**BOROUGH OF CALIFON COUNCIL**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MAY 4, 2020**

Mayor Charles Daniel called the regular meeting of the Borough of Califon Council to order at 7:30 p.m. with the reading of the following Sunshine Law announcement: ***“I would like to announce and have placed in the minutes that adequate notice of this regular meeting of the Califon Borough Council has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by publication of the annual notice in the Hunterdon Review and the Hunterdon County Democrat.”***

***Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the State of Emergency imposed by Governor Phil Murphy, the Borough of Califon Council will hold their regularly scheduled monthly meetings conducted remotely through a web-based platform called Zoom until the Borough is fully opened and operational to the public. Public notification regarding access to the Council meetings will be posted on the Borough website and Facebook. Adequate notification of this change of format has also been provided to both the Hunterdon Review and the Hunterdon County Democrat.***

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL: PRESENT: R. BAGGSTROM, J. COLLINS, E. HAVERSANG,**

 **L. JANAS, M. MEDEA, C. SMITH**

 **ALSO, PRESENT: ANTHONY ARDITO, BOROUGH AUDITOR**

 **ABSENT: NONE**

Mayor Daniel made an alteration to the meeting agenda:

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **2020 MUNICIPAL BUDGET – PUBLIC HEARING AND FINAL ADOPTION**

Mayor Daniel turned the discussion over to the Borough Auditor, Anthony Ardito who explained to Mayor and Council that the State did their examination of the Borough 2020 budget and approved it for adoption. The Council is free to adopt even though the distribution of State aid has been put on hold and is in a state of flux.

Mr. Ardito summarized the 2020 Municipal Budget as follows:

1. 2020 budget allowed for employee salary increases of 2%
2. Contributions were once again provided for the volunteer Fire Company, Rescue Squad and other special services
3. Municipal Tax rate will increase from .613 cents per $100 of assessed valuation to .634; a 2-cent increase (0.0216); which will increase the municipal portion of taxes by $76 annually for the average taxpayer with an assessed valuation of $330,060.

Mayor Daniel opened the public hearing to the public. There being no comments from the public, the public hearing was closed.

The following Resolution was introduced for adoption:

**RESOLUTION 2020-43**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Califon that the 2020 Municipal Budget as introduced on April 6, 2020 and duly advertised on April 22, 2020 and whose public hearing was held on May 4, 2020 with Total Appropriations and Revenues equaling $1,266,657 is hereby approved and adopted upon final reading and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that one (1) certified copy of the adopted 2020 Municipal Budget will be forwarded and filed with the division of Local Government Services.

Motion was made by R. Baggstrom seconded by M. Medea to adopt Resolution 2020-43 as read.

For: R. Baggstrom, J. Collins, E. Haversang, L. Janas, M. Medea, C. Smith

Opposed: None

Absent: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**POLICE REPORT**

Police Chief, Jeff Almer, joined the meeting tonight and reported that April had been a good month with 1000 calls for Califon. There will be a heavy patrol of River Rd. once the bridge project on Rt. 513 commences. Bridge reconstruction began today, 5.4.20, and Rt. 513 is closed. One of the detours is down River Rd. from Hoffman’s crossing. Chief Almer reported that a resident of Raritan Drive called in a suspicious vehicle late in the late-night hours but failed to call it in when the vehicle was being observed. Chief Almer emphasized that calls need to be made at the time of observation because there is nothing the Police can do if the vehicle is gone.

Chief Almer reported that all is fine having to do with his department and the Covid-19 crisis.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by M. Medea seconded by L. Janas to approve the minutes from the meeting held on April 20, 2020.

For: Unanimous

Opposed: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**LIST OF BILLS**

No list of bills for tonight’s meeting.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**\_\_** e-mail from Kevin Pyatt, DPW regarding clean out of leaves, clippings, sticks and debris from area behind the consignment shop on Main St.

\_\_ meeting with Lisa Hibbs from Commercial Utility Consultants on April 27th attended by Clerk Eidsvaag and Mayor Daniel; HAEC energy auction to be held on June 16th

\_\_ proposal from EcolSciences, Inc. for Phase 1 Assessment/Preliminary Assessment; Weis Mill Dam; in the amount of $2,800

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **RESOLUTION – EXTENDING THE GRACE PERIOD TO JUNE 1ST FOR 2ND QUARTER TAXES DUE MAY 1ST**

Mayor Daniel explained to Council that on Tuesday, April 28th, Governor Murphy signed Executive order 130 giving local municipalities the ability to extend the grace period for 2nd quarter property tax payments from May 11, 2020 to a date no later than June 1, 2020. Mayor Daniel stated that this decision is not mandatory but is left to each municipality to do act on one of three options:

1. Leave the grace period at May 11th
2. Extend the grace period to any date between May 11th and June 1st
3. Extend the grace period to June 1st

Mayor Daniel stated further that this decision has to be made by May 11th and must be done by resolution of the governing body. Mayor Daniel asked Council for their thoughts. This issue was discussed with Council in great detail between the Mayor and CFO, Amy Monahan, explaining the fiscal repercussions if either option is decided upon. Chief among these financial concerns was the issue of the obligation to pay the local and regional school taxes and the County taxes on May 1st. The Governor’s Order mentions no deferment of payment to these entities and interest penalties will be charged if payment is not completed in a timely manner. If the local and regional school and county government get paid first, then the Borough is left to pay all the towns bills, which include payroll, shared services and vendors. If tax revenues are delayed by moving the grace period to June 1st, there may not be enough tax revenue to pay the town’s expenses resulting in interest penalties and more expenses incurred. Also, discussed at length are the problems created with the payments from mortgage companies, banks and third-party administrators, if the grace period is extended. CFO Amy Monahan stated that the mortgage companies, banks, etc. are already calling to see if the grace period is extended and she emphasized that they will wait until the very last minute to pay; potentially leaving us short on revenue to cover May’s bills. Councilmen Collins and Janas stated that the banks and mortgage companies are sitting on the escrow and will for as long as they can. Councilman Janas asked if the schools are willing to delay and wait for their payments. Mayor Daniel answered that he can call and see if they might be willing to take 50% now and 50% on June 1st. Councilman Collins asked if there is normally any help for hardships; Ms. Monahan said that yes, they can usually work out a plan for partial payments. Councilwoman Smith asked what will happen if the grace period is left at May 11th. Mayor Daniel responded that a notice to residents would be blasted out informing them of the decision. Councilman Medea and Baggstrom suggested the Council consider extending a week but not until June 1st. After further discussion, emphasizing the financial hardship the town may be facing if this extension is granted, the Council unanimously agreed not to extend the grace period to June 1; leaving it at May 11th. Mayor Daniel reiterated that he will draft a notice to the public informing them of this decision to be posted on the website and Facebook and around town. If there are multiple calls from residents regarding hardships experienced by a majority of the residents, this decision can be reconsidered by calling for an emergency meeting at the end of the week. Clerk Eidsvaag will notify the Mayor and Council if the Municipal offices experience an influx of calls regarding hardship.

1. **RESOLUTION – INTRODUCTION OF 2020 SALARY & WAGE ORDINANCE**

The Clerk read Ordinance 2020-02 by title: **AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF THE VARIOUS OFFICERS OF THE BOROUGH OF CALIFON IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTERDON AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

The following Resolution was introduced for adoption:

**RESOLUTION 2020-44**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Califon that Ordinance 2020-02 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF THE VARIOUS OFFICERS OF THE BOROUGH OF CALIFON IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTERDON AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY** is hereby introduced upon first reading; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Ordinance 2020-02 will be considered for final adoption following the public hearing to be held on June 1, 2020; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Notice of Ordinance 2020-02 will be published in the May 13, 2020 edition of the Hunterdon Review.

Motion was made by R. Baggstrom seconded by L. Janas to adopt Resolution 2020-44 as read.

For: Unanimous

Opposed: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilman Medea reported that the basketball nets for the basketball court at the Park have been ordered and will be shipping in a week. They have requested that a couple of people be available to help the driver unload the nets so he and Chris Keiser will make themselves available. The nets will be unloaded into the bays at the Municipal Building.

Councilman Medea reported that the pedestrian sign at the bridge is missing; he thinks it may be up at the school and will check.

Councilman Haversang reported that he has had no news from Jason Beard about the cookbook that is in development. The Columbia Trail reopened but is much less crowded that it was before it was closed for a couple of weeks.

Councilwoman Smith reported that Amanda Rambo, resident of Main St. has reported to her that there are many cars parking on Main St. to walk the trail. Councilman Baggstrom reported that there are many people parking and walking on River Rd. as well.

Councilman Janas reported that the April Planning Board meeting has been cancelled. He has heard nothing from the school Steering Committee.

Councilwoman Smith reported on the 2020-21 School Budget at a public hearing on April 29th. The total budget appropriations are $2,965,655. Councilwoman Smith stated that the population of the school for next year is currently at 63 students and she gave a breakdown of the number of children in each grade.

Virtual learning is going well. Maintenance is currently working a full schedule. Graduation will be held on June 9th and they are trying to put some kind of plan in place; unknown as yet.

The Steering Committee is waiting to meet again until July when the new CSA begins her employment. Next year’s tuition will be $6500 for grades K-5 and $7000 for grades 6th thru 8th.

Councilman Baggstrom reported that the Main St. Improvement Project is finished and the contractor Top Line did a nice job with the curbing (80-90% was salvageable) and the paving. The surface of the storm drains is all new; not the basins. There will be no additional signage except for what was there prior to construction. Mayor Daniel reported that the residents on S. Main St. are very pleased that the road was improved.

Councilman Collins reported that the Board of Health meeting in April was cancelled.

Councilman Collins reported that Trout Unlimited has once again expressed their commitment to cover the cost of the Environmental Assessment Study for the Weis Dam project. The proposal estimated the cost at $2,800. The Borough Attorney will look into getting the required permission from the County and hopefully this project will continue to move forward.

**MAYOR’S REPORT**

Mayor Daniel reported that, because graduation ceremonies are cancelled this year due to the Covid19 virus, Jessica and Jason Beard are looking into purchasing lawn signs with pictures of all the graduates from Voorhees High School that can be posted on the lawns of the graduate’s homes. Two sets for each graduate will be ordered; one for the graduate’s home and one for the town to post. The total number of high school graduates in Califon Boro this year is 18 students, so the cost for the signs will be approximately $300.00. The cost of signs for graduates of Califon School will be paid by the school. The Beards have asked if the town could cover the $300 cost for the high school students. Mayor Daniel felt that this cost could be covered by the money in the Recreation Committee account that was saved by not having the Memorial Day Parade this year. The Recreation Committee will be contacted to confirm.

Mayor Daniel reported that our Borough Engineer, Tom Boorady, is waiting for the go ahead to apply for the next round of funds for road improvements through the DOT. Kevin Pyatt, DPW, has suggested that the Borough apply for improvements to Bank St. and Philhower Ave. and then that whole section of town will be done. Councilman and Streets & Roads Commissioner Baggstrom expressed his agreement with this plan. Council agreed as well and Mr. Boorady will be given the green light to proceed with the application whose deadline is July 1st.

**COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None

There being no further business to come before Council at this time, motion was made by C. Smith seconded by R. Baggstrom and unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted:**

**Laura G. Eidsvaag, RMC**

**Municipal Clerk/Administrator**