

**FAIR HAVEN BOROUGH COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING - MAY 23, 2022
ZOOM PLATFORM ONLY**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Halpern at 5:05 p.m. The Flag Salute was followed by a Moment of Silent Reflection. The following Sunshine Law Statement was read:

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, PUBLIC MEETINGS MAY BE HELD IN PERSON OR BY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT TO INCLUDE STREAMING SERVICES AND OTHER ONLINE MEETING PLATFORMS (NJSA 10:4-8(b)).

THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD THROUGH THE ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM BEING BROADCAST FROM BOROUGH HALL, 748 RIVER ROAD, FAIR HAVEN, NJ. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR THIS SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING OF MAY 23, 2022 IS AVAILABLE BY CALL IN PHONE NUMBER OR THROUGH WEB CONFERENCE (ZOOM). MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WILL BE ON MUTE UNTIL IT IS TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, WHICH WILL BE ANNOUNCED. AT THAT TIME, THE PUBLIC HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION/COMMENT BY PHONE OR THROUGH ZOOM BY THE "RAISE HAND" BUTTON AND WILL BE CALLED ON AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME.

NOTICE OF THIS MEETING IS BASED ON THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. 2022-115 ADOPTED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL AT THEIR APRIL 25, 2022 REGULAR MEETING. NOTICE OF THIS SPECIAL MEETING WAS SENT TO THE ASBURY PARK PRESS, THE TWO RIVER TIMES AND THE STAR LEDGER ON APRIL 28, 2022. NOTICE WAS ALSO POSTED ON THE BOROUGH WEBSITE, FACEBOOK PAGE, CONSTANT CONTACT, THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AND HAS REMAINED CONTINUOUSLY POSTED AS REQUIRED UNDER THE STATUTE.

WITH ADEQUATE NOTICE HAVING BEEN GIVEN, THE BOROUGH CLERK IS DIRECTED TO INCLUDE THIS STATEMENT IN THE MINUTES OF THIS MEETING.

ROLL CALL

On Roll Call the following were present: Councilmembers Chrisner-Keefe, Cole, Koch, McCue, Neff and Rodriguez. Others present: Administrator Casagrande, Attorney Cannon and Chief McGovern.

Mayor Halpern welcomed everyone to the special meeting to discuss 2022 Capital Bond ordinance considerations. The following opening statement was read:

There are some significant expenditures and improvements being considered that present some sizeable financial obligations. The impact of the decisions being made by the governing body will be felt by future generations of Fair Haven and should not be taken lightly. Some of the larger projects being discussing have been considered in various proposals for close to 7 years. It is important to focus on the task at hand and make decisions on current market conditions, the current needs of the Borough and staff to officially do their jobs while being fiscally responsible to the Borough in making those decisions. The meeting will be run with each proposed capital expenditure being considered giving each governing body member an opportunity to speak and ask questions. The goal is to see if the items being considered have enough support for the bond to be authorized and issued. Rules do not allow the Mayor to vote on these considerations, under any circumstances including a tie vote. A 2/3 majority is needed on each potential expenditure meaning at least 4 members must vote in favor of the items to be approved. The Mayor asked if there were any questions before discussion begins.

DISCUSSION

2022 Capital Bond Ordinance Considerations. Administrator Casagrande gave a synopsis of the packet of information she provided to the governing body. She shared her screen showing a series of spreadsheets. Information from the Borough's Financial Advisor, Anthony Inverso (Phoenix Advisors) was shown: Ordinances Authorized but not issued/Projected for 2022/2023 (broken into four phases - Facilities, Roads, Property Acquisition and Other All with costs associated); 2022 Borrowing Analysis (Preliminary for combined Capital Projects with phased in debt service over a three year timeframe), Scenario for Phased In Facilities Projects, Road Program (2019-2023), Property Acquisition and Other Projects and how each will affect the budget and taxpayer.

Councilwoman Neff asked Administrator Casagrande to explain the debt service and what project would affect the budget and taxpayer the most. In one version, it shows all of the debt hitting at one time (2023) and ending at the same time. In another version, it shows a more likely approach with issuing notes. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe asked if the documents were posted on the Borough website for the public; no. She felt the financials could be helpful and asked that some of it be shared on the website tomorrow. Councilwoman Cole said that some projects seem to follow a

different funding policy and asked if there was a policy or guidelines followed by the Finance Committee i.e. newer projects being done by a bond and maintenance items may be done through a budget line items or surplus. Administrator Casagrande explained that maintenance items are not considered capital improvements and would have to be funded through the Current Fund budget. For example, McCarter Pond receiving an upgrade is considered a capital improvement item and not maintenance which also pertains to large area restoration. The governing body budgets \$215,000 for "Pay As You Go Capital" through a Bond Ordinance (listed on the Regular Meeting agenda) which is used for lower ticket capital. Administrator Casagrande explained what was and what is bonded, or debt issued. Councilwoman Koch confirmed what the Borough anticipates for ARPA funds; the screen was shared and Administrator Casagrande explained what has been received to date and the guidelines of the Local Finance Law. Councilwoman Koch asked if the work on McCarter Pond could be done with these funds? Yes, it can, if Council chooses. She understood that it is best to use these funds on something that is not repeated, just a one-time cost. Councilman Rodriguez said when thinking about notes or bonds or using ARPA capital, if the project is going to benefit a generation of Fair Haven folks, you would want to spread the cost out so those who are here for 30 years and will be here another 10 years (before retiring), whether you used budget money or use government money, the full "brunt of the cost" will be borne by those residents. Councilwoman Neff asked Councilman Rodriguez if he was saying that the funds should be used for longer term projects (ARPA) or the list that we have. A one-time \$600,000 is a windfall for the Borough and could be used toward 21 Fair Haven Road which would be used by the public 100 years from now; we should bond out for an amount of time. For an immediate impact, it would be useful to use the \$600,000 that way.

With regard to the Police Department, Councilwoman Cole felt we have an obligation to address the building because of known hazards and proper remedies are necessary. The plans before the governing body with its price tag is pretty steep; she felt the need to move forward with the Police Department, expeditiously, with cost reduction strategies and consider a recaptured plan because we will lose our Community Center.

Councilwoman Koch said the Borough needs a police department. She was surprised by the elaborate exterior design and felt it could be toned down a bit to reduce some of the associated costs of the design. She suggested limiting the basement excavation and adding a ½ story to the additional structure for storage rather than having to excavate. She was in favor of a Police Department, but not as it has been presented. Councilman Rodriguez stated that many people moved to Fair Haven because of the safety that we enjoy in town and our police department. The building is not up to standard for our police force, so he is in favor of moving forward quickly with bonding to replace the building. The current facility will be in use throughout construction in the adjacent parking lot. He is in favor of removing the basement, in part or as a whole as a cost saving measure. There will be trees planted to blend in with the neighborhood. He supports the plan and getting the officers into an appropriate building.

Councilman McCue arrived at 5:37 p.m.

Councilwoman Neff said there is a magnitude cost for the projects (facilities and possible purchase of 21 Fair Haven Road) including the smaller projects being considered based on the information provided by Administrator Casagrande. Everyone needs to think of the overall picture, the years past and what the community has wanted over time with requests to the governing body (prior and current). We have a broad set of needs to be addressed whether it is taking care of the ponds or our fields; we need to address them. The cost is close to \$17.5 million for the buildings. Costs have increased, dramatically, since the initial plan; there are supply chain issues and the financial environment is very different. It is important to think about all of the projects individually, as well as the context, in total. Council needs to account for the current environment (interest rates, supply chain) and think through this in a careful way. These projects were looked at for many years (DPW and Police Department); the Police Department is most important, and the issues need to be addressed. We need a cost reduction accounted by curbing the project as this will not be the final cost. Councilwoman Neff was concerned about losing the Community Center; it is hard to find an ideal location. It was her understanding that the new building having a second floor with a room that the community could use may not be practical. We could use Knollwood School for some events, but not sure it is practical or Bicentennial Hall, with improvements, so that meetings could be held. Councilwoman Neff said the the public bathrooms and storage building need to be reconsidered to add a room that could be a Community Center; she asked that this idea be reinvestigated by the Facilities Committee.

Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe thanked the Facilities Committee who worked hard to get us to where we are. The Borough has gotten a lot of use at both locations and multiple governing body members, over the years, have looked into new facilities with acquisition of properties. This is a long time coming. It is hard when governing bodies turn over and there are different views for projects; the entire governing body agrees that something needs to happen at the police

department, but the question is what. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe asked that action be taken without further delay for the employees. The Borough has been in the same cycle for quite some time; there are cost saving measures that can be taken for these big-ticket items. We should look to the Facilities Committee members who are in the profession of architect, engineering, finance, etc. as they have experience for how to best reduce the cost without compromising functionality.

Councilman McCue understood the concerns and requests to scale down to cost save. He agreed with the cost saving measures, but we have heard of people wanting an improved facade and we need to strike a balance. This has been an ongoing cycle with new representatives and new ideas. The Facilities Committee would have liked a more equal replacement for the Community Center because of the demand and its current use. It seems that more outdoor activities are sticking with us in the current climate. One cost reduction may not make a difference because costs are going to increase (inflation/interest rates) due to delaying these projects. We missed when the interest rates were at 0% (prices and interest rates will continue to increase).

Mayor Halpern said it sounded like there was support for the police department to be built, at some capacity. We need an investigation of cost savings.

With regard to DPW, Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe said the plan has taken on different versions over the years of what it should be i.e., a replacement in its current location, a different position on the property or finding another borough location. The plans are both functional for the employees and the work performed as well as user friendly for the residents. The current plan costs are quite a bit with the understanding of the need for site remediation. The Borough needs to take action to prevent continued deterioration. She felt strongly after visiting the current DPW site (on various occasions) and the building's very poor state that an end game needs to be reached so work can be started. Waiting will lead to further detriment. It is up to the Facilities Committee to marry the existing plan with a way to reduce the amount of site work required, understanding that this will impact the efficiency of use for the employees and public. The costs are exorbitant and there are ways we can reduce them which can be studied and recommended by the Facilities Committee.

Councilman Rodriguez supported the plan to do the work at DPW. He has toured the site as well as the public and other Councils. The current building is over 40 years old and has given us useful life. He also supports the Borough being as thrifty and wise with taxpayer money; the Borough does not take this lightly. We plan to have the current building used until the new building is built. We should maintain most of the locations for some things at DPW to reduce costs. The Borough needs to create a plan with a compromise in size, costs, etc. Four affirmative Council votes are needed to get this done. There is a need to replace the DPW, in the most economical fashion, not just replace the roof; it is a used-up asset that needs to be addressed.

Councilwoman Neff stated everything needs to be looked at individually and in total. A few years ago, the Borough was looking at \$13 million for the projects and now the cost is \$17.5 million. Many people were up in arms when this topic came up at a Special Facilities meeting a few years ago. Our buildings have been let go for too long without any improvements and need to be replaced. Due to costs, she suggested going with one facility project, for now, and then seriously consider the second for another time. The proposed plans for the building is beautiful. The location of the new building will take away from the land that could potentially be sold at some point. We can renovate the DPW in its current footprint and consider selling the lots around DPW which will offset the costs. A significant revision of the plan was requested. Mayor Halpern agreed with how beautiful the proposed building plans are but concerned about the costs for the projects (close to \$29 million if you include Bicentennial Hall). He stated that he does not have a vote, but the Borough needs to address the DPW immediately because of its condition, keeping in mind that each plan amendment costs money with the Architect.

Councilwoman Koch agreed with those who have spoken so far. The DPW proposal is beautiful and checks off all of the boxes. Our Architect designed an extraordinary building. We owe our employees a safe working environment which can be achieved at a much lower cost to our residents. She is in favor of a new DPW, but not as presented. We need something less expensive on the outside and inside. She suggested reducing the work rooms and mezzanine for the seasonal and additional items.

Councilman McCue had spoken with many regarding DPW and most of the costs are for the site work. He asked Administrator Casagrande how much the site work is within the projected costs. She advised that it was bundled with the Police Department costs; it was requested that she have it separated for a better understanding. Outside of the fencing is curbs, sidewalks and milling/paving (a few hundred feet). Administrator Casagrande said \$256,000 is the cost for the site work. There is a savings by eliminating the elevator and just having stairs.

Councilwoman Cole said that it is a beautiful building; the neighborhood has changed a great

deal and the improvements are important, but she cannot support the current design due to costs. Both projects are expensive and may present as “a can of worms” if both projects are started simultaneously. There is an urgency, and the conditions need to be addressed. We need to be prudent on what can be done and what will be addressed for safety. There is no comprehensive facilities analysis (10-12 years out and the effects). We cannot afford what has been designed, at this time, and need to take steps that are economical. The Borough also needs to consider the residents and mitigate the conflict with a DPW facility in a residential neighborhood. The Facilities Committee should be given a specific set of goals and objectives so they can proceed. We should not do anything that will trigger an Architect bill until everyone is in agreement. The next expenditure has to yield actual results. There are other projects that need to be considered besides the facilities.

The Mayor said three Councilmembers are in favor of this project; four affirmative votes are needed. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe stated that the governing body is talking about a bond ordinance that does not have a specific dollar amount attached to it. It was stated that Council feels the need for an improved DPW, there is just not support for the building plans, as presented, so there is a need to tweak the plan or come up with a different plan all together. The employees should not have to work in a building that has rain coming in. All seem to be in favor of the police department with a few tweaks, but do not feel the same for the DPW facility. Councilwoman Cole suggested addressing the front burner issue to buy time for the costs ahead of us; Councilwoman Neff agreed. The governing body does not want buildings that are unsafe, but do not support the current plan. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe said the Borough needs to take action on DPW because of the condition of the building, but she does not like the projected costs and would like to reduce some of the plan.

With regard to Bicentennial Hall, Councilwoman Cole said the building could be a true treasure for Fair Haven with its phenomenal history. It is a charming place to host events and receptions with the possibility of being rented out for outside organization events. It could be suitable for certain meetings, but there are challenges. We have a grant that would provide for ADA improvements. The priority is the preservation of the structure not so much the grant. The building and property needs careful attention paid to it. People in the community are concerned about the changes to the site as well as the building because it is historic; no need to rush it as it must be done properly. She suggested letting the grant go and undertake a more proper restoration of the building and addressing the acoustics. The Borough’s decision should not be tied to the CDBG grant.

Councilman McCue said the building is a treasure to be enjoyed by all. It is unfortunate that we are losing the Community Center however, Bicentennial Hall could have the ability to absorb some of its uses. We need to make the building accessible to all and need to provide the necessary updates for use. He was in favor of moving forward with this project.

Councilwoman Koch was conflicted by this project because she understands both sides. She referred to a comment by Councilwoman Neff that the building is not “kid friendly”; this is a concern. Putting in taxpayer funds (\$500,000) plus grants for this project is a lot of money to only allow our seniors and other groups to meet there and not provide the kids with an active recreational opportunity. It would not be worth putting \$750,00 into the building.

Councilman Rodriguez supported investing in Bicentennial Hall and believed we have a good plan to make it more accessible. Having the State help us fund it is in our best interest and he agreed that the Borough should put \$1 million into it. We should cap it with the project we have in mind and follow Councilwoman Cole’s suggestions to get the community involved further down the road. Getting it ADA compliant is critical and needs to be done no matter what the building use is. He was glad the May 9th meeting was held there to see whether or not it would be feasible to hold future meetings there. He felt that the Borough should not exceed what was already discussed/considered on the financial front. We have money set aside in a previous bond ordinance and a State grant to address ADA needs.

Councilwoman Neff was also conflicted. Bicentennial Hall is a special building, and we need to do our best to use and honor it. She said “Love Where You Live Day” was a great day and showed that similar types of events could be held there. The location of Bicentennial Hall is close to a very built-up area (Acme and other businesses). She does not want a parking lot or to add more concrete to the property. The building’s interior is loud because of the acoustics and is dangerous for children because of the floors. She did not want to spend another \$1 million on it with all that is on the projects list. She recommended modifying the building and not going any further.

Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe echoed what had been stated. As noted, the last Council meeting was held there, and the Communications Committee is looking at audio/visual options and how to address the acoustics. The building is worth investing in, but we need to make the right investment. There are a lot of opportunities to look at it on its own and for other community uses.

She was concerned about a parking lot. The Borough is moving in the right direction. A meeting with the Mayor, Council and Facilities Committee will help enhance the conversation for a shared understanding. She was sure the plans were well reasoned/thought out to best achieve the goals of the Borough.

Mayor Halpern said it seems the amount of money and the plans being considered does not have full governing body support, as presented, but there is support for some sort of work in the building. We need to go back to the drawing board.

The Mayor advised the governing body and public that he supports the acquisition of the property at 21 Fair Haven Road which would be a generational investment and perk for the Borough (the best investment and value for the residents). He is cognizant of the neighborhood, so we need proper planning. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe feels it is a real opportunity and probably will not happen again at this location next to our dock; if we have the opportunity to pursue it, we should. The cost and what will be done with the property are two major factors. We can figure out the plan later but should obtain the property now because it is such a great opportunity. There is a concern about the maintenance of the land because of the other Borough open space properties we have to take care of. All of our residents take advantage of our parks and properties, and this will be an asset as well. The Borough has grant money available to pursue it. Some costs are unknown, and the property might not be useable, but we should seize on it. The survey from a few years back should be reviewed; there was interest in waterfront access.

Councilwoman Neff said the Finance Committee did review all of the projects and everyone fully supported this property acquisition; it is a great opportunity. The Borough can build a park with community feedback while being considerate of the neighbors. It would be an iconic park location because it is next to our dock. The cost impact is 0 and does not raise to a point of increasing taxes. We have funds to support the purchase and may be able to obtain further support. We already pay money for Green Acres so when we receive a grant, it is from tax payments already made. If we do not accept the grant, we are giving money to other municipality's waterfront parks. This property will add value to the Borough; everything else being considered tonight is a maintenance cost. Our residents can enjoy more space by the waterfront (more so than the Grange and Hance pocket parks or the boat ramp). The park will be around for 100+ years. There is significant support as can be seen in the surveys, our Master Plan and other feedback from the community. This is a very unique opportunity that will add value to the Borough.

Councilman Rodriguez supported the acquisition.

Councilwoman Koch had concerns regarding this purchase because the DeNormandie Avenue purchase was marketed the same way (a once in a lifetime opportunity). We were successful in purchasing the Robard's property and rehabilitating it, but we also have properties at the end of Battin, Hance and Grange, in cue, that need to be rehabilitated. There was concern for the associated costs besides the \$1.7 million to purchase 21 Fair Haven Road such as the need to address the current home on the property (demo) and the bulkheading (remove or not). This property as a park would stress this small neighborhood; we have, in the recent past, received complaints regarding public fishing and crabbing at all hours on the dock. Adding another park at the end of the road would contribute to the issues.

Councilman McCue said there are going to be additional costs after the purchase to address what will go there (bulkheading and living shoreline). He understood the public wants property on the water, but felt there is a need to clear up some of the other capital projects, first.

Councilwoman Cole said the Master Plan does speak to opening up access to the river, which is an important goal, however, this matter needs careful consideration and a lot of thought to detail so it does not compromise the neighborhood. This is a multimillion-dollar purchase with many moving parts and unknown costs. She would like a great park not just an OK park. The Borough needs to go in with its eyes wide open and understanding the full cost. There also needs to be a maintenance plan.

Mayor Halpern gave the consensus of what he heard for this project and the concerns for the other capital item costs. He advised the Council and the public that this Special meeting will go until about 7:15 p.m. and everyone will log off and enter the Regular Meeting Zoom that was set up; this discussion will continue during the Regular Meeting before executive session.

Councilwoman Neff agreed with what had been said. We can better regulate how the dock can be used through the Recreation Committee. An ordinance can manage and address issues i.e trash, not grilling on the dock and hours of use. We cannot always plan for property acquisitions since they can come up at any time. We don't know what the property will look like, but we can decide if it is going to be a park or just some gardens with benches and walkways. The Borough

can control what goes there and the behaviors.

Mayor Halpern said with regard to roads, he has the general sense that all are in favor of the Borough investing in its roads. He asked if everyone was in favor of including this in the bond issuance. Administrator Casagrande said the debt analysis that was done needs to be separated out because two of the projects are partially funded by NJDOT grants; Fair Haven Road Phase I and Third Street Phase II (each \$750,000). Councilwoman Cole said that roads are an ongoing expenditure, and she likes to see 5-years out; we can roll forward with road projects, ongoingly. She is in favor of addressing roads and sidewalks, bike and pedestrian improvements, per the Master Plan, on an on-going basis.

Councilman McCue asked if the discussion is just for roads? Yes, however, there is a request for some equipment. Administrator Casagrande advised that the 2023 earmark does not necessarily have to go toward roads, it can go to 2022 capital improvements or as the governing body sees fit. Councilman McCue clarified the Hance/Cooney Project cost of \$600,000 and if it is the figure now or a scaled back figure. Administrator Casagrande provided a handout with regard to where the Borough is with roads as far as microprojects. She and Engineer Gardella reviewed balances from prior bond ordinances to move forward with micro-projects. After further review with the Borough's Financial Advisor, some of the left-over bond money can be authorized to another project so we do not need to reauthorize the money.

Councilwoman Koch was in favor of this as part of the ordinance. She asked if funds are still available for the project between Oaklawn and Harrison; yes, it is covered by prior authorizations.

Councilman Rodriguez supported road maintenance. Once River Road is completed and some of the other road projects are finalized, the roads will be a greater asset for our residents.

Councilwoman Neff supported road projects.

Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe felt the Borough should focus on road projects, consistently, year after year. She has always advocated for road projects and the maintenance for what we have. There needs to be a road study for the health of all roads and prioritizing the list.

Another capital request was a loader for DPW. Councilwoman Chrisner-Keefe asked if we have a loader that is in disrepair and if not replaced will impact the work of DPW? Administrator Casagrande said the equipment is older and needed. The loader is also used for leaf pick-up in the fall. It was asked if the Borough can hold the investment to a future year and what the impact would be? Engineer Gardella requested the loader for 2022, however no bond ordinance was done. Our last loader was purchased in 2016 to replace one that was auctioned. The Borough is trying to stagger the purchases through the years.

Councilwoman Neff felt it is an important item but should be pushed to 2023.

Councilman Rodriguez concurred with Councilwoman Neff. He noted repairs are costly and it is a risk, but we should push the purchase to 2023.

Councilwoman Koch was in favor of a loader this year.

Councilman McCue echoed Councilmembers Neff and Rodriguez's comments and felt the loader should be purchased in 2023. We can rent a loader, if needed.

Councilwoman Cole did not support a loader purchase for this year.

The Mayor advised this meeting needed to be adjourned and these discussions will continue after the Workshop Session of the Regular Meeting Agenda and will include public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn moved by Councilman Rodriguez, second by Councilwoman Cole with Ayes by all present.

Time of Adjournment: 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allyson M. Cinquegrana, RMC/CMR
Borough Clerk