



**CITY OF LAMBERTVILLE
SPECIAL JOINT SESSION
MAYOR & COUNCIL WITH THE
LAMBERTVILLE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 7, 2018, 6:00 P.M.
PHILLIP L. PITTORE JUSTICE CENTER
25 SOUTH UNION STREET
MINUTES**

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT.

Mayor DelVecchio called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. and read the following statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act into the record: This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act with the City Clerk providing adequate notice on January 25, 2018 to the Times, the Democrat and the Herald, posting of the agenda on the city's website at www.lambertvillenj.org and the city's bulletin board located at 18 York Street, and notice was also sent via the list serve and to department heads.

ROLL CALL.

Governing Body, City of Lambertville

The City Clerk called the roll as follows:

Present: Councilman Sanders, Council President Stegman, Mayor DelVecchio.

Absent: Councilwoman Asaro (sick), Councilwoman Warner (death in family).

Lambertville Board of Fire Commissioners

The Secretary for the Fire Commission called the roll as follows:

Present: Commissioner Komjathy and Commissioner Lechner.

Absent: Commissioner Mohr and Commissioner McManus-Keyes.

Noting that Commissioner Kasick resigned.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Mayor DelVecchio led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE.

The City Clerk led the public in a moment of silence in honor of those serving in the United States Armed Forces.

BEST PRACTICE INVENTORY, Question 8.

Mayor DelVecchio informed the members of the public present that the DCA set up a practice now called the Best Practice Inventory and noted that if you don't achieve a certain grade (the score drops below 25 responses) the city will lose state aid.

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Question 8 reads: Many municipalities have created one or more authorities (including fire districts, utilities authorities, redevelopment authorities, housing authorities, port authorities, etc.) to provide greater focus and attention on addressing a public need, or to reduce governing body burdens. While creation of an authority is often appropriate, and many authorities successfully fulfill their missions, authorities with weak membership or insufficient local-level monitoring can become wasteful, inefficient and unresponsive to the public they serve. N.J.S.A. 40A:5A-20 allows a local governing body to dissolve an authority subject to certain parameters and with Local Finance Board approval. Municipalities should at least annually assess the authority or authorities they created and publicly discuss their findings and conclusions. Findings and conclusions should address whether their existing authorities 1) continue to serve the public interest, and 2) are more efficient than other potential alternatives in providing services and financing public facilities. Within the past year, 1) has the above-referenced discussion appeared as a listed agenda item on a scheduled governing body meeting, and 2) do the findings and conclusion appear in publicly-available meeting minutes?

The city's response was "No."

Mayor DelVecchio informed the members of the public present that this discussion will review the following two points of interest: Does the Lambertville Board of Fire Commissioners continue to serve the public interest and are their more efficient than other potential alternatives in providing services and financing public facilities. He said tonight he would like to address "Does the Lambertville Board of Fire Commissioners continue to serve the public interest" and asked Council President Stegman and Councilman Sanders to meet with the chairman of the Lambertville Board of Fire Commissioners to explore part two of the question: "are more efficient than other potential alternatives in providing services and financing public facilities."

Continue to Serve the Public Interest

Mayor DelVecchio commented that from his point of view, the Lambertville Board of Fire Commissioners continues to serve public interest. The Mayor further commented that the city previously looked into regionalizing fire services but at that time, because of the laws surrounding fire commissions, it was prohibited.

Chairman Komjathy gave an overview of what the Fire Commission has achieved:

- 240 first responder calls that range from answering fire calls to folks who have fallen in the river, includes assists to the Rescue Squad at Heritage Village and Hibernia Apartments, also provide assistance to New Hope Fire, Flemington and Hamilton Township;
- Lowered response time because of day time fires;
- Reduced the amount of money spent on paying other fire companies, the current budget is \$680,000 pretty much stable in his third term on the commission;

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- Switched from all volunteer to a paid staff, very little debt (\$150,000);
- Training is held internally instead of shipping out;
- Staff has been trained to do the maintenance on the fire trucks which includes oil changes, etc.
- Purchased an older truck from Ewing to help in some of the missions in town;

Mayor DelVecchio mentioned the shared services agreement with the City for diesel fuel and gas and this is an additional way to save money.

Mayor DelVecchio asked if the City were to regionalize what the best way would be to accomplish this. Commissioner Komjathy responded that in his opinion the best way would be for municipalities to contract with Lambertville. He introduced Attorney Braslow and stated that he was the expert on title 40. Attorney Braslow commented that he also represents the state association of fire commissioners and he commented that “I think on this model, contract with Lambertville.”

Mayor DelVecchio commented that the city didn’t understand the intricacies of the law when they initially investigated regionalization. He asked Attorney Braslow how the Hamilton regionalization is progressing. Attorney Braslow commented that they have 9 municipal fire departments and the majority of the districts endorsed it. Supposedly the council was to make an announcement that they were on board but it hasn’t happened yet.

Commissioner Komjathy introduced his staff: Sally Lelie – Secretary, Michael Barlow – Chief, Greg Siwy – Captain, Joe Marcucci – Finance, and Lester Myers – Deputy Chief.

Lt. Robert Brown of the Lambertville Police Department asked to make a statement. The Lambertville Fire Commission via Fire Chief Michael Barlow, advised Police Director Cocuzza that the Fire Department will now have firefighter applicant background investigations conducted by a private company. Consequently, the Lambertville City Police Department will no longer conduct background investigations of firefighter applicants.

Commissioner Komjathy commented that they are hiring a reputable firm to complete background checks. He further stated that they had an excellent working relationship with the police department, OEM. We had difficulties during Christmas holidays and there was no second thought for putting our folks on double shifts while we had a situation going on. The period passed and if it occurred again we would take it under advisement.

Councilman Sanders asked about their involvement with the rescue squad. Commissioner Komjathy commented that they have multiple calls and during the day they need assistance from the fire department. Chief Barlow commented that they are only to respond to the second alert

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for advanced life support calls, things that are more critical than a cut finger. However, they have a gentleman's agreement and fill in on an as-needed basis.

Mayor DelVecchio commented that Hunterdon Medical Center will be expanding their site and they recently bought Stoneking's. This will be a big operation and once they get their project up and running, we could get a big commitment from them on what they are willing to do.

Councilman Sanders commented that he visited their website and asked if they had an annual report. Chief Barlow responded that they currently have a monthly report and are working on an annual report.

Commissioner Komjathy commented that their website was linked to the city's website and they had a glitch, they invested in their website, use social media to keep people informed on what is happening. When Commissioner Komjathy was first elected they had four fire departments and four buildings that they funded. Today, they have two fire departments (the Union and the Fleetwing) and one building. The Fire Commission has a great relationship with them. The Columbia is still operating as a nonprofit but as a canteen business. The Hibernia owns their building but they are not operating as a fire department. Members of the Hibernia are members of our department, they all report to the Union and they don't have separate trucks. We don't pay rent or fees to these individual companies with the exception of the Union which is voted on by the board of commissioners.

Councilman Sanders asked how many full time employees they had. Commissioner Komjathy stated they had 3 full time employees and 8 per diems. Commissioner Komjathy stated that the fire election is scheduled for February 17, 2018 from 2 – 9 pm. The budget and the purchase of a truck is on the ballot. He was part of a coalition to be on the election ballot like the school board. The state gave the same rules and as long as their budget stays below the 2% cap it doesn't need to be voted on by the public. Various boards and commissioners appeared before the legislature about changing the date to the November election.

Council President Stegman asked if they could explain about the Columbia. Commissioner Lechner commented that it would be more appropriate to get them to explain. Attorney Braslow explained that the Columbia was serving a function but it went from firefighting to providing a truck and canteen service to be used during a fire or emergency situation. Commissioner Komjathy stated that they are a registered not for profit and when the building was sold the commission tried getting the proceeds.

Other Potential Alternatives

Mayor DelVecchio reiterated his request for Council President Stegman and Councilman Sanders to meet with representatives of the Commission to discuss other potential alternatives at a later date. Commissioner Komjathy stated that it would be beneficial for Council President

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Stegman and Councilman Sanders to attend a Commission meeting. Secretary Lelie commented that the reorganization meeting is scheduled for March 6th. Councilman Sanders stated that it was important for Attorney Braslow, because of his knowledge base, to participate in the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

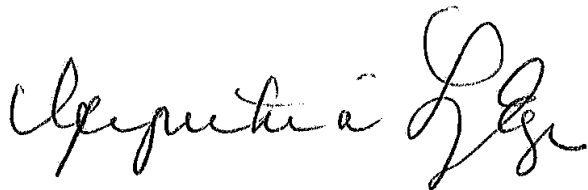
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION/PETITION OF CITIZENS AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION.

Larry Rack, 55 Elm Street, asked how responsibility is held for arson investigations. There have been a couple of fires in my neighborhood; do we have the resources to handle that? Mayor DelVecchio asked Lt. Brown to respond. Lt. Brown commented that the city has many resources for arson investigations and they include the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office, the State of New Jersey's Arson Investigation and the State Fire Marshalls. The fire company has a vital role in putting out the fire and then it goes to law enforcement.

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m. with a motion made by Council President Stegman and seconded by Councilman Sanders. An affirmative roll call vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia L. Ege, CMR, RMC, City Clerk



The February 7, 2018 Joint Session Minutes were approved at the February 20, 2018 Council meeting.