



Borough of Swedesboro Council Meeting  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES of JULY 19, 2010  
Approved on AUGUST 2, 2010

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A regular meeting of the Borough Council was held on the above date in Council Chambers with the Honorable Thomas W. Fromm presiding.

Mayor advised that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Mayor asked for a roll call of Council, all members present, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mr. Zappala moved to approve the minutes of July 19, 2010, seconded by Mr. Weeks. Vote all yes.

### **MAYOR'S OPENING COMMENTS**

Mayor did have any comments at this time.

Mr. Casella moved to open the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Weeks. Vote all yes.

Ben Campenelli-2 Maybrook Avenue- Questioned the assessment going on in Swedesboro and the high taxes. He feels that the taxes are too high and he cannot afford to live here and in fact is trying to sell his house. He is questioning what is being done to cut the local taxes and school taxes.

Mayor Fromm advised Mr. Campenelli that the assessment is mandated and is a County wide assessment that will save the town a lot of money as the County is paying for it. Assessments should be done every three years, however, the cost is very high and an assessment has not been done in Swedesboro since 1992. Mayor Fromm indicated that how it was explained to him that on average. If the revaluation is done correctly it will not necessarily raise your taxes, typically 1/3 go up, 1/3 stays the same and 1/3 could go down. The newer homes were overvalued compared to the rest of the town. The budget is the same, but it is redistributed. It should help with the regional school, because our values are so low.

Mayor emphasized that the borough taxes went down 17.6 cents per hundred dollars of value.

Mr. Campenelli interrupted the mayor regarding articles in the newspaper and on the news that the taxes were going down and wondered if he would be getting a rebate check.

Mayor Fromm stated that the taxes will be going out in the next few weeks. The bottom line is that the council reduced taxes in this town. Mayor commented that they do not have control of the schools. Again Mr. Campenelli interrupted suggesting a total freeze on taxes.



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Mayor stated that he was proud of what was done with the school and that they got a cut out of the Kingsway Budget, which would have been a very high tax increase and for the local schools hours and hours were spent getting a reduction in the school budget. A 755,000 cut in the school budget was proposed and it was emphasized that the state would not allow a freeze. Mayor went on to say that the State reduced our cuts from 755,000 to 493,000. Complaints should be addressed to the Governor who gave this town over a \$200,000 increase in taxes.

Mayor Fromm stated that the original increase was .46 cents per hundred the reduction was reduced by us reducing our budget by 17.6 cents, the Kingsway was reduced by 5 cents, the Swedesboro Woolwich school budget was increased and the rate increase is @ 36 cents per hundred. Nobody on Council is happy about it and feels that they did their job by cutting the budgets. There is no control once it goes to the State.

Mayor Fromm stated that doing the math as an example using his house, which has a 101,000 appraised value, his taxes will be going up \$369.00. If they did not do what they did they would have gone up an additional \$273.00 for a total of \$642.00.

Mayor stated that the Council did their job the best they could however, it is still a lousy situation.

Mr. Zappala advised him to look at his tax bill and look at the breakdown. A lot of time was spent on the school budgets. Swedesboro/Woolwich did not want to work with the towns.

Mr. Campanelli again spoke and feels that with the assessment they will face another tax increase.

Mayor Fromm reiterated the assessment is not a money grab it is a fair way to do the assessments and distribute the taxes. It will now be done every three years and will not have drastic increases.

Mayor states that he shares the anger, but they are not going up because of this council. Mayor informed every one of all the meetings they had in an effort to get the situation fixed. Mayor feels that the Governor is the one to blame for this impact from the schools. The State took all the bargaining power away.

Mr. Campenelli went onto say that he was never given notification that Council did all these wonderful things and no communication was sent to the residents to get on a tax revolt.

Mayor states that it has been in the newspaper, it is on the website, and was on the news.



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Mr. Casella commented at the last council meeting when everyone found out that the State overturned all the work that Swedesboro and Woolwich did, to reiterate what Mr. Zappala and the Mayor said hours after hours were spent, Mr. Casella stated that he asked why can't we do a lawsuit because of them overturning the decision and that it means nothing. It is a slap in the face to mayor and council.

Mr. Campanelli does feel that a letter should have been sent.

Mr. Casella is very angry with Department of Education and the Governor as they did the complete opposite of what they said they would do.

Mayor stated that he is putting together a letter that is going to go out explaining the current tax situation.

Mr. Zappala moved to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Weeks. Vote all yes.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Letter from Lou Colamecco asking permission to hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual breast cancer walking starting in Woolwich and going through Swedesboro.

Mayor Fromm asked for the support of this event as Mr. Colamecco is a pillar of the town and recently lost his wife to breast cancer.

Mr. Casella asked if the Deptford Fire Police could help out with this event.

Mr. Weeks motioned to allow the walk through Swedesboro, seconded by Mr. Zappala. Vote all yes.

**REPORTS:**

The Fire Company report and construction report was presented to Mayor and Council.

Mayor Fromm stated that Mr. Borden approached us again asking if there is any chance that Council would consider donating a couple of our old police cars as we have done in the past. So far one or two cop cars and an old ambulance was donated and the rationale in the past was the best case scenario is that we would only get about \$200.00-300.00 for the vehicles and based on the work that this organization does they would consider donating the vehicles. The expense of advertising would be more than what we would get for the cars or we may break even. Mayor asked Ron to come in tonight to address council.



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Mayor welcomed Ron Borden a former police officer for Swedesboro who now works for the County.

Ron Borden addressed Council and asked for permission from the Council. Mr. Weeks asked if these were cars that Woolwich did not want and Mayor Fromm stated that was the case.

Mayor Fromm did not want to speak for Council, but he is for it because he states that the cars are used for events in our community.

Mrs. Gahrs asked how many cars and Mayor stated that there are two functioning cars and two that do not run. Mr. Borden asked if the mechanic in Swedesboro could get them to run perhaps they could take them. Mr. Casella asked who has the titles.

Mr. Weeks stated in lieu of the fact that we donated vehicles in the past and the fact that it is being used in the County and for our own citizens that he has no problem with this.

Mayor stated that we would have to speak with Tim Chell, but for tonight we will make a motion and confirm with him on how to proceed.

Mr. Weeks made a motion to donate the cars to the Deptford Twp. Fire and Police, seconded by Mr. Casella with the consent of the solicitor. Vote all yes.

Mayor asked Clerk to check with the solicitor and thanked Ron for the group's participation and their support of Swedesboro.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance- As noted the taxes are increasing by approximately .36 cents and the tax bills will most likely be going out in approximately one-two weeks. Mayor again stated that he will have a letter to go out with the bills.

Mr. Weeks asked if the minutes were voted on and he was advised that they were.

Mayor Fromm stated that we are already getting some things together for next year's budget. Hopefully we will be able to generate some money to help build up the surplus so that we can hopefully cut taxes again next year.

Mayor Fromm stated that he is very happy with the fact that Swedesboro is probably the only town in New Jersey who has actually cut their local tax and it is largely due to the fact that the police force was merged.



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Public works- On Church Street the line painters were in and at the recommendation of the police we were asked to put yellow stripes all the way down. This is for the four way stop sign at the Corner of Church and Second Street. Signs are up and still covered, but once the ordinance is passed we will remove the covers and enforce it.

Mr. Weeks asked if crosswalks could be painted as there are stops and the word stop is there and there are sidewalks at the corners.

Mayor Fromm stated that we are still moving forward with the water meter project and we are waiting on some parts and the meters to complete the change orders.

The clerk stated that she was informed by Mueller's that everything was progressing and that the bills would be able to be generated next week and that they will be out the week of July 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Fromm stated that the normal water conservation measures are in effect of odd/even days and right now through the cooperation and coordination of the engineer, somebody from the State, and Mike D. They actually think that we may have a very inexpensive fix where we will be able to maintain the system without going to the drastic banning of all outdoor water use. Any equipment that we may have to buy will be able to get used when we put the new water storage facility in as far as metering the water and keeping the pressure. The website states that we may have to enforce banning of the water.

Over the next few weeks the first stages of the installation of a new drinking water well will be installed at the Corner of park and East. The exploratory part of that will be started by drilling a 300' bore hole. The treatment system will be done away with and that building should go away and the tank behind it. There will be a pump only there. The plan is for it to pump up to the treatment plant and treat the water up there. It will make the place much nicer and be a 100% increase in improvement over the water situation as the well is on its last leg, well #3.

Public Safety- Mr. Casella saw the Chief over the weekend and everything is fine.

Mr. Weeks asked if we could get the Chief to have some officers down town help enforce the stop for pedestrian law as the law requires that you stop for anyone that is in the crosswalk or what could be deemed a crosswalk. Mr. Weeks stated that he was in the middle of the street the other night and almost got hit by a car because the person did not stop or slow down as he was in the crosswalk.

Mayor will speak with the Chief and would like to enforce those who are not using the crosswalks and for people not to be crossing in the middle of the block. There is an effort in the State to enforce this issue.



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Mrs. Gahrs encountered a problem where she has stopped for somebody in a crosswalk and people are passing her on the right and she is praying that the person does not get hit.

Mayor Fromm will contact the Chief.

Economic Development- Mr. Weeks stated that there is a meeting this Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Fromm asked Helen Fromm if she would like to comment on Swedesboro Day. Mrs. Fromm stated that she is actively working on flyers. Robert Botto is sponsoring a dunk tank and all the forms are on line this year. Postcards have been sent to get the date out there and promote the event. There is a sponsor list to see where the money is going. Everything is coming along. As Kingsway no longer has their craft fair they provided the committee with their vendor list of over 400. The contact number is up to date as is the website. Donations are needed and appreciated.

Mayor Fromm stated that volunteers are always needed.

FIRE-

Mrs. Gahrs when comparing the numbers from May to June the total number of calls are up by 4. Mrs. Gahrs commended the volunteer fire company for going out in this heat to the fire calls and the alarm calls. Their uniforms are very heavy and hot.

Mayor Fromm asked Mrs. Gahrs to contact Ed Barber and whoever the president is to meet with the mayor and the engineer to make sure they are absolutely aware of what happens when the tank work starts.

Mrs. Gahrs did mention this to them and they seemed to be aware of the fact that there is work being done.

Garbage and recycling- Mr. Ayers asked if it was discussed at the last meeting about the letter Mark Fruits is putting together to send to the business' in town to make them aware of our ordinance and make sure that everyone is following it with regard to garbage and recycling.

Mayor Fromm stated that it was discussed at the last meeting, but since there are more people at this meeting he will go over it again. We are at the point where we can start changing procedures or things that have been happening over the years. Somehow the town had people that were disposing tires and oil and now we find out that the town is doing more than what our ordinance has called for. The committee has gone more in detail and they will be saving a lot of money. A lot of money has already been saved by trying to things in better ways.



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Mayor Fromm commented that one of things that people do not understand about Swedesboro's budget is similar to "no good deed goes unpunished". Two years ago the CFO came and said the purpose of a garbage district had outlived its usefulness so the Garbage district was canceled, which may not be a big deal, but it means that we do not have to do a separate garbage budget or a separate audit, both of which cost money. If people were to look at the tax bill there used to be a garbage district of about 29 cents, which has not risen and it even went down, but it was rolled into the general budget. There is no garbage district on the tax bill this year and it was rolled into the municipal budget. It was a good thing.

The article that states that Swedesboro taxes are going up is simply not the truth. Over the last 7 years the taxes have only gone up about 3.4% a year for the local taxes.

Prior to leaving Mr. Campenelli thank Mayor and Council for their efforts.

Parks and Recreation- A meeting is scheduled for next week.

Planning Board- A meeting was held last week and there was one item on the agenda and one was tabled.

Mayor Fromm stated that a site plan waiver was given to an ice cream shop to be located on the Corner of Ferry Road and Kings Highway. It should be really good for the town.

Board of Health- After the last council meeting there was some discussion because of the heat wave that we have been experiencing about residents who may or may not have had any air-condition or some type of fan. On follow up the next day Sam contacted the chairman Mr. Spithaler and asked him to take a ride up to the Lore Drive apartments to check on them, which he did. Mr. Casella would like to recognize Ed Dupper who was able to get three names of residents who needed fans. Because of the efforts of Steve Ayers, Diane Hale and Mr. Dupper they were able to deliver the fans and a couple of residents were helped. Mr. Casella thanked everybody who helped with this effort. If anybody is in need of a fan, whatever can be done to help them out will be done.

Mayor Fromm also thanked all involved.

Mayor Fromm asked for the status of the rental property with the temporary water.

Mr. Casella stated that they were supposed to be out at the end of June.

Mayor stated the first meeting in July they were not out.

Clerked commented that she asked Mr. Simmerman to take a ride out there to see if the hose was disconnected and he did report that it was removed.



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Mayor asked that we confirm that there is nobody in that house and no hose providing the water. Mayor Fromm asked Steve to do verify no one is living there and to do an e-mail.

Mayor Fromm asked Steve Ayers what was up with the trees that were supposed to be down.

Mr. Ayers will speak with Carol or Marianne as they were supposed to meet and find out what was going on.

Mr. Casella asked if there was work being done on Helms as there was a work tree truck there and also someone stated that there were two trees cut down on Second Street.

Mayor Fromm stated that one at Weatherby and Helms needs to be down before the kids come back and before it falls on them.

Reassessment- Mrs. Gahrs stated everyone should have a copy of the latest report from Robyn as to where we stand. The inspection rate is 65.5%. Mrs. Gahrs saw the gentleman on Park Avenue today and there is another gentleman doing commercial properties. There are two people doing the assessments. A time frame was not given as to when it will be completed.

Mr. Ayers saw the gentleman doing the census and he seemed like he was trying to do a good job. Those he was having trouble getting a response from he was trying to get the information from neighbors, etc.

Clerk read her notes that she was asked to follow up on.

Mr. Ayers asked if the concrete regarding the curbs at the Corner of Broad Street and Second Street, as well as in front of Mr. Fanslau's house was out of the street.

Clerk will look into.

When commenting on the new lights that were damaged on Kings Highway Mayor Fromm had additional information. The company had a repair kit with them, but Mayor Fromm asked Stan to check to see if this was still under warrantee and bond so rather than putting touch up paint on them making sure it is not something that we will be stuck with.

At this point Mayor Fromm commented that the library construction project is officially underway. The official word that he received today is that they are absolutely right on schedule and as of now there are no major hiccups, the only possible minor change is the code official asked for some additional lighting. This is a wonderful thing for the town. The operation in the back of borough was a great idea as the people really depend on having access to the computers.



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**OLD BUSINESS**

Mrs. Gahrs-last meeting Mrs. Hale talked about lowering the Lake in the fall and to make contact with some of the residents. Mrs. Gahrs contacted most of the people on the Lakeview Drive side and out of the 9 people she had 7 people who would like to have the Lake lowered to do either clean up or repair work. Two people reported that they really did not need anything done.

Mrs. Gahrs did inform them that it would only be for a short period of time and that she was just trying to get ideas so that they can get all their ducks in order to be prepared to do the work.

At the last meeting it was mentioned that one of our public works gentleman, John Gangemi was instrumental in saving a garage that had a fire and asked if there was something more than could be done for him as members of council to reward him or have him come to a meeting and recognize him formally for what he did.

Mayor Fromm stated that we would not be able to give him gifts, but we certainly could recognize him at a meeting. Mayor asked clerk to do a certificate of appreciation for John.

Mrs. Gahrs wanted to keep in mind for the 2011 services that possibly on that service that perhaps something could be done with the boy scouts to do some type of dedication service for the new pole.

Mr. Ayers commented on the Lake lowering to encourage that this not be an annual thing. Last year we lost all the trout stockings that were going to take place in the winter, so perhaps every third year this could be done.

Mrs. Gahrs did tell everyone that she spoke to that they would have to take advantage of this situation as this was not something that could be constantly done so as not to disturb the balance of the lake.

Mr. Zappala commented on the flag pole and he did speak with Mr. Simmerman. He had three companies out last week and he is awaiting their proposals for that. He did work on a 50' foot pole and Mr. Zappala stated that they talked about a possible 60' foot pole.

Mayor Fromm asked him to find out how high the one we had is and to keep it that size, not shorter.

Mr. Zappala stated the job will encompass from removal to replacement. The internal controls will make it much easier to change the flags. Mr. Zappala will contact the scoutmaster of troop 13 as they are interested in doing a fundraiser for this and any assistance they can provide for this project will be appreciated.



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RESOLUTIONS:

Clerk read the following resolution: R-88-2010-(Approval of Items of Revenue). Mr. Weeks motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Mr. Ayers. Roll Call Vote-all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Clerk read the following resolution: R-89-2010 (Professional Service Contract for Federici and Akin Thompson Ave. Sewer project). Mr. Weeks motioned to approve, seconded by Mrs. Gahrs. Roll Call Vote-all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

ORDINANCE-10-10-10 PUBLIC HEARING:

Mr. Weeks motioned to open the meeting to the public seconded by Mr. Casella. Roll Call Vote all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mayor stated that this is an ordinance to amend an ordinance to make Second and Church Street a four way stop intersection.

No one spoke from the Audience.

Mr. Weeks motioned to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Mrs. Gahrs. All yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mr. Weeks motioned to adopt Ordinance 0-10-10, seconded by Mr. Zappala. Roll Call Vote-All yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mayor Fromm stated that he will have them check into the cost of putting bigger stops and a crosswalk for the signs. This was at the recommendation of the police after having a meeting with the community members for speeding traffic. Mayor Fromm states that he has gotten reports from the residents that it already has improved.

No sick pay benefit applications.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mrs. Gahrs had questions about a property that was in the process of being revamped on the bend and seems like it has been abandoned as far as more work and was wondering if anyone knew what was happening there because it is starting to look pretty bad.

Mayor Fromm stated that he talked to the owner and it is a recession right now. He was also waiting for some approval for the permits as he is putting four houses in the acres behind there and he is waiting for the permits. He was assured that the project will be moving forward. This original house will be restored to a single family house.



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Mrs. Gahrs stated that this owner is in the middle of doing other buildings and new construction so she did not know where the owner stood.

Mayor Fromm was told that it is his next project.

Mayor Fromm stated that the police responded to a citizen who had a concern about a traffic situation on Mechanic Street as far as obstruction of Traffic and the police went out and talked to the residents and they trimmed back their bushes and made it a safe situation. Mr. Simmerman also went out as did Dan Orbanus.

Mayor Fromm asked clerk if she spoke with the Police regarding the block party and she informed him that she did not that she only spoke with Mrs. Morris. Mayor Fromm asked clerk to check with the police and also contact Mrs. Morris about the Deptford Fire Police helping out for their event.

Mr. Weeks motioned to open the meeting to the public, seconded by Mr. Zappala. Vote all yes.

Lucille Stewart- Informed all that the BBQ will take place on 8/21/10 at the Richardson Avenue School. Mrs. Stewart stated that she spoke with the Chief about the block party and he did not feel that they would block the street off.

Mayor Fromm stated that we would contact the Chief and make sure it had no impact on her event as council agreed that they would work with that organization.

Mayor Fromm stated Jersey Q Barbeque was voted the best barbeque in South Jersey and it is a great event for a great cause.

Cheryl Zappala-560 Park Avenue- stated her and her neighbors were outside talking and two of the bicycle police officers came by and talked with them for a little bit. They drove through the park and East Avenue and were making their way around town and as a resident feels that it was nice to see them out talking with the community.

Helen Fromm-402 Weatherby Avenue- Commented that she saw the Flyer for the National Night Out for Woolwich at the police headquarters and was curious if Swedesboro was doing anything.

Mayor Fromm stated that we are doing pretty much what they are doing, but nothing at this point has been planned. Mayor Fromm stated that what National Night out was designed to be is for everyone to go out on their streets and talk to their neighbors and get back to the purity of that.

Mr. Casella stated that last year it was the Swedesboro/Woolwich National night out at the Locke Avenue Park.



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Mayor Fromm stated that he would talk to the Chief about this.

Mr. Weeks stated that it would be good to have the neighbors get together for an outing and having the police ride around and interact with the neighbors rather than everyone going to one place.

Mrs. Fromm stated that the Flyer stated specifically Woolwich Night Out.

Mr. Weeks moved to close the public portion, seconded by Mr. Casella. Vote all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mr. Zappala moved to pay all duly authorized bills. Vote all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mr. Weeks motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Casella. Vote all yes, Mrs. Hale absent.

Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8:23 pm.

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Tanya L. Goodwin, Clerk