

Here is the recap from the May 5, 2021 Highlands Borough Council Meeting.

Starting off the meeting, Ms. Nancy Messina took her oath of office for her new role for the Highlands Housing Authority. Congratulations Nancy!

Next up was the approval of the minutes for both April 2021 meetings (the 7th and the 21st), and then it was on to ordinances, which were all on their first reading. The three ordinances put forward were:

- A revision to the borough code to allow for bingo and raffle licenses to be issued for Sundays. Currently, this is prohibited.
- Proposed refinancing \$2.75 million of bonds which had been issued in 2011 for the Atlantic Highlands/Highlands Sewerage Authority. By refinancing these bonds under the current interest rates, the borough should save \$462,000 (even including the cost of refinancing).
- An ordinance to bond for the construction of the new Municipal Building. This is a revision to the prior ordinance to fund the construction, which had been tabled during the February 17, 2021 meeting. While the projected cost of the construction remains \$10 million, the total bond amount has been reduced to \$4.75 million. The reduction of the bond amount is a result of an expected contribution of \$5 million by FEMA. Many thanks to the Borough Administrator, Mr. Mike Muscillo, and Mayor Broullon for their ongoing efforts with FEMA to secure this aid. The projected impact to the tax rate at this new level is estimated to be \$0.0385 for every \$100 of assessed value. For example, a home assessed at \$240,000 would pay roughly an additional \$92 per year.

All three ordinances passed unanimously.

Moving on to resolutions, the council unanimously adopted all but one of the resolutions on the agenda. The resolution which was not adopted was a vote on the final 2021 Municipal Budget, which is pending feedback from

the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The resolutions which were adopted were:

- payment of bills, the details of which can be found at bit.ly/HighlandsPOB
- an amendment to the 2021 Temporary Budget
- an authorization to read the 2021 Municipal Budget by title

While the final vote on the 2021 budget had been tabled, Mr. Pat DiBlasio did go into detail on the budget, including fielding questions from the public on details of the changes from 2020. The projected impact to the tax rate is a decrease of \$0.01 for every \$100 of assessed values. Carrying forward the example from above, a home assessed at \$240,000 would pay roughly \$24 less per year.

The agenda called for a block of resolutions to be covered under a consent agenda. However, Councilperson Linda Mazzola asked for these resolutions to be read individually. Councilperson Don Melnyk seconded this motion and the council agreed to proceed with individual readings.

Of the 10 resolutions, all passed unanimously with one exception; a resolution to enter into a shared services agreement with Monmouth County for the continued use of ModIV for property assessment computer services. The resolution on the adoption of this shared services agreement was tabled to allow for additional research by Council President Jo-Anne Olszewski on alternative solutions. The existing agreement carries through the end of 2021.

The 9 resolutions which were passed unanimously are as follows:

- A resolution to award the contract for wastewater pumping to O&M Solutions. This change in vendor will save the borough \$3,600 annually and had been reviewed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) Superintendent Ron Boyce with no objection.

- A Memorandum of Agreement between the borough and the U.S. Coast Guard for emergency services.
- Execution of a project agreement with Monmouth County to perform pedestrian improvements along Marine Place West. This work is funded under a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Related to the HUD grant, a resolution certifying that Highlands has a policy prohibiting excessive use of force. The federal government requires that towns receiving funds attest to having such a policy. This provision of the HUD grant requires no change for the Highlands Police Department as a policy had already been in place.
- A resolution for a tax refund due to overpayment for one household.
- A resolution which renames Superstorm Sandy Recovery Trust Fund to the more general Storm Recovery Trust Fund.
- Then three resolutions, all tied to Open Space improvements, which are supported in part by matching Open Space grants from 2016 and 2018. Taking all 3 at one time will allow for additional savings because of a bulk purchase:
 - o Purchase of Sport Court for Snug Harbor (Basketball and Tennis Court area)
 - o Purchase of playground equipment for Huddy Park, Snug Harbor and Veterans Memorial Park
 - o Purchase of rubber mulch for the playground areas

The meeting then moved on to reports from the Administrator and Engineering.

In the Administrator's Report, Mr. Mike Muscillo reported out on his recent activities. These included:

- Reimbursement meetings held been held with FEMA (related to Municipal Building funding)
- Paperwork has been submitted for Safe Route to Schools Grant with NJDOT

- Meeting had been held with the NJDEP regarding Monmouth Hills regarding storm runoff.

For Engineering, Mr. Ben Matlack of CME Associates reported out that the Waterwitch Storm and Sanitary Sewer project remains on track. In other news, the work on Locust Street is progressing well and paving should begin soon. Also, Mr. Matlack had inspected the Captains Cove construction, including the excavation to replace the bulkhead near the corner of Washington Avenue and Marine Place. There was no observed disturbance to sewer or gas lines, but engineering has communicated the urgency in completing this phase of construction to the owner of Captains Cove.

Following public portion, Mayor Broullon communicated that Council meetings will return to in-person beginning with May 19, 2021, with recordings still available following the meeting (no remote participation). Councilperson Melnyk has been assigned the task of identifying options to allow for live-stream, but this will not be available ahead of the meeting on the 19th.

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.

Have questions? Reach out to the borough at bit.ly/contacthighlands and submit your questions.