

BOROUGH OF HIGH BRIDGE – COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 13, 2020 – 7:30 p.m. – Location: Zoom online Council meeting

CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR LEE

FLAG SALUTE: LEAD BY MAYOR LEE

ROLL CALL

Councilman Columbus	present	Councilwoman Moore	present	Mayor Lee	present
Councilwoman Ferry	present	Councilman Strange	present		
Councilwoman Hughes	present	Councilman Zappa	present		

Also present were Attorney Barry Goodman, Administrator Bonnie Fleming, Clerk Adam Young and thirty-nine members of the public and press.

READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: REGULAR 07/16/2020

Motion to dispense with the reading of the July 16, 2020 regular minutes: Hughes / Strange

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, absent ;

Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 absent

Motion to approve the July 16, 2020 regular minutes: Hughes / Strange

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, absent ; ;

Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 absent

Councilman Zappa enters at 7:35 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM MAYOR LEE

A. Passing of Doris Schuetz - Mayor Lee spoke of the accomplishments of Doris Schuetz and asked for a moment of silence.

B. Mayor's Statement - Over the last five months, our Borough Administration has been extremely busy. First with the COVID pandemic, the closing of the schools, parks, and municipal buildings. The subsequent re-opening plans and overcrowding in our parks, and most recently, Hurricane Isaias and its aftermath. The toughest issue we have faced, and one that we must work together to resolve, is systemic racism. Several events that unfolded here in High Bridge over the last eight weeks, including a peaceful march organized by local high school students, and the sharp increase in tourism to Lake Solitude, have exemplified that we are not immune to racial bias and intolerance. Hateful and racist posts and comments on several community Facebook pages and during our last Council meeting were visible for everyone to see, including our children and our minority friends and neighbors, and even drew the attention of several news organizations. It is now an unfortunate fact that the racist views of a few spoke the loudest and are now part of our permanent public record. This has been an extremely painful experience for me as Mayor, and as a mother. Growing up we learned that sticks and stones may hurt your bones but words will never hurt us... we all know that is simply not true. Words do hurt ... and the wounds can be deep and often leave scars that last forever. My heart goes out to our minority population who were undoubtedly hurt by these hateful exchanges, and may even have felt abandoned by those of us who stayed silent. As such, I believe this is an important time to speak up about racism. Calling it out is an important step towards healing. I unequivocally denounce racism and intolerance. As Mayor, I want to ensure that everyone, residents and visitors alike, feels welcome and that their voices are heard, and that their children are safe. Tonight, I am announcing a new Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in the Borough. This Committee will include myself, members of Council and the School Board, Borough employees and members of the community. The focus of this group will be to develop plans of action to ensure that High Bridge embodies diversity, equality, inclusion, and justice. We will also meet with residents to expand the dialogue so we may all have a better understanding of the issues and develop concrete action items. I want High Bridge residents to feel comfortable and safe in expressing themselves and their concerns as we collaborate to achieve meaningful solutions. Our diversity is what makes us stronger as a community, and as a society. Embracing our differences means we stay true to one of our most core values; respect. Respect for ourselves and for others. I certainly don't have all the answers, but I am committed to being part of the long-term solution. I am hopeful that each and every resident will work with me and with each other, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation to effect change in High Bridge. Together we can be leaders by example to the neighboring communities in Hunterdon County and throughout the State.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: 5 MINUTES PER PERSON

Mary Murdock spoke about overgrowth on Cregar Road and asked that the growth be cut back and appreciates the sentiments of Mayor Lee's introductory statement. Councilman Zappa spoke about letting DPW know to prioritize this item. Karen Gove asked to join the ad-hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, asked about the Salary and Wages Resolution and if this many people are employed to accomplish these tasks. Council spoke that many of these positions are done by fewer people. Pablo Delgado thanked Mayor Lee and Council for their statements on diversity and their handling with this issue and offered to sit on the Committee. Monica Franke stated that she is concerned that the resident care for the environment was mixed into another narrative about racism. Michael Heon asked about the original Open Space and Recreation Plan, stated that there are concerns about Lake Solitude, that the Mayor made statements which were misleading about the use of Lake Solitude, that people are being misled about tourism in High Bridge. Joshua Genthe spoke about Arch Street not yet being paved. Council spoke about the impact of Covid and future paving projects. Joseph Suozzo thanked Mayor Lee for her statement and offered his assistance, asked Council to review the 513/Church Street intersection for safety. Mayor Lee and Council, spoke about the Council's involvement to convince the County to act. Linda Lucas spoke about being upset about the garbage found at Lake Solitude and made suggestions to increase tourism in the area. Dan Sova asked about the status of 100 West Main Street, being sold or not. Mayor Lee spoke about the current owners not yet selling the property.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. Ordinance 2020-035:** Amend Ch. 261 - Parks and Playgrounds
Motion to open the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-035: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

Council discussed the intent of the Ordinance. Mary Murdock asked for what the changes are, asked about jumpers on Arch Street. Council spoke about the new disorderly conduct items, the Borough not having jurisdiction on Arch Street where people jump from and the intent to keep waterways open but to keep people safe from Covid-19 as well. Michael Heon asked about climbing on the dam and the specific language utilized in the Ordinance, the use of port-o-potties, and other proposed language in the Ordinance. Discussion ensued. Monica Franke spoke that she is glad to hear about the changes to the Ordinance and asked about reopening of the area, and if port-o-potties will be put into the area if opened. Mayor Lee spoke about the intent to continue the closure of Lake Solitude at this time. Karen Gove asked if the Ordinance covers all the parks. Council stated that it is for all parks. Pablo Delgado spoke about the need to use the spaces in a way that benefit the community and recreation. Mayor Lee and Council stated that this influx of people is unique and that the plan needs to continue evolving for residents and visitors, and that Mayor and Council do consider what impacts the changes will have. Jake Cregar spoke about Ordinances and arrests having happened at Lake Solitude in the past and asked why people can swim up until recently. Council stated that they are not aware of why the arrests happened so far in the past and spoke about the changes to the Ordinance. Lisa Tribinera stated she is glad to extend the closure of Lake Solitude another thirty days and stated the falls should not be treated like a park.

Motion to close the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-035: Hughes / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-035: Strange / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

- B. Ordinance 2020-036:** Lease Agreement - EMS Building
Motion to table the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-036: Zappa / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

- C. Ordinance 2020-037:** Shared Service Agreement between Town of Clinton, High Bridge, and South Branch Emergency Services
Motion to table the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-037: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

- D. Ordinance 2020-038:** Agreement with South Branch EMS to provide services for High Bridge
Motion to table the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-038: Zappa / Hughes

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

- E. Ordinance 2020-039:** Amend Ch. 244 - Noise
Motion to open the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-039: Zappa / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

Council stated the intent of the Ordinance. Mary Murdock asked if it will be tracked with a decibel meter. Council spoke about the Officer on duty making the determination on the scene. Discussion ensued. Pablo Delgado asked if events are affected by the Ordinance. Council spoke about the approval process for events considering this.

Motion to close the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-039: Hughes / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-039: Strange / Hughes
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

- F. Ordinance 2020-040:** Amend Ch. 184 - Vehicles and Traffic
Motion to open the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-040: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

Council spoke about the intent of the Ordinance. Sally Ward spoke in support of the Ordinance. Mary Anne Borer asked how many cars can park at Tisco and Solitude parking lot. Administrator Fleming and Mayor Lee stated fifty at Tisco and fifteen at Solitude lot. Discussion ensued. Nicole Poko stated that parking at the Tisco building should consider the paved lot underneath the area.

Motion to close the public hearing for Ordinance 2020-040: Moore / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-040: Strange / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

DISCUSSION ITEMS: NONE

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

- A. Ordinance 2020-041:** Bond Ordinance to Amend Ord. 2019-017 – Various Water Utility Improvements
Motion to introduce Ordinance 2020-041: Zappa / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Mayor Lee states that the Ordinance 2020-041 shall be published in its entirety in the Express Times and/or the Hunterdon County Democrat along with the public hearing date of September 24, 2020.

- B. Ordinance 2020-042:** Amending Ordinance 2014-19 to confirm properties not affected by vacation of portions of streets
Motion to introduce Ordinance 2020-042: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Mayor Lee states that the Ordinance 2020-042 shall be published in its entirety in the Express Times and/or the Hunterdon County Democrat along with the public hearing date of September 10, 2020.

CONSENT AGENDA

RESOLUTION #	TITLE
Resolution - 179 - 2020	Acceptance of 2019 Audit

Resolution - 180 - 2020	Amend Parks and Playgrounds - Ch 261-1 to 261-9
Resolution - 181 - 2020	Approval of Events - Paint Out and House Decorating Contest
Resolution - 182 - 2020	Approval to Paint Fire Hydrants
Resolution - 183 - 2020	Award of Contract - Golf netting
Resolution - 184 - 2020	Award of Contract - Fire House Garage Doors
Resolution - 185 - 2020	Amend Article II Municipal and Board of Education Property - 197-6 Handicapped parking spaces designated
Resolution - 186 - 2020	Salary and Wages
Resolution - 187 - 2020	Signage in the Commons
Resolution - 188 - 2020	Veterans Hero Flag Project
Resolution - 189 - 2020	Electronic Tax Sale
Resolution - 190 - 2020	Extend Closure of Lake Solitude Park
Resolution - 191 - 2020	Appointment of Deputy Tax Collector

Motion to remove **Resolution 180-2020** and **Resolution 182-2020** from the consent agenda for discussion Columbus / Strange

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

Resolution 180-2020:

Councilman Strange spoke about times when a cooler may be necessary in parks for legitimate reasons and asked that the wording be altered. Council discussed the specifics of the language and looking at this in the future.

Motion to adopt **Resolution 180-2020**: Zappa / Strange

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

Resolution 182-2020:

Mayor and Council discussed the possibility of painting the hydrants differently rather than all gnomes and having other groups involved in this project as well as the need for more discussion on this.

Motion to table **Resolution 182-2020**: Strange / Hughes

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

Motion to approve the consent agenda as amended: Hughes / Strange

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

COUNCIL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Councilman Zappa - Department of Public Works / Engineering

Spoke about StreetScape Phase 2 progress beginning, DPW still picking up brush from the storm, new equipment being used and prepared, sewer lift station being worked on, nine trees were reported down, cleared catch basins, rebuilt catch basins, pothole repairs, trimming of trees, mowing grass, new signs ordered, dirt was removed from the Commons, and working on a stormwater management plan.

Councilwoman Hughes - Public Health / Environmental / Solid Waste / Recycling

The Environmental Commission held socially distanced, the Shred Event was a success, the electronics recycling event was a success, and worked on language for signage at Solitude Lake.

Councilwoman Moore - Finance

Spoke about the 2020 tax rate, sending out tax bills, the annual audit report being completed with no recommendations, stated net debt and the amounts collected.

Councilman Strange - Emergency Services / Education / Open Space / Recreation

Read the Fire Department statistics, spoke about equipment testing being done, the coming golf outing on September 18th, spoke about the rebranding of the EMS trucks, spoke about the Police Department working with the people who were at Solitude Lake, working on Recreation Ordinance changes, spoke about the closing of Voorhees State Park, is not yet sure about the High Bridge Youth Soccer season happening, the trail brochures and QR codes have been posted.

Councilwoman Ferry - Website / Newsletter / Historical / Special Events

Website Committee working on a social media policy, the Events Committee holding a virtual Paint Out as sponsorship is down, having a house decorating contest on October 31st, the Historical Committee creating a list of what needs to be done at the Solitude House, thanked the Committee for their work on this list, the Springside Ad-hoc Committee working on tarping Springside, thanked these members for their work.

Councilman Columbus - Golf / Economic Development Committee

Read the golf statistics, spoke about how long the course was closed, approval to repair netting, looking into some fountain ponds and a bubbler to reduce algae in some areas, the coming Club Championship, the coming Secula event, EDC working on economic fund opportunities, working with Google Maps to show entities in the Borough.

Administrator Bonnie Fleming - Administrator's Report

Spoke about working extensively on figuring out how to make the Lake Solitude situation work, the coming annual tax sale, continue finalizing EMS agreements, and spoke about how to deal with the vacated alleyways, reviewing a solid waste contract which will be up for bid soon, a court date for 100 West Main Street violations, and beginning PBA contract negotiations.

Mayor Michele Lee - Executive Services Report

Working with the 100 West Main issues, working with entities about storm damage, working with the Lake Solitude issues, Covid-19 changes, working with the Economic Committee, StreetScape logistics, receiving thanks to the Police Department.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: 5 MINUTES PER PERSON

Brian Scanlon, 79 Fairview Ave., asked when the situation of access will be specified, when paving will follow the Borough maps, and asked for clarification on this issue. Administrator Fleming spoke about needing to look at the specifics of the situation and contacting Mr. Scanlon about this issue. Discussion by Council ensued about past Ordinances. Mary Murdock spoke about opening the painting of hydrants up to a broader audience. Pablo Delgado spoke about bringing more people into town, that having Main Street closed may not happen and encouraged people to support the local businesses. Karen Gove thanked Council for taking time to do fire hydrants as it is a good item to discuss. Nicole Poko spoke about updating social media to Love High Bridge, speaking about the positive things in the Borough, asked for followers to reach out to her, spoke about three businesses opening on Main Street, spoke about supporting local businesses, and thanked everyone for their support. Sally Ward thanked Mayor Lee for her opening statement, thanked Borough professionals, thanked all for persevering with amazing grace and read a poem.

LEGAL ISSUES: NONE

COMMUNICATIONS

- A.** Elizabethtown Gas Notification of Public Hearing
- B.** July 2020 Zoning Report
- C.** Tax and Finance Reports
- D.** Lake Solitude Reopening Plan
- E.** Resident letter of thanks 1
- F.** Resident letter of thanks 2

BILL LIST

Approval of Bills as signed and listed on the Bill Payment List. **Total Amount: \$1,315,035.56**

Motion to approve bill list:

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

ADJOURNMENT: PRESIDING OFFICER ASKS IF THERE IS ANY FURTHER BUSINESS

Motion to adjourn:

Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Hughes, yes ; Moore, yes ; Strange, yes ; Zappa, yes ;

Motion passes: 6 yes

Next Council Meeting: September 10, 2020 - 7:30 pm – Fire House, 7 Maryland Ave., High Bridge, NJ or Zoom

ATTEST:



Adam Young
Municipal Clerk



Michele Lee
Mayor