**BOROUGH OF CALIFON**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**NOVEMBER 21, 2024**

**MINUTES**

Mayor Charles Daniel called the regular meeting to order at 7:03 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.”***

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL: PRESENT: R. Baggstrom, E. Haversang L. Janas, J. Ruggiero, C. Smith**

**Absent: M. Medea**

**Also, Present:**

**Chief J. Almer WTPD**

**Via Zoom, Borough Attorney M. Anderson**

Mayor Daniel moved to Public Comments on the agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Weslee Lynch of 78 Main Street from the Califon Historic Millpond Alliance read their proposal regarding the restoration of the South Branch River. The alliance, which is made up of residents who reside along the river either on First Street or River Road, has asked the council to pass a resolution that will require that any restoration plans presented by Raritan Headwaters Association adhere to the Borough’s Master Plan, undergo historical review, and demonstrate sufficient funding.

The proposal asks that the council require any plans for the river restoration by the Coles Mill Dam to reflect that this area is the scenic center of Califon. The aesthetics of the banks and the vegetation along the banks must be tailored to maintain the scenic setting of this part of town.

Brian O’Sullivan, 1 First St, showed the council members photos of the sun setting along the river taken from the bridge and another photo taken in 1969, the last time the slew skates were raised to lower the water level.

B. O’Sullivan read a statement reflecting his thoughts and opinions on removing the Coles Mill Dam. The statement also advised that he was informed that the Borough had plans to turn lot 25, a riverfront strip of land owned by the Borough, on First Street, into a park with parking spaces. B. O’Sullivan also advised that the land swap proposal he presented to the Borough was not discussed in an open meeting but instead in an executive session. B. O’Sullivan stressed the need for transparency.

Daniel Andraos of 76 Main Street said he believes someone is advocating on behalf of the dam's owner and does not know why the owner has not had to submit the plans for removal to the Historical Society.

Mayor Daniel advised that no one was representing the dam's owner and that he was sure that this project would have to be presented to the state Historic Preservation Commission.

Cindy Stoter, 7 First Street, advised that she attended Raritan Headwater’s public information meeting held at the Presbyterian Church. At the meeting, she advised that residents of First Street were not in favor of a public park on First Street. C. Stoter then advised that she had heard this was still being pursued.

Discussion was held regarding where this idea was first presented and whether the Borough knew this plan had taken place. Mayor Daniel stated that the Borough is not planning in any way to install a park at this location.

J. Lynch, 78 Main Street, asked about the town's historic review process. A discussion concerning the process of the Califon Planning /Zoning Board, which also conducts historic reviews, took place.

Danielle Andraos, 76 Main St, advised that the county had advised her that the dam's removal would interfere with the structure of the bridge. D. Andraos advised that residents on the river get different messages from RHA.

Art Hance advised that he is not a resident of Califon but has worked and lived in the area for many years. A. Hance attended the public meeting of RHA and advised that the companies involved in the engineering of the dam removal will financially benefit from the removal of the dam. Hance advised that he believes the Borough needs to take a stance on what can and cannot be done, or the Borough will not have any choice once the project is fully planned.

Bill Cutri-French, who lives in Glen Gardner but owns a house on 35 Railroad Ave, advised that a year ago this August, he submitted a Historical Review for the demolition and rebuild of a garage at 35 Railroad Ave. He had to submit $500 for escrow, but he still has not received the balance for this escrow.

With no further comments to be made, the mayor closed public comment.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES- Meeting of November 5, 2024**

L. Janas advised that there are two “the’s” in his committee report.

C. Smith advised that Santa and Mrs. Claus will be present on both December 1st and December 8th, not just the 8th, as the minutes reflect.

 Motion was made by J. Ruggiero seconded by R. Baggstrom to approve the meeting minutes of November 7, 2024.

For: R. Baggstrom, E. Haversang, L. Janas, J. Ruggiero, C. Smith

Absent: M. Medea

Opposed: None

**MOTION CARRIED**

**CORRESPONDENCE/CLERK REPORT**

-Preconstruction meeting on 1-15-24 concerning Phase II of Aqua Water Main Replacement Project. Start date for Raritan River Road is 12-5-24. Coolidge Court- 12-12-24 and School Street Extension 12-17-24. Service installation will be 12-23-24 and final pave April 14th.

\_ Regarding Phase I, First St and Hoffman will receive a full pave before winter due to the number of repairs needed to get these roads winter-ready. Philhower will undergo complete repair.

Aqua has agreed to be responsible for any repairs that may be needed in the spring due to settling.

Once the installation is completed and the three-month settlement period is over, the streets for Phase II will be paved from shoulder to shoulder.

We received an estimate of $3,600 to repair the water service on the island in front of the post office. However, we must wait to do this as it is outside the budget.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Council members unanimously approved using the Califon Island Park parking lot to stage equipment and machines for Phase II of the Aqua Main Replacement Project.
2. Council members unanimously approved the hiring of Lori Swiston as a part-time Deputy Clerk. L. Swiston will work Monday through Thursday for 16 hours and earn $16,850.00.
3. Council members unanimously approved hiring Caitlin Haughey as the Municipal Clerk/Administrator, effective February 1, 2025. C. Haughey’s salary will be $76,500.

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **SHORT TERM RENTAL**

The Township of Union’s ordinance for Short-Term rentals was discussed. It was agreed that if Califon allowed short-term rentals, we would change the definition from one night to a minimum of two nights. Discussion took place concerning Operational Requirements. The Township of Union requires that short-term rentals are “permitted for a maximum of 15 separate rentals per year or a maximum of 90 nights per year, whichever occurs first.”

 Discussion on whether the Borough would follow these restrictions took place. Pros and cons were both discussed.

Mayor Daniel asked the Borough attorney if we would forward this to the Planning/Zoning Board. M. Anderson advised that he suggests that the Borough forward a copy of the Ordinance to the P/Z board once it is introduced.

 Further review and discussion will take place at the next meeting.

Mayor Daniel asked Chief Almer if he had anything to report. Chief Almer advised that there is nothing new to report.

Mayor Daniel advised that we would go into one more Public Comment.

Councilman Ruggiero asked if he could ask a member of the public a question. Mayor Daniel agreed. Cm Ruggiero asked D. Andraos of 76 Main Street, when she was operating a short-term rental, how many weekends of the year she had her place booked. D. Andraos advised that every weekend and she would have Monday through Friday renters as well.

No further comments were made.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Councilman Haversang reported that the trees planted in the park are doing well. The watering has ceased, and we now have rain, so we are in good shape.

Bill Kibler will be the new fire chief for the Fire Company report, effective January 1, 2025.

Councilman Janas reported that no active proposals were made before the board, so last night’s planning board meeting was canceled. The next meeting will be on December 18th.

Councilwoman Smith reported that the Califon Board of Ed met on November 20th. Enrollment is 92.

December 9th, the PTA is hosting the annual Holiday Lunch at the school.

The college pennant project is going strong. The school has over 100 college pennants from schools that Califon school graduates have attended.

Councilman Baggstrom advised that we covered all he had to report.

Councilman Ruggiero reported that the Menorah lighting will occur on December 30th at 6:30 pm.

Proposals for IT/ Email are still being received and reviewed.

**MAYOR’S REPORT**

Mayor Daniel reported that he attended the Califon School TREPS program on the evening of Friday, November 15th. He said they did a fabulous job, and the students were enthusiastic about their projects.

Mayor Daniel reported that he attended the NJLM conference, and the hot topic was affordable housing. Mayor Daniel advised that the 4th round of affordable housing came out, and Califon’s obligation is 23 units. Mayor Daniel reported that since we are 100% in the Highlands Preservation area, do not have sewers, and are entirely built out, there is not much we can do. We will be seeking assistance from the Highlands to assist in getting this number down. Mayor Daniel reported that we have professionals who are affordable housing experts who can help us navigate through the issue.

With no further business to attend, Councilwoman Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:05pm seconded by R. Baggstrom.

All In Favor

Adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Mastro