

Here is the recap from the April 21, 2021 Highlands Borough Council Meeting.

Following the approval of the March 17, 2021 minutes, the council proceeded to unanimously adopt all 3 ordinances on the agenda. These ordinances included:

- establishing guidelines for commercial filming in town
- the establishment of a "Cap Bank" which will serve as buffer in the event of unforeseen expenses (for example, emergency spending in reaction to a natural disaster)
- reappropriating unused bonded funds from completed projects to apply towards road improvements in town.

Moving along with the progress, the council unanimously adopted all but one of the resolutions slated for the evening. The resolution which was not adopted - an extension of premises covered under a liquor license - was tabled to allow for further discussion between the Highlands Police Department and council. The resolutions which were adopted were:

- payment of bills, the details of which can be found at bit.ly/HighlandsPOB
- certification of compliance with certain Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines
- closeout of the change order for improvements to the bulkhead at Cedar Street and Jones Creek, which reflects a savings of \$13,582.14 compared to the original projected expense.

Three additional resolutions were adopted under a consent agenda, including the refund of a tax overpayment, and changes in membership for the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and the Shade Tree Committee. For Housing Authority, Nancy Messina has been appointed to a term which will expire on November 30, 2021 and Gloria Miller to a term expiring November 30, 2024. As for Shade Tree, Peter Moles will join the committee with a term expiring December 31, 2021. Good luck to all new members!

The meeting then turned to reports. The following are highlights from the read-outs:

In the Administrator's Report, Mr. Mike Muscillo reported out on his participation in a series of meetings since the March report. These included:

- Reimbursement meetings with FEMA
- Hazard Mitigation meeting with Monmouth County OEM
- Safe Route to Schools Grant with NJDOT
- Park upgrade meeting with the Borough Engineer and Department of Public Works
- Exploratory meeting with a potential construction management firm for Borough Hall

For Engineering, Mr. Ben Matlack of CME Associates reported out on a timeline of 2-3 weeks for putting the Borough Hall work out to bid. Additionally, he reported the project for the Waterwitch Storm and Sanitary Sewer project should be ready to go to bid this July.

Council President Jo-Anne Olszewski provided updates from the schools, including the announcement of a new Tri-District Superintendent – Dr. Tara Beams. Also reported was the welcome announcement of a summer program at Highlands Elementary. The program focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) has been developed in conjunction with Ms. Jacqueline Kane of the Recreation Department, providing the children of Highlands with in-person summer enrichment opportunities.

Councilperson Kevin Martin discussed the activities from the Environmental Committee. Of special note was an update from the yearly Exxon report. For reference, this is an ongoing remediation by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for the site known as Scenic Exxon Service Center on Route 36. For details on the project, the information is

tracked by the NJDEP under Program Interest (PI) Number 007956. This project is scheduled to run through February 28, 2023. Additionally, Mr. Martin will be working with the Green Team towards goals needed to achieve Sustainable Jersey Silver-Level Certification. Currently Highlands is Bronze-Level certified, with the next assessment taking place in 2022.

Councilperson Don Melnyk reported out the progress happening across several committees. For Communications Committee, preliminary evaluation for enhancements to the website launched late in 2020 has completed. A subset of the committee will work towards actionable changes in the coming weeks with suggestions for the full committee in their May regular meeting. The Shade Tree Committee has worked with the Borough to achieve Tree City USA designation by the Arbor Day Foundation. As part of the Pride in Highlands Day (April 24, 2021) a proclamation in observance of Arbor day will be read by Mayor Broullon, and the Department of Public Works (DPW) will be installing Tree City USA signage and a raising a flag to celebrate the day. Finally, for Open Space Committee, the team is reviewing suggested updates to the Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI). Additionally, Open Space grant money from 2016 and 2018 will be pooled with budgeted Open Space funds and directed to updates on Veterans Memorial Park, Huddy Park, and Snug Harbor Park (inclusive of the Skate Park area). Our DPW will participate in the work for these upgrades and is taking the lead in obtaining the costs for this effort. More details will be made available as part of the May 19, 2021 Council Meeting during Committee Reports.

Mayor Carolyn Broullon added updates from the Economic Development Review Board (EDRB). One of the most important duties of the EDRB is to report obstacles to the expansion of the commercial tax base. Two items discussed were parking (current zoning requirements or businesses, permit parking and payments into the parking capital improvement fund) and expanding conditional uses to the Central Business District to include Cannabis dispensary and Tattoo parlor.

Following public portion, Police Chief Robert Burton addressed some recent concerns raised over email regarding speeding. The chief reiterated that the Highlands Police are available 24/7 and that there is no need to wait for council meetings to bring safety concerns to their attention. He went on to discuss the process involved for establishing new traffic control measures, which must be supported by data. The data already available to the department for the areas of reported via email, to date, do not support changes. However, the chief also noted that the needs of Highlands are constantly evolving, and that the department continues to work with the Borough Administration to address emerging concerns.

Full video from the is available on the borough website, highlandsborough.org. This meeting as well as any prior meetings can be found at bit.ly/HighlandsVideos.