to keep everyone safe and maintain social distancing.

Mayor DiPaola thanked Councilwoman Argenzia and Councilman Gordon's wife who were both nurses and were working on the front lines; they were in her thoughts and prayers. She would not be reporting on any numbers in the future as the discrepancies in the numbers were causing more issues and confusion. She added that one positive case was one too many. She said a better policy was for everyone to stay safe and follow the Governor's orders to wear gloves and a mask when they went out so as to flatten the curve. She also read the following message:

"I want to thank each of you for your efforts to comply with the restrictions that are in place to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As we approach Passover, Easter and Ramadan, I must remind you to please continue to quarantine at home so as to prevent the spread of the virus. We are not helpless against this virus – we can only fight this as a community. I am not interested in reciting the current number of residents who have tested positive. One sick resident is one too many. We must assume that we all have the virus and that anyone can be contagious. Therefore, I urge you to protect yourself by wearing a mask and gloves if you must go out in public. We each have to do our part by staying inside until this danger passes. You may become ill and then recover, but others may not be so lucky. It is your responsibility to look out for others by practicing social distancing if you must go out in public. Please dispose of your gloves and masks properly so others do not have to come in contact with contaminated materials.

We are here to support you, but we need you to comply with the only tools we have at our disposal – practice social distancing, stay indoors unless absolutely necessary, wash your hands thoroughly, wear gloves and a mask if you must go outdoors. Do not spread false or misleading information. If you feel sick, quarantine yourself and contact your primary care physician for guidance.

This afternoon, Governor Murphy issued several executive orders. The first extends the public health emergency for 30 days to continue to stay at home unless necessary and maintain proper social distancing if you must go out. The second order was to close all state and county parks. This afternoon, in consultation with Superintendent of Schools Brian Gatens, a decision was made to prohibit passive recreation at all Borough and Board of Education fields and parks effective at 8 PM this evening until further notice. We will be reevaluating this directive on a weekly basis. Our police department will be enforcing this directive.

I want to thank our health care workers who are working tirelessly to help those suffering from this virus. I also want to thank our emergency responders including our Office of Emergency Management led by Coordinator Mark Savino and Deputy Coordinator Perry Solimando, all members of the Police Department led by Chief Michael Mazzeo, our Fire Department led by Captain AJ Sottile and our Ambulance Corps led by Justin Mason. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our first responders as well as our medical heroes. They are risking their lives on a daily basis to care for us in our time of need.

Our small business community is suffering. I urge you to frequent local businesses who can provide take out or delivery service.

We must all do everything we can to keep Emerson safe. We are the Family Town and we will get through this.

If you find yourself out of work and in need of food, there are generous residents who are willing to help. Or if you would like to receive a phone call to check on your welfare on a weekly basis, please call Borough Hall at 201-262-6086 Option 9 and give your contact information to our staff. This information will be kept confidential.”

I also want to share a message that was sent out last Friday to inform our seniors, disabled and housebound residents about meal delivery and grocery shopping services available to them.

“Hi. This is Mayor DiPaola reaching out to say hello and hope you are all feeling well. If you are not please reach out to your primary care physician for guidance. Unless as always if it is an emergency, then please call 911. Our emergency services are always here to help you. In an effort to assist our homebound and disabled residents, we are sharing the following updated information about the Pascack Valley Meals on Wheels program so as to streamline the enrollment and delivery process for Emerson residents.

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, you may be eligible to receive five frozen meals each week at a cost of \$25 per week. You must live alone, be unable to drive and be homebound due to age or disability. If you know an Emerson resident who would benefit from this, please let us know. Please visit emersonnj.org for their application or contact the Borough Clerk at 201-262-6086 Option 9 for assistance. If you contact Meals on Wheels directly, you may be turned away. All checks should be made out to 'Pascack Valley Meals on Wheels' and may be mailed with your application to Emerson Borough Hall, Attn: Meals on Wheels, 146 Linwood Avenue, Emerson, NJ 07630. Applications and payment received by Wednesdays at noon will allow meal delivery to begin the following Monday.

We also wish to make you aware of another service available for seniors 60 and over who are concerned about leaving their homes to shop for groceries and/or pick up medication during the COVID-19 outbreak. Please contact AskUmbrella.com to see if you are eligible to get these necessary supplies during this difficult time. To place an order, individuals 60 and over can either fill out the form online or call 973-200-4499 or 844-402-2480 Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. AskUmbrella.com charges a nominal fee for this service. For more information, individuals should visit <https://www.askumbrella.com/covid-response>.

On a more cheerful note, people have been asking about our emergency services passing by for their children's birthdays. We are willing to do this on a first come, first serve basis for any child under the age of 16. Please reach out to our Borough Administrator Rob Hermansen at 201-262-5077 with any requests.

I wish you all a happy holiday. God bless you and God bless Emerson."

She thanked all volunteers who were making sure that residents were getting what they needed. She said that the Borough's emergency services would pass by to send birthday wishes to residents under the age of 16. Mr. Hermansen should be contacted to make the arrangements. She also stated that they were reaching out the Fire Department about having the Easter Bunny make an appearance while ensuring the appropriate social distancing. If an event was scheduled, a Swiftreach message would go out to residents. If anyone was planning to visit neighborhoods on their own, she asked that they please ensure social distancing as well. She wished everyone a Happy Holiday, Happy Easter, and a blessed Passover and Ramadan.

- Borough Administrator Rob Hermansen reported on the following:
 - He said they were doing everything in their power to protect residents and Borough employees during this health crisis.
 - Based on this consideration, a decision was made to close Borough Hall to the public. Lock boxes had been placed outside the Building Department which provided 24-hour access for permit forms, court fines, and tax payments.
 - First quarter property taxes would be due on May 1st; there was discussion of a grace period, but they had not yet received any information from the State.
 - All departments were open and functioning; employees were working remotely and only entering Borough Hall as necessary in order to protect their health. He asked everyone for their continued patience as the Borough navigated through these trying times.

- The firehouse floor repair was on course. He anticipated that the bid would go out in May and keep to the set schedule.
- He thanked the Police Department, EMT's, Fire Department and family and friends in the medical community for doing all they could to help families during this crisis. He also thanked OEM Coordinator Lt. Mark Savino for sharing all pertinent information with employees and the public.
- OEM Deputy Coordinator/DPW Superintendent Perry Solimando and his department were doing everything they could to disinfect and sanitize all facilities.
- He especially wanted to thank Mayor DiPaola for working with the department heads and himself in order to allow Borough employees to work remotely. He also thanked her for working so hard to help protect Emerson residents.
- He wished everyone a Happy Easter and Passover.
- At the next meeting he anticipated placing a contract on the agenda for architectural services for the renovation of Borough Hall. He said that current economic conditions provided the opportunity for aggressive bidding. Putting this project off did not make sense as that would entail additional costs. Ms. Roehrer had told him that the Borough would be using cash on hand.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT

☞ **Motion** to open the meeting to comments from the public was **moved** by Councilwoman Argenzia, **seconded** by Councilwoman McGuire and carried unanimously.

Hearing no requests for comment from the public, Mayor DiPaola asked for a motion to close the meeting to comments from the public.

☞ **Motion** to close the meeting to comments from the public was **moved** by Councilwoman McGuire, **seconded** by Councilman Gordon and carried unanimously.

XIII. RESOLUTIONS ON CONSENT AGENDA

☞ **Motion** to approve Consent Agenda Resolutions No. 84-20 through 88-20 was **moved** by Councilman Bayley, **seconded** by Councilwoman Dinallo and carried by a roll call vote of 6-0:

Roll call:

YES: Bayley, McGuire, Dinallo, Hoffman, Gordon, Argenzia

- CA 84-20 Approve laundry license renewal for the one-year period May 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021 – Emerson Cleaners
- CA 85-20 HHS Inspector extend term of Canio Saluzzi due to Covid-19 health crisis
- CA 86-20 Requesting approval of the Director of the Division of Local Government Services to Rename a Dedicated Trust by Rider for Snow Removal to Storm Recovery Reserve Trust Fund Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:4-62.1
- CA 87-20 Resolution Authorizing Joseph Amaral & Sons Landscaping Inc. to Maintain 93 Vivian Avenue
- CA 88-20 Resolution Authorizing Joseph Amaral & Sons Landscaping Inc. to Maintain 14 Broad Street

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to address, at the request of Mayor DiPaola, a motion to adjourn was **moved, seconded** and carried at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Dietsche, RMC
Borough Clerk