

Minutes Special Meeting of Mayor and Council – March 3, 2016
Town Hall Council Chambers, 100 Central Avenue at 5:00 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ATTENDANCE ROLL CALL

Councilman:

Furgione - Present

Giralo - Present

Gribbin - Present

Pullia - Present

Rodio - Present

Torrissi - Absent

Mayor DiDonato - Present

PRESENT ALSO

Michael Malinsky, Town Solicitor

Jerry Barberio, PWM/Business Administrator

Steve Barse, Labor Attorney

Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Buena Vista Township (not in official capacity)

Governing Body of Folsom Borough and Folsom Borough Clerk

Executive Session #R046-2016

#R 046 -2016

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Common Council of the Town of Hammonton that, in accordance with the "Open Public Meetings Act," an Executive Session is authorized on this below adopted date, for the purpose of discussing and/or acting upon:

Discussion Discipline Police Officer

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the minutes of any matters discussed in Executive Session shall be released to the public as soon as reasonably possible after Mayor and Council conclude that the basis for exclusion of the public ceases to exist.

Motion by Councilman Furgione, seconded by Councilman Giralo, the resolution is adopted.

ROLL CALL

Councilman:

Furgione - Yes

Giralo - Yes

Gribbin - Yes

Pullia - Yes

Rodio - Yes

Torrissi - Absent

Mayor DiDonato – Yes

Mayor DiDonato declared the motion carried.

Discipline Police Officer

Motion by Councilman Gribbin, seconded by Councilman Rodio, authorize continuation of disciplinary hearing with Appointing Authority, per NJ CSC Rules and Regulations, for termination of police officer to Thursday 3/10/16 at 3 pm and authorize Appointing Authority to take appropriate action at that time.

ROLL CALL

Councilman:

Furgione - Yes

Giralo - Yes

Gribbin - Yes

Pullia - Yes

Rodio - Yes

Torrissi - Absent

Mayor DiDonato – Yes

Mayor DiDonato declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this meeting has been posted and given to official newspapers. Please familiarize yourselves with the fire exits to the right and rear of the Council Chambers. Please do not proceed beyond the front benches without invitation from the Mayor to do so.

Mayor DiDonato advised he will relax the 5 minutes allotment for public input for this hearing only.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

South Jersey Gas Discussion/Hearing

Mayor DiDonato advised the public on the status of the proposed moving of approximately 180 employees jobs from South Jersey Gas Company located in Folsom, NJ to Atlantic City, NJ. He has been advised by the company that South Jersey Industries will remain in Folsom with a much smaller staff. For this effort, Grow New Jersey Government Funding will be utilized. Grow New Jersey is a fund created to bring jobs into the State of New Jersey. He believes it's inappropriate to allow use of this funding to move existing businesses from one Municipality to another within the State or County. He is also concerned that AC DEVCO, who he understands has defaulted in \$7 million in loans, is involved in financing this proposed project.

Mayor Louis DeStefano of Folsom Borough, advised the Borough of Folsom was not notified of the proposed move nor given the chance to offer assistance that may allow South Jersey Gas Company to remain in Folsom, New Jersey in it's entirety. Mayor DeStefano further advised this proposed move will have detrimental affects on Folsom Borough's financial well being. We are urging our Atlantic County Freeholders to take this into consideration before acting on this issue.

Mayor Charles Chiarello advised it is not his goal to get involved in other municipalities issues. However, Buena Vista Township faces similar problems with the loss of local businesses to other Municipalities. He believes laws created by the State of New Jersey are the main source of the problems local governments are facing and the local governments need to become more involved with the State to be able to voice our concerns at the onset of a potential law and could financially harm local government.

Mayor DeStefano is concerned with Folsom residents having to move because they cannot afford the tax burden this proposed project will cause. He is insulted at the suggestion made by South Jersey Gas officials at a previous meeting that we, being located in the "boondocks," is problematic for South Jersey Gas in attracting educated employees.

Mayor DiDonato opened the hearing to the public.

Deputy Mayor Gribbin advised we are disappointed that a large corporation like South Jersey Gas would want to leave our area and move to Atlantic City. The real problem is that South Jersey Gas is asking tax payers to help fund and guarantee this move. We, the municipalities who will be adversely affected by this move, are still part of Atlantic County. In addition, Deputy Mayor Gribbin finds it discerning that we do not have the support of Atlantic County in this issue. We've already survived the worst economic storm in history and now we're being asked to bail out Atlantic City. Deputy Mayor Gribbin referenced the Atlantic County Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan dated September 24, 2015 and pointed out that if this move is allowed, it would be contradictory of Atlantic County's efforts.

Mayor DiDonato pointed out that the plan Deputy Mayor Gribbin is referring to cost the taxpayers over \$200,000 to create.

Deputy Mayor Kelly of Buena Vista Township questioned the report Deputy Mayor Gribbin made reference to.

Yuli Chew

Mr. Chew stated the state has collected funding from Atlantic City through the years and he feels this funding to be used now when Atlantic City needs it. He also feels the casinos should have been made to fund and sustain Atlantic City while they had money coming in.

Angela Donio

Mrs. Donio agrees with everything the Mayors have said this evening. She stated we are the HUB of South Jersey. The impression is that South Jersey Gas is trying to attract people from outside the area but statistics have shown that people want to be in a town that's walkable.

Mayor DiDonato wanted the public to know that Hammonton has offered public utility extension to South Jersey Gas which would help in their expansion because Folsom does not have public utilities.

Linda Maxwell

Ms. Maxwell is asking who is sponsoring this move?

Mayor DiDonato advised which public figures were present at the meeting.

Councilman Rodio spoke concerning the Hammonton Public Schools as well as surrounding schools who have highly educated graduates who are engineers, pharmacists, etc. and he knows many of the graduates are current employees of South Jersey Gas.

Mayor DiDonato commented on how South Jersey Gas is treating their customers who pay their bill by calling them "hicks." He also mentioned if this proposed project is approved, the cost of same will be borne by the utility users.

Sam Mento

Mr. Mento, School Board President, stated he is proud to see a Democrat, Republican and Independent all working for the same cause. He advised that the product our school is putting out is superior and the taxpayers are getting what they are paying for. He is a business owner and property owner in Hammonton and he is worried about the impact of this proposed move. He feels Atlantic City made money for years and now that Atlantic City is having financial problems the State wants to place the burden on Atlantic County.

Annette DeRose

Ms. DeRose grew up and currently lives in Folsom specifically because of the Folsom and Hammonton schools. She would hate to see Folsom become unaffordable because of this move.

Deputy Mayor Gribbin agreed with Ms. DeRose's concerns. He is disheartened that South Jersey Gas or Atlantic County did not send representatives to listen to our concerns and answer the questions of the tax payers this evening

Mayor DiDonato stated not only was this meeting noticed to the newspaper but he also personally reached out to County Freeholders and South Jersey Gas Representatives inviting them to this meeting.

Benjamin Ott

Mr. Ott read his e mail to South Jersey Gas which he wrote from a professional point of view.

Councilman Rodio read a letter concerning costs of this move which would not take place if they did not receive the funding.

Deputy Mayor Gribbin urged people to contact their Freeholds and urge them not to fund the move because South Jersey Gas will not be able to move if they do not receive the funding.

Rob DeRose

Mr. DeRose stated he is concerned the use of Grow NJ funds for this proposed project. He feels the reason Atlantic City is having financial problems is because people don't want to go to Atlantic City.

Don DiDonato

Mr. DiDonato stated this is not a question as to whether South Jersey Gas should move or not. However, if they choose to move they should pay for the move, not the taxpayers. He pointed out that we have the ability to reach out to our Freeholders and change this issue.

Angela Donio

Ms. Donio concerning AC DEVCO stated she read that they are in debt and their representative made a statement that they are going to be able to pay that debt. She believes this proposed project may be what the representative was referring to.

Councilman Furgione questioned since South Jersey Gas is a public utility, could we do something to that end?

Mayor DiDonato questioned Mr. Malinsky, Town Solicitor, for his legal opinion in this matter to which Mr. Malinsky replied he is looking into options at the County level. Obviously, reaching out to our Freeholders could be beneficial. If the Freeholders approve the funding, the Municipalities may appeal to the Local Finance Board and then to the Appellate Division.

Authorize Letter to NJ State Finance Board

Motion by Councilman Gribbin, seconded by Councilman Pullia, authorize the Clerk to forward a letter to the NJ Local Finance Board, NJ EDA and Atlantic County Freeholders asking for a forensic investigation and financial audit of AC DEVCO and to ask that the meeting to decide the funding of the South Jersey Gas move to Atlantic City be postponed until the investigation is complete. The Clerk was asked to copy all those who originally received Resolutions 40 and 43 opposing this financing which were adopted at the February 22, 2016 Council Meeting.

ROLL CALL

Councilman:

Furgione - Yes

Giralo - Recused

Gribbin - Yes

Pullia - Yes

Rodio - Yes

Torrissi - Absent

Mayor DiDonato – Yes

Mayor DiDonato declared the motion carried.

BOROUGH OF FOLSOM MOTION AND ROLL CALL TAKEN BY PAT GATTO, CLERK

PUBLIC HEARD

Yuli Chew

Mr. Chew stated he is pleased with council's action this evening.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Motion by Councilman Giralo, seconded by Councilman Rodio, the meeting is adjourned. Motion carried.

April Boyer Maimone, Clerk