

DPW COMMITTEE OF THE
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF CLOSTER

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2014 – 7:30 P.M.

The Mayor and Council of the Borough of Closter held a Special Meeting at Borough Hall on Thursday, March 6, 2014. Councilwoman Latner called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilwoman Latner invited all to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey. The Notice of Special Meeting was published in The Record on February 19, 2014 and the Star Ledger on February 20, 2014, as noted in the affidavits of publication, and were posted on the Municipal Clerk's bulletin board on February 19, 2014 and February 20, 2014 and have remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of each Notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

3. ROLL CALL

Those present were as follows:

Mayor Sophie Heymann
Councilpersons: John C. Glidden, Jr., Alissa Latner, John Kashwick, David Barad
Borough Administrator, Richard Sheola
Borough Attorney, Edward T. Rogan
Borough Clerk, Loretta Castano
Superintendent of Public Works, William Dahle, III

Those absent were as follows:

Councilpersons Arthur B. Dolson and Victoria Amitai

4. DISCUSSION RE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INPUT REGARDING THE FUTURE OF GARBAGE AND SANITATION COLLECTION IN THE BOROUGH

Councilwoman Latner explained that the purpose of the meeting is to provide an open discussion with the public before the DPW Committee brings the final plan to the full Mayor and Council. The Committee wishes to provide transparency for the residents. She provided a brief history starting in 2012 when the Borough went out to bid for garbage collection at which time the savings did not warrant the privatization of garbage collection. The residents at that time did not want any changes in garbage collection. In 2013 a special Ad-Hoc Committee was appointed to review various solid waste and recycling collection options. The Committee did not make a hard and fast recommendation but instead suggested listening to the residents before implementing any recommendations. She thanked the Committee, which was headed by Michael Kafer. She outlined the recommendation to be forwarded to the Mayor and Council which included solid waste collection in house twice weekly and outsourcing recycling collection on a twice a month basis. Vegetative waste, not grass clippings, would be collected on a limited basis. This recommendation would eliminate extraordinary repair bills as well as provide for the purchase of one new garbage truck in each of the next two years in addition to help to increase the economic and green benefits of recycling. A major campaign would be directed at the schools and children in addition to adherence to stricter rules for recyclables by homeowners. The new trucks would be used not only for garbage collection but for other services such as leaf collection and snow removal.

Councilwoman Latner opened the meeting to the public.

Diane Smith, 419 Closter Dock Road, expressed support for the purchase of the garbage trucks but felt the Borough could not go to privatization because the purchase would become obsolete. She said that she likes the present system of collection and does not want the present employees fired or reassigned. The Borough would give up everything with privatization inasmuch as the first contract is wonderful and cheap but the second contract would provide for increased rates. Leave the system alone and without change.

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Janet Lukach, 290 Durie Avenue, referred to vegetative waste collection and noted that many residents were not aware of the change and she was advised during a meeting at the Mayor's office that only 120 to 150 residents require this service. She requested a listing of those residents and was advised by the Superintendent of Public Works that there was no list only a rough count. There was no mention of the elimination of this service indicated in the November 13, 2013 meeting agendas. At this time, she quoted the Borough Administrator's report in the minutes of the Work Session of November 13, 2013, which indicated that there are about 150 stops for this service in the entire town so there is not a lot of customers to be served for a lot of money to provide this service. She continued quoting the minutes in which Mayor Heymann, Councilman Barad and Councilman Kashwick gave their opinions. Councilwoman Latner said the service was not economically feasible and the general consensus was to deep six the services. Further at the Regular Meeting of November 13, 2013 a motion that was made by Councilman Glidden, seconded by Councilwoman Latner to eliminate the vegetative waste collection as of January 1, 2014 was adopted on a 3-2 vote. The public was unaware of the change and she cited that the Department only picked up vegetative waste 14 times from March until September 2013. She said that the 150 residents may not be able to afford landscapers and is a personal choice. These homeowners pay taxes and should not be penalized. She said the motion of November 13, 2013 borders on violation of the Sunshine Law and should be rescinded thereby restoring the vegetative waste collection.

Richard Marsich, 82 Maple Avenue, said the proper management of the Department in a few short years by the Superintendent of Public Works has made a big difference in the service; and his continued management would bring costs in line. He expressed support for continued pick up by the town and employees.

In answer to Joe Spivack, 40 Johnson Court, Councilwoman Latner said that snow plowing would not be outsourced. He expressed support for maintaining the same system citing the knowledge of the town by the Borough employees.

Ju Chun, 64 Robinhood Avenue, referred to the campaign for recycling; and Councilwoman Latner outlined some of the education that could be provided to the children. Mr. Chun suggested that the campaign be directed to the Borough as a whole not on a segmented basis.

Steve Isaacson, 97 Columbus Avenue, said he was a member of the Committee and felt that this meeting was not set up properly; and the Council was only going through the motions. In answer to a question about the meeting, Borough Attorney said that the meeting started as a Committee meeting but when it was indicated that other Council members would be attending the meeting, a public notice had to be published under the Open Public Meetings Act. Mayor Heymann noted that the Committee does have background figures to justify the suggestions that are being made this evening; and she said she would share same with any interested resident.

Josephine Cavalier, 89 Union Street, expressed concern about the waste removal and Councilwoman Latner said the Borough would not be privatizing waste removal and that Miele Sanitation would continue picking up the recycling but on a twice a month schedule. Borough Attorney clarified that this was originally scheduled as a three-person committee meeting for discussion purposes and the committee decided to seek public input. When other members of the Council heard about the meeting and wished to attend, a public meeting notice had to be advertised because there would be a quorum of the Council at the meeting. The Committee's inclination going into the meeting was they were not leaning towards privatization.

Carl Olsson, 215 Irving Avenue, as a member of the committee, noted that Mr. Kafer did a superb job and questioned if the committee report was a public document available to the public; and Borough Attorney answered in the affirmative. Borough Administrator said that the report is published on the website.

Michael Kafer, 261 Parsells Lane, Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Committee, said there should be available a printout indicating the recycling tonnage figures during the once-a-month pickup compared to the twice-a-month pickup for the last six months. Some of the recommendations in the report were implemented; but as of this time, the governing body has not taken a position on the report. He said we pick up our own garbage and we have a Solid Waste Transfer Station in our town. We have a recurring revenue source in the Host Community benefit, on which the Borough does not place a value, and should be treated as an asset. He suggested that there could be once-a-week solid waste pickup and the manpower could then be used for other services such as clearing downed trees, snow and ice, which was one of our recommendations.

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Nancy Hodgins, 19 Jane Street, agreed to keep the staff at the Department of Public Works and felt that if the public had not come out last year, a different solution would have been voted upon. There should have been more research done on issues before same are brought to the public. Borough Attorney said if the Council is not changing the policy, a vote would not be taken. A future Council could choose to look into the matter. Councilman Glidden said that under the law we cannot bind a future council. Ms. Hodgins noted that assisted listening devices should be available to the residents.

Thomas Caldwell, 25 Cedar Court, cited the amount of garbage in his home but could make do with once a week pickup in the winter months. He noted that the reason the speakers cannot be heard is because of audience in the back of the room speaking at the same time. He expressed his happiness with the Public Works employees and noted that during the storm he went to the DPW Garage to complain and was told to go away because the men work very hard. He noted that the governing body works very hard and the only time there has been a large group at a meeting is when garbage is discussed.

Phyllis Hirsch, 422 High Street, expressed opposition to the suspension of vegetative pickup and requested that same be restored. Relative to the pick up of paper and cardboard, she requested that same be allowed to be placed into plastic containers to avoid littering. Tying up paper in bundles is impractical and plastic containers can be dragged to the curb.

Marie Hartwell, 1 Bradley Place, referred to the Host Community fee and Mayor Heymann said that the fee is 50 cents per ton, which is the mandated minimum by the State. The value of the pickup is many times more than that fee. If you add up the cost of the resold recyclables plus the cost of pick up of same and compare that with the Host Community fee, Closter comes out way ahead. She noted that in 2011, Miele Sanitation handled 31,744.44 tons of solid waste plus an additional 5,366 tons of construction debris; and this figure has been going down yearly as recycling increases. Using these figures, the Host Community fee due Closter would be \$18,567.50. Realistically the number would be smaller for 2013. She cited the figures for 2012 including the bids received for collection of recyclables and said that copies of these figures would be available to residents upon request. Ms. Hartwell expressed support of the recommendations made by the committee and questioned why this issue keeps coming up before the governing body.

In answer to Dave Hollender, 20 Johnson Court, Councilwoman Latner said the recommendation of the Committee is for twice a week garbage pick up.

At this time, Councilwoman Latner read an e-mail from Ellen and Richard Stein, 26 Collins Avenue (3. M.L. 3/6/14) who could not attend the meeting. They expressed support for the service of the Department of Public Works in collecting garbage and urged that the system remain in place.

Michael J. Kelly, 132 Herbert Avenue, referred to the host community fee in Hillsdale, which Mayor Heymann noted was no longer in effect. Mr. Kelly noted that he was glad the garbage collection would remain the same but felt that the snow removal was terrible citing the high snow on the corners. Catch basins were not cleared and he said he is not getting an honest return for his taxes.

Diane Smith, 419 Closter Dock Road, expressed support for the continuation of vegetative waste pick up and noted that the Department of Public Works did a wonderful job of snow removal in her neighborhood. She expressed support for twice a week garbage pickup and requested that action be taken this evening on this matter. Borough Attorney said that a vote cannot be taken this evening because the public notice indicated that no action would be taken at this meeting. Councilwoman Latner said that we are looking at different ways to comply with DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) laws relative to vegetative waste. Mayor Heymann said that our DPW, as a courtesy to elderly and disabled, will pick up at the house door if asked to do so.

In answer to Steve Isaacson, 97 Columbus Avenue, Councilwoman Latner said the DPW Committee would be meeting before the Council meeting next week to discuss the matter; and Borough Administrator said that after that discussion, the recommendation can be formulated for presentation at one of the next two meetings.

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Josephine Cavalier, 89 Union Street, expressed her disappointment about these meetings on garbage collection and felt the governing body is making us uncomfortable.

In answer to Lydia Shambilides, 566 High Street, Borough Administrator said it is hoped to have increased recycling education in the schools. Mayor Heymann said recycling proceeds fluctuate and some time the pick up costs are greater than the revenue.

Rich Marsich, 82 Maple Avenue, said that the Superintendent of Public Works should be given what he needs in addition to the support to manage the department.

Councilwoman Latner thanked the residents for attending the meeting and for sharing ideas with the governing body.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 8:45 p.m. was made by Councilman Glidden, seconded by Councilman Barad and declared unanimously carried by Councilwoman Latner.

Provided to the Mayor and Council
on March 14, 2014 for approval at the
Regular Meeting to be held
March 26, 2014

Loretta Castano, RMC
Borough Clerk

Prepared by Carol A. Kroepke, RMC
utilizing recording and Borough Clerk's
Notes

Approved at the Regular Meeting held March 26, 2014
Consent Agenda Item No. 19a.