BOROUGH OF HIGH BRIDGE
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Date: November 18, 2021 – 6:00 p.m. – Location: Fire House, 7 Maryland Ave., High Bridge NJ

CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR LEE

FLAG SALUTE: LEAD BY MAYOR

ROLL CALL

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

Also present were Attorney Barry Goodman, Administrator Bonnie Fleming, Clerk Adam Young, and eight members of the public and press proceeded by thirty-five members of the public and press after the conclusion of the executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE GOLF COURSE BARN LEASE AGREEMENT AND CHAPTER 48 INSURANCE BENEFITS

Councilman Schwartz enters at 6:03 p.m. Members of the public discussed timing of the executive session with Attorney Goodman and the public exited the meeting room for the executive session.

Resolution 268-2021 - Motion to move into executive session: Hughes / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, absent ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 absent - Action may now be taken.
Motion to move out of executive session: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Thirty-five members of the public and press entered the meeting room.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS:

Motion to amend the agenda to move discussion item Chapter 48 Insurance Benefits, Resolution 260-2021 to the beginning of the meeting: Hughes / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Chapter 48 Insurance Benefits
Mayor Lee asked for a motion to table Resolution 260-2021: Hughes / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, no ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 no
Mayor Lee and Councilman Strange stated that Council would like more time to discuss this item of business, to hear the public's thoughts, and to consider more points of view.

READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 10/27/2021

Motion to dispense with the reading of the October 27, 2021 regular minutes: Hughes / Schwartz
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to approve the October 27, 2021 regular minutes: Hughes / Moore
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

VISITORS:

A. Marc Saluk, Economic Development Director for Hunterdon County - spoke about the constant need to have more meeting space options in Hunterdon County, stated a redeveloped barn space is useful, and a consistent theme for utilization of the American Rescue Plan funds has been meeting space related.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: 5 MINUTES PER PERSON

Theresa Woods of 31 Nassau Road spoke about the danger of potholes on Nassau Road after 45 years since the last paving, the need increasing to have the road repaired, and the deterioration of Nassau Road conditions. Rosemary Woods reiterated Theresa Woods' concerns, that the homes in that area pay taxes as well, that this is a consideration for the local families and extended families of the area and asked that Council drive Nassau road along with emergency services. Doug Walker of Sylvan Road stated he is against employee benefits as that the Borough's infrastructure is failing, that there was no anticipation of these benefits being given, asked that this issue needs fiscal consideration and action by Council soon, that this is an ongoing cost, that this should be considered by Ordinance for a public hearing, and that all information available to Council should be available to the public. Laura Bonner of Cregar Road asked about a damaged light pole, when it can be repaired. Council discussed having the item removed and what the logistics may be. Administrator Fleming stated it would be looked at. Dr. Brendan Coughlin asked if the Council had read up on public/private entities, stated that Council should speak to the points of the meeting, stated in May 2018 there was discussion about a distillery at the Annex along with tax implications, about Tax Assessor responses to this item about exemptions, spoke about having a liability at the golf course as proposed, spoke about the possibility of previous employees being involved with the benefits issue. Paul Kovacsofsky stated that Chapter 48 should be a public hearing item, that he would like to see analysis documents, that the name of the agenda item was vague and rushed, that he would like important items to be discussed outside of the consent agenda, that he would like to see where the savings are in the documents, discussed the actions at a previous meeting pertaining to a letter of acceptance and stated that the way things are being handled doesn't seem right. Sally Ward spoke about the percentage of taxes paid in the Borough and stated supporting documents are listed on the website for reference. Councilman Strange stated that the letter of support item had not documents and came in late on the agenda. Mayor Lee stated that a letter of support was not issued. Sally Ward asked for people to take personal responsibility. Doug Walker stated that the agenda was put up Tuesday evening and asked why everything can't be put up Friday before the meeting. Jason Morales of Union Avenue of fourteen years in the Borough stated that his street is bad, stated that Council has done a better job to address the road issues, that there was a tripping incident, that he repairs the street, that the sewer pipe has an issue, that business use of the barn at the golf course shouldn't be done if there are other important needs, that he is against the redevelopment and to get a cost estimate to repair what the Borough owns already, and suggested putting a significant redevelopment item to a Borough vote.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND RESOLUTIONS:

A. **Ordinance 2021-036:** Golf Redevelopment Plan Bond Ordinance

Motion to re-open the public hearing for Ordinance 2021-036: Hughes / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Mayor Lee stated that it is time to vote on this Ordinance and that this is a good opportunity for the Borough. Hughes discussed that the maximum Bond amount does not indicate that the full amount will necessarily used. Councilman Schwartz stated that this should not be passed until the agreement is passed. Mayor Lee disagreed.
Motion to table Ordinance 2021-036 until the settlement of the lease and redevelopment agreement:
Columbus / Schwartz
Mayor Lee stated that Ordinance 2021-036 is holding up the project and that some form of commitment needs to be shown.
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, no ; Moore, no ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, no ; Lee, no ;
Motion fails: 4 no, 3 yes
Councilman Strange spoke about the process for utilization of the bond. Mr. McManimon stated that this is an authorization and not a sale of the bonds. Councilman Strange stated that bonding is a commitment to the project, spoke about the history of the earnings of the course, that the taxpayers have paid the bond on the course, spoke about the original intent to preserve the open space where the golf course is, stated that the current proposed project may pay its own bills, stated that he does not want this project to be a similar break-even project as the golf course was, that this should not be done by referendum based on the track record of projects such as the sale of the water system. Mayor Lee stated that the course will be generating funds after it is paid off. Sally Ward from Solitude stated that Mr. Strange should vote yes, gave background of how the golf course was envisioned, spoke about the opportunity afforded to the Borough at this time and that to do nothing is wasteful, and that this needs to be done so that the barn is useful to people. Laura Bonner of Cregar Road stated that she has made her feelings

clear on this matter, spoke about how her situation coming to the community and investing in local businesses, pay attention because the community is speaking, stated that it is important to invest in the change, stated that she votes yes, asked Council to not table the item, and that she hopes to see the change and keep the community that has always been here. Doug Walker stated that the golf course originally would take ten years to pay off, this did not happen, refinancing ensued, that the golf course made money as a business, that it didn't pay the mortgage, that good management of the course without debt would work for the taxpayers and bring in $250,000 and $300,000 to pay for infrastructure, that golf and weddings do not go together, that funds can be taken to refurbish the barn/course. Dr. Brenden Coughlin spoke about his time playing at the golf course with Douglas Walker, spoke about increased taxes which would have been incurred from the water system sale, spoke about past expenses of the golf course, spoke about possible amounts of funds the Borough may take in as a wedding venue, spoke about the wedding and golf venues not being complimentary businesses, suggested that there should be a redevelopment committee or limiting this redevelopment to downtown, spoke about PILOT agreements and making sure to watch redevelopment projects for faults with PILOT agreements, stated that this should have gone out to bid as the optics are bad, and that how the process is conducted should be weighed for future projects. Jennifer Cussack of Overlook stated that she would vote yes, stated that she has been hearing that the project is low risk, stated that doing nothing isn't no risk either as the barn will have cost. Karyn Gove stated that she was told that the Borough would not be on the hook for the funds but that, after reading the supporting documents, that she believes the wording does not offer a guarantee. Christina Whited of 76 Main Street urged Council to vote yes because doing nothing does not help the Borough, that capacity of water and sewer was considered when preserving open space at the golf course, that the Borough is beautiful and should entice people to come to the Borough, that there are still concerns with where alternate parking could be, that it is important to listen to the professionals and people with vision. Karen Rinehart of 18 Hoffman Road asked if we know the cost of repairing the barn, stated that people are not getting all the information, and that the full redevelopment of the venue may not be needed at this time. Mayor Lee stated that it is an opportunity and that it would be hundreds of thousands of dollars to do the repairs on the barn, stated that the Borough has not looked at repairing the barn as this is an opportunity. Councilman Columbus disagreed with that assessment of cost to repair the barn. Mr. McManimon stated that the Borough Engineer estimated $100k to $150k depending on the project scope. Pablo Delgado of 9 Hickory Circle expressed that he feels there is not enough information to know if this project should be bonded this way, that he would have liked to be considered for a project like this, that there are other options which can be looked at, that he is disappointed as the genesis of this project, that he believes there are issues with this project, that other people in town with capital should invest in the Borough, stated that Council should vote no as the principal being followed is terrible as proposed, stated that there are no bonds going to save the Solitude House, and stated that the redevelopment being done this way is a shame.
Motion to close the public hearing for Ordinance 2021-036: Columbus / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to adopt Ordinance 2021-036: Hughes / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, no ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, no ; Strange, no ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion fails: 3 yes, 3 no
Attorney McManimon stated that the number of votes is insufficient, and that Council may if they choose re-vote if they feel there is a reconsideration. No further motion was made.

B. **Resolution 269-2021**: Golf Redevelopment Agreement and Golf Lease Agreement
Motion to table Resolution 269-2021: Strange / Schwartz
Roll call vote: Columbus, no ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 no
Discussion ensued between Attorney Goodman and Mayor and Council about options for proceeding with this item.
C. **Resolution 270-2021**: Golf Operations Contract
Motion to adopt Resolution 270-2021: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
D. **Ordinance 2021-052:** Well 8 Valve Piping Upgrades
Motion to open the public hearing for Ordinance 2021-052: Schwartz / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes ;
Councilman Schwartz spoke to the intent of the Ordinance.

Motion to close the public hearing for Ordinance 2021-052: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motion to adopt Ordinance 2021-052: Ferry / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:

A. **Ordinance 2021-053**: Authorizing Acceptance for Deeds of Alleys
Motion to introduce Ordinance 2021-053: Strange / Ferry
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, abstain ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 5 yes, 1 abstention
Councilman Schwarz abstained.
Mayor Lee states that the Ordinance 2021-053 shall be published in the Express Times and/or the Hunterdon County Democrat along with the public hearing date of December 16, 2021.

B. **Ordinance 2021-054**: Water Main Improvements
Motion to introduce Ordinance 2021-054: Ferry / Hughes
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Mayor Lee states that the Ordinance 2021-054 shall be published in the Express Times and/or the Hunterdon County Democrat along with the public hearing date of December 16, 2021.

CONSENT AGENDA

RESOLUTION #	TITLES
Resolution - 271 – 2021	Amend 2021 General Sponsorship Packages, Fees, and Donations
Resolution - 272 – 2021	Amend Art and Media Donation Agreement
Resolution - 273 – 2021	Amend Capital Budget
Resolution - 274 – 2021	Award of Contract – Body Worn Cameras
Resolution - 275 – 2021	Award of Contract – Emergency Excavation
Resolution - 276 – 2021	Award of Contract – High Bridge / Clinton Township Tree Project
Resolution - 277 – 2021	Construction Permit Refund
Resolution - 278– 2021	Lien Redemption
Resolution - 279 – 2021	Tax Refund - Overpayment
Resolution - 280 – 2021	Updated Boards and Committees
Resolution - 281 – 2021	Use of American Rescue Plan Funds
Resolution - 282 – 2021	Year End Transfers

Motion to approve the consent agenda Resolution 271-2021 to Resolution 275-2021 and Resolution 277-2021 through Resolution 282-2021: Hughes / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Councilman Strange spoke about waiting for an approval plan and asked when we would receive this. Administrator Fleming stated it is minor and we should receive this soon. Councilman Strange stated that the language in the Resolution is not accurate as it speaks about the complaint and asked for an amendment.
Motioned to amend Resolution 276-2021 to remove the line “disrupting their property through inappropriate behavior”: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Motioned to adopt Resolution 276-2021: Strange / Columbus
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilman Columbus – Golf
Read golf statistics, control panel at the pump station is functioning, stated that this is a successful year at the course and people are still playing

Councilwoman Ferry - Website / Newsletter / Historical / Events
Spoke about the Historical Committee working with Dennis Bertland to have Solitude House on the National Register of Historic Places, spoke about success of Borough events, future Borough events, thanked those involved, the Borough website, spoke about ongoing painting of the second floor at the Solitude House, furnishings donated, and archive updates. Spoke on the Events Committee and thanks to local contributors for their support of Borough Events.
Councilwoman Moore – Finance – No report at this time.
Councilman Schwartz - Department of Public Works / Engineering
Spoke about having a Borough engineering meeting, the safe routes to school project updates, about the new manholes for the sewer pump station progressing, staring work on well 8 in December, spoke about storm drainage work beginning soon along with road closures, the Administrator making contact about Cregar Road bridge status, and River Road work beginning soon. Spoke about the Department of Public Works work completed for brush and leaves, reminder about appropriate placement of leaves, water meters are still being replaced, call 811 before digging, do not flush anything other than toilet paper down the toilet, reminder to clean up after your dogs at the parks, report vandals, collecting nearly 200 cubic yards of leaves to date, and staff is limited for paving and field maintenance.
Councilman Strange - Emergency Services / Economic Development Committee
Read the October Fire Department statistics, paying respects to past member Henry Hagon and attending the Califon Fire Company parade, read the Police Department statistics, and spoke about Police Officer trainings. Spoke about the Economic Development Committee and rescheduling the November meeting.
Councilwoman Hughes - Public Health / Environmental / Solid Waste / Recycling / Open Space / Recreation
Stated that Hunterdon County has their hazardous waste day coming up, Saturday December 11, spoke about bush trimming and weed pulling in different areas, thanked Green Team members for their assistance with recertification of the Sustainable New Jersey bronze award renewal.
Administrator Bonnie Fleming - Administrator's Report
Spoke about starting 2022 budget, working with FEMA about expenses for tropical storm Ida, claim filed for vandalism to slide in park, and collecting toys for tots and chow hound boxes at Borough Hall.
Mayor Michele Lee - Executive Services – No report at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: 5 MINUTES PER PERSON

Karyn Gove stated that Gransky's donated prizes to the kid's costume contest and thanked Mayor for judging the contest. Pablo Delgado asked Council to not take his comments personally as they are friends, that this decision for the golf course effects everyone in the Borough, asked Council to look into funding from the federal infrastructure bill, asked about updates to the transit village designation, stated that the Borough would benefit from weekend train service, stated that the contract for the golf course may need amending if barn and food concession items are not included. Sally Ward stated that she is sad about the outcome of the golf course Bond item on the agenda and stated that she feels bad about Councilman Strange's choice on the matter.
Councilman Columbus stated that he represented the Borough, that he did not like the terms of the contract, and that he is looking at this from a business standpoint for the Borough. Councilman Strange stated that this was not an easy decision, this was not presented well from the beginning, that he did listen to many people on this, that he has done his best to listen to all on this issue, that friendship had nothing to do with his vote, that this has been the most difficult vote to date, that it is offensive to suggest that people are voting because of what their friend suggested, that all involved have tried to do the best they can, and stated that he will do what he can to assist the town, on Council or not. Sally Ward stated that Councilman Strange needs to care and that a golden opportunity has been shot down by Councilman Schwartz, Councilman Strange, and Councilman Columbus.
Karyn Gove of 15 Mill Street commended Council for voting based on the information they had. Councilman Columbus stated that this is not always an easy position to be in. Karen Rinehart of 18 Hoffman thanked Council for looking at this issue, thanked Council for their time and effort, and stated that there are still many opportunities in town.

LEGAL ISSUES: NONE

COMMUNICATIONS

A. Tax and Finance Monthly Reports
B. October Zoning Report

BILL LIST

Approval of Bills as signed and listed on the Bill Payment List. **Total Amount: $449,417.07**
Motion to approve bill list: Hughes / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes
Councilman Strange abstained for any PaintOut items.

ADJOURNMENT: PRESIDING OFFICER ASKS IF THERE IS ANY FURTHER BUSINESS

Motion to adjourn: Ferry / Strange
Roll call vote: Columbus, yes ; Ferry, yes ; Moore, yes ; Schwartz, yes ; Strange, yes ; Hughes, yes ;
Motion passes: 6 yes

Next Council Meeting: December 16, 2021 - 7:30 pm – Fire House, 7 Maryland Ave, High Bridge NJ

ATTEST:

Adam Young
Municipal Clerk

Michele Lee
Mayor