

**SOUTH PLAINFIELD BOROUGH
BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 18, 2013, 7:00 P.M.
AGENDA MEETING**

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Anesh called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Anesh read the sunshine statement and announced that same is being held pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act of 1974 and all provisions of that Act have been met with adequate notice of this meeting having been provided to the Borough's two official newspapers and also published on the Borough's website.

The roll call was administered by Clerk Antonides as follows:

COUNCIL	Present	Absent	Late
Councilman Barletta	X		
Councilman Bengivenga	X		
Councilman Diana	X		
Councilman McConville		X	
Councilman White	X		
Council President Rusnak	X		
Mayor Anesh	X		
ALSO PRESENT			
Administrator Cullen	X		
Clerk Antonides	X		
Attorney Rizzo	X		
Engineer Miller	X		

Review of Agenda Items: Clerk Antonides reviewed all the items on the agenda for this evening. Mayor Anesh asked if the Council has any comments on the agenda this evening.

Councilman Diana questioned if the expenditures in Ordinance 1985 could be included in the operational budget opposed to borrowing the funds. Also pertaining to resolution #13-112 Councilman Diana said he believes he has made his position well known and continued to express his concerns for renovating in a flood zone area saying that he questions if this is the best most prudent method. He advised that he is happy to see the renovations will be funded by the library and said how commendable that is. Councilman Diana said that contrary to how some people perceive his views on the library he is not anti-library and wishes to see nothing but the best for the library. This option may be the best one in the end but questioned how we can determine that without reviewing the options. To conclude, Councilman Diana said that he has to strongly oppose this governing bodies opposition to resolution #13-111 as there are some 33 states inclusive of Washington that have early voting. Councilman Diana said the \$21 million is largely for the modernization of it. This has an air of opposition attached to it is Democrat proposed addition to our voting in New Jersey.

Mayor Anesh said pertaining to resolution #13-111 it is a fact that we already have early voting here in New Jersey. If you want to vote early, you already can do that now, with little to no costs involved. How much easier can we make than that. There are multiple ways to submit the early vote; bring it to the post office, the County, or our municipal offices. It is a mechanism that is here and it works. Mayor Anesh said that Councilman Diana commented that this body is against it because it is a Democrat proposed Bill, which is contrary to the reason to oppose such a Bill. The Director of the State League of Municipalities has opposed this Bill and still opposes it and has strongly urged all municipalities to oppose this Bill. You are looking at a \$20+ million dollar figure to improve something that already is working at increased costs to the taxpayers and do not feel that we are gaining any real benefit from doing that. Mayor Anesh said that he happens to agree with the League on this position, though does not necessarily agree with the League on everything. Mayor Anesh said that regarding #13-112 Councilman Diana opposes this resolution and desires to look at other options and that perhaps we need more time to review other options. Mayor Anesh said he recalls nearly a decade ago that request for a new library were constantly brought forth. Mayor Anesh reviewed all the various options over the past decade that have been presented for a potential new library building, of which ultimately after review and consideration the plans devised as there were did not make the proposals possible. We looked at tearing down the library, expanding it, moving it to the south side of town, moving it to where the Drug Fair was, etc. Mayor Anesh said to Councilman Diana that frankly if he has any other options we would love to hear your input. But to say that we have not looked at or reviewed any other options, when we have done exactly that for over a decade is a bit ridiculous. This is an issue that has been going on for a long while. If you have any options to tell us, please do so. It is already March, 2013 and we are 90 days into the 2013 and this is not a surprise or sprung on anyone. We have been discussing this. Mayor Anesh said he has to give the Library Board a lot of credit with this, and pointed out that he has not agreed with everything they have done over the years, but has to give them credit that they really have done everything in their power over the years to seek out every possible option and solution for their library building to try to meet the needs of all residents. It is impossible to satisfy everyone, but Mayor Anesh said he feels they have come as close to as they are ever going to. On top of that they are looking to renovate the library with their own funds they have some for years for this purpose. Mayor Anesh said he is open to anything and that if there is a better option out there to please let him know as he does not wish to be sitting here in another ten to fifteen years from now still hearing there may be a better option out there. Mayor Anesh said these are just his opinions on these topics and you don't have to agree with them. Mayor Anesh said that pertaining to Ordinance 1985 it is a matter of public finance 101. When you have capital expenses in terms of hundreds of thousands of dollars for capital purchases that have a long life expectancy (five, ten, twenty years etc.) there is no reason (with emphasis) that we should put the entire amount of capital expenditures in the current year's operational budget thus burdening the taxpayers all in the fiscal 2013 year. There is no reason to do that. Public finance 101 says you can spread the cost out over the life of the asset. You have two options; either raise the funds in the current year's budget and increase the taxes to all residents in 2013 more than they need to be or you can spread it out over the life of the asset, which Mayor Anesh said he believes to

be the fiscally prudent thing to do especially when you look at the financial environment we are in with interest rates at all-time lows. Mayor Anesh concluded by saying that this is his opinion and we can agree to disagree.

Council President Rusnak recalled dating back to 2003 that he believes we have exhausted every possible option there is for the library siting some of the examples of various options that have been looked at inclusive of the lot next to the funeral home which was considered that has now cost us some \$800,000 that became a campaign issue. Council President Rusnak said the reason he knows this is because 2003 was year he ran for office and this issue was thrown out there. Council President Rusnak said over the years he has had his difference with Mr. Aronowitz, but right now he is walking arm in arm with him, as well as the Library President and the Board of Trustees. Council President Rusnak said he hopes to see that this proposed library renovation and expansion gets done and please it will not cost the tax payers any money out of their pockets. It will be done with the funds the library already has on hand and does not see how it can be any better than that. As far as the bonding (Ord. 1985) goes, the Mayor made excellent points tonight in that regard and said he for one would not throw some \$600,000 on the tax payers in 2013 as it just does not make any sense to do that.

Councilman White asked what municipality is doing a pay as you go method for their heavy expense capital items. What are they doing and what does their tax base look like. If paying as you go is the best method, why isn't everyone doing it. It sounds good in theory but it is not feasible, not palatable, and not something that can be done. Mr. Cullen and Administration and Finance have done a good job at making sure that the Borough is fiscally sound. That doesn't happen by accident it happens through proper planning. For those who attended the recent Dr. Seuss event you could see how crowded that library was. How much longer are we going to wait before we actually do something about it. Look at the suburban bus company. How much longer were we going to sit and wait before we did something about it. Previous administrations let it sit. There is a different level of accountability here, which is not to say we are not all entitled to our opinions. Councilman White said he just wanted to give some background to the degree of planning and fiscal responsibility that has gone into this.

Councilman Diana clarified that he is not anti-library and agrees with Councilman White 100% in that something does need to be done about the library but again expressed his concerns if we were to get another big storm. Council President Rusnak said that is a very good concern to have which is why we sat down with our Engineer and went over that very concern inquiring how we can avoid that from happening. At this time, Engineer Len Miller, advised that what is proposed is that the library will be elevated higher than the flood plain. It would have to be built that way in order to obtain a permit. Any doors below would be flood proofed. Councilman Diana said he is pro-library renovations and has nothing against them and that his only opposition on the matter is if something were to happen to the library (i.e. flooding). Council President Rusnak asked Councilman Diana if he has any alternatives. Councilman Diana said no, he doesn't not have any options that are better. At this point, more "what-if" scenarios were expressed. Councilman Diana said if the library doesn't flood, and he hopes it does not, he will gladly sit and eat crow. However, if it does flood, what do we do then.

Councilman Diana added that New Jersey is the only state that has mail in voting and wonders what makes us so special. Councilman Rusnak said if he remembers correctly didn't the Board of Elections Superintendent say he hopes we would support opposing the proposed \$20+ million early voting system and asked the Borough Clerk to verify. Clerk Antonides responded by saying yes, as does the Director of the State League of Municipalities. Council President Rusnak said if that is the views of those two offices, I don't see why we wouldn't want to support that. Clerk Antonides advised that his concerns were the cost factors that would be involved and not just for the establishment in year one of some \$20+ million, it is also with the years thereafter. The costs the County and municipalities will have to bear. Poll workers have to be paid, Clerks and their staff have to be paid. Where is that money going to come from. We already have early voting in New Jersey called vote by mail at essentially no cost to the tax payers. Mayor Anesh clarified that the extra voting days include weekends too. Clerk Antonides said yes, Saturdays, Sundays, late nights for 15 consecutive days straight – per election! It will be very costly. Mayor Anesh said with the mail in system you can vote almost anytime you want. This proposed early voting system still restricts you to 15 days before and election. Mayor Anesh said this Bill does not have his support. Clerk Antonides said as an aside, that she inquired about the possibility of electronic voting and learned that there have been discussions on this and it may come to fruition down the road. Council President Rusnak said that would then make the early voting obsolete. Mayor Anesh said that in the wake of hurricane Sandy this municipality and county did a tremendous job in putting an election together. Every municipality had a contingency plan in place immediately following the Sandy storm.

Councilman Diana asked to separate out resolutions #13-111 and #13-112.

Exec #13-98 Authorize the entering into Executive Session in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975, Ch. 231 for the following item(s): There was no Executive Session for this evening.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Anesh opened the floor for public comments.

Eric Aronowitz of 126 Lafayette Place and former Library Board President and member, said though he and the Council have not always agreed on things over the years that he is gratified to see resolution #13-112 on the agenda this evening. Mr. Aronowitz said the Library Board has looked at and explored absolutely every possible option and feels this is the most fiscally prudent option and urges the Council to please adopt resolution #13-112 this evening. The Library Board has always tried to do everything in the best interest of the Borough. There is no other option. Everything was looked at for some ten years. We have both democrats and republicans on the Board and we are both of like minds on this. Mr. Aronowitz said he is as pleased as punch.

Mr. Michael Zushma, OEM Coordinator, advised that he met with FEMA this past Friday and reviewed the potential reimbursable categories totaling \$707,590.20.

Before Mayor Anesh closed out the Agenda meeting he announced that we have a special guest with his this evening. Mayor Anesh reviewed the Biggest Loser Contest in the Borough that was a part of the Mayor's Wellness Campaign. Mayor Anesh announced the winner of this year's Biggest Loser Contest is Lakisha Williams who received a prize of a Wii Fit system. Photographs were taken by the media and a round of applause was extended.

With no further public comments made, Mayor Anesh closed the floor from public comments.

ADJOURN AGENDA MEETING: With no further comments, Mayor Anesh asked for a motion to adjourn from the Agenda Meeting. Councilman White made a motion to adjourn from the Agenda Meeting at 7:35 p.m., seconded by Council President Rusnak unanimously carried by an all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amy Antonides, RMC/CMC