SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

A special meeting of the Bridgeton City Council was held on Tuesday, October 14, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held at City of Bridgeton Police and Municipal Court Complex, 330 Fayette Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey in Council Chambers.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Jack Surrency.

The Statement of Meeting Notice was read by Deputy Clerk, Jeanne Hitchner, "Adequate notice of this meeting pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 giving the time, date, location and agenda to the extent known has been given in the following manner:
1. By posting notice of said meeting on the bulletin board at City Hall Annex, 181 East Commerce Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey on October 9, 2014, at 4:30 pm
2. By mailing such notice to the News of Cumberland County and the Press on October 9, 2014, at 4:30 p.m.
3. By publishing notice of said meeting in the South Jersey Times on Friday, October 10, 2014"

 Invocation and flag salute was led by Councilman Thompson.

The following answered to roll call from the City of Bridgeton:

Ms. Lugardo-Hemple
Mr. Spence
Mr. Thompson
Mr. Zapolski
President Surrency

The following answered to roll call from Fairfield Township:

Ms. Servais
Mr. Pitts
Mr. Byrd
Mr. Morton

NJ Courts Municipal Division Manager of Vicinage 15, Carol A. Cummings, Esq., Mayor Kelly, and Mayor Thomas-Hughes of Fairfield were also present.

President Surrency opened the meeting to Ms. Cummings to explain a little about the different options Fairfield currently has being their Court Administrator resigned without giving any notice. First, she noted that there was an ad that went out seeking applicants for the position. Unfortunately, those who applied did not have any municipal court experience. Therefore, if Fairfield were to hire someone without any former experience, this person would have to go through training in order to become

accredited before they could actually begin working. She reiterated that this was still an option even though it would take a while.

Ms. Cummings explained that Fairfield also has the option to join Bridgeton in either a Joint Municipal Court or a Shared Municipal Court. She briefly explained the difference between each noting that a Shared Court is comparable to "living together" where a Joint Municipal Court is more like a "marriage."

Ms. Cummings expressed that figuring out the best court set-up is just one big mathematical equation looking at caseloads and budgets to determine staffing, etc. At this time, she referred to the Joint Municipal Court budget which Administrator Goodreau put together and asserted that these figures show the cost of a Bridgeton-Fairfield Joint Court to function from turning on the lights to health benefits, to security, etc.

President Surrency asked if there would be any outstanding costs associated with the merge such as printing costs of the tickets to read "Bridgeton Joint Municipal Court," etc. Ms. Cummings replied that it would only be a one-time cost. If there were to be more courts added on down the road, the name would remain the same. Plus, she only recommends courts to have a three month supply of tickets on hand at a time.

Administrator Goodreau stated that Fairfield would have to make upgrades to their facility if they were to remain their own court. He noted that Bridgeton has already made these upgrades and does 100% security screening. He offered to give a tour of the facility after the meeting.

At this time, Mr. Goodreau pointed out that this meeting was called for tonight to get the feelings of both Fairfield and Bridgeton to see whether there was an interest to form the Joint Municipal Court and if so, to move forward with the paperwork.

Mayor Thomas-Hughes of Fairfield Township raised the issue that Fairfield residents are paying to run a court that is not generating any money in return. She verbalized to the Fairfield Committee that this is the time and place to ask questions and gather information.

Mr. Zapolski suggested to Fairfield to look at the costs involved in operating alone with the upgrades that need to be made and compare that with this operating budget as a shared service. He noted that it appears that there is revenue to be gained by Bridgeton and a shared service opportunity to be gained by Fairfield, helping out their budget, making this a win-win for both communities.

Mr. Byrd expressed that he would like to gather more information before reaching a decision. He noted that he does not feel it necessary to have a Joint Court because one person quit.

Ms. Cummings commented that Fairfield Court has not had any stability in the past eight years. There has been court administrators arrested, money has been taken, etc. She stated that there is no obligation for Fairfield to combine courts; however, she feels it is a good opportunity while there is nobody in the position. Other courts that wanted to combine have had to fire individuals to do so.

Much discussion ensued.

Mayor Kelly emphasized that if Fairfield were to form a Joint Municipal Court with Bridgeton that the lines of communication would always be open. He also stressed that he saw this as an opportunity for both municipalities to benefit from and was not meant to be a winner take all proposition.

President Surrency announced that this is the time for public comment. Ms. Lugardo-Hemple moved, seconded by Mr. Spence to open the meeting for public comment.

Nancy Ridgeway of Bridgeton expressed that Fairfield would not be saving money whether they did a Joint Court or remained on their own. She feels it is nice that everyone was able to come together and have a discussion in this manner.

President Surrency asked if there was anyone else desiring to be heard. With nobody coming forward Ms. Lugardo-Hemple made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Spence seconded this motion.

Mr. Spence made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Ms. Lugardo-Hemple.

President Surrency adjourned the meeting.

ATTEST:

_____   _____
Deputy Clerk, Jeanne Hitchner   Council President, Jack Surrency

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Date