

BRIDGETON CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
April 18, 2023

A meeting of the Bridgeton City Council was held on Tuesday, April 4, 2023 5:30 p.m., at the 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 Bethea.

The Statement of Meeting Notice was read by Municipal Clerk, Nichole Almanza;

Notice of this Meeting of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton, as required by N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., the "Open Public Meetings Act", has been provided by an Amended Public Advertisement in the South Jersey Times, The Daily Journal on February 11, 2023 and on the City Website setting forth the date, time and place of this meeting of the Bridgeton City Council.

Invocation and Flag Salute was led by Councilman Gonzalez.

The following answered to roll call:

Councilwoman Rosemary DeQuinzio
Councilman David Gonzalez
Councilwoman Marian King
Council President Edward Bethea

Absent: Councilman J. Curtis Edwards

Also in attendance:

Mayor Albert Kelly
Solicitor Michele Gibson
CFO Trisha McGahhey

Administrator Kevin Rabago
Municipal Clerk Nichole Almanza

PRESENTATIONS:

2023 Budget Introduction and Presentations

Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago announced that tonight's Consent Agenda provides a Resolution Introducing the 2023 Budget and stated that some departments will be presenting information about same.

Fire Department - Deputy Fire Chief Michael Hitchner discussed some issues that the Fire Department has encountered regarding smoke detectors that are normally provided by the State to hand out to residents. He explained that the State is low on resources and has not been providing as many to the City.

*****Councilman Edwards entered the meeting*****

Deputy Chief Hitchner stated that there has been an increase in emergency calls and explained how the department needs 2 additional EMT's and 1 Firefighter. He also reviewed some of the upcoming retirements that will take place in the next 2 years.

Councilwoman King discussed the amount of overtime that the department has and asked if it would make a difference to just hire an additional worker rather than pay the overtime amount. Deputy Chief Hitchner answered that it would definitely elevate some but would not get rid of all. Councilwoman King stated that looking into doing this would be a benefit to the public safety of the City.

Public Works / Water & Sewer – Mark Lavenberg, Public Works Director discussed various projects that the department will handle in the next year such as: changing of trash cans downtown, sidewalk replacement on Laurel Street, road pavement on various streets, and South Avenue force main replacement. Mr. Lavenberg discussed the importance of grant funds to be able to continue these types of projects.

Mr. Lavenberg stated that they are also looking into the redevelopment of wells to meet the needs of future housing developments.

Mr. Lavenberg discussed the lead service line replacements being required by the State. He explained that the City is doing the work inhouse rather than getting an outside contract like other municipalities.

Mr. Lavenberg discussed the importance of having a Water Utility Revitalization Fund and thanked Council for continuing same for future use.

Councilwoman King asked if there were any updates as to replacing the lead lines from the curb to the home for the residents. Mr. Lavenberg explained that there still is not much guidance as to residents replacing their lines from the curb to the home but will update when the time comes. He added that the City is only responsible from the main to the curb.

Councilwoman King asked if there was any way to have interns or apprenticeships with the department. Mr. Lavenberg explained that he actually was one of the first to run an apprenticeship when he worked in Trenton. He continued that he has considered doing some similar here and has been in talk with the State.

Police Department – Police Chief Gaimari stated that there has been an increase in calls for the department. He continued that there has also been an increase for firearm cards and permits. He added that there will be an Ordinance on 1st reading at the May 2, 2023 meeting to increase the fees as required by the State.

Chief Gaimari explained that he has asked for an additional Sergeant to handle trainings such as: use of force, domestic violence, firearms, harassment, etc.

Chief Gaimari stated that the department continues to look for grants to help save money such as grants used for body worn cameras and fingerprint scanning.

Chief Gaimari stated that the department is in dire need of updating and/or replacing computers as most have not been updated in over 10 plus years. He continued that some of the computers will not work with the newer programs that the department is using.

Chief Gaimari stated that the department needs new police cars and undercover cars as most of them have way over 100,000 miles. He explained that he has been in talks with the Prosecutor's Office in regard to buying their unmarked cars from them as they replace their quite often and would still be in good condition.

Chief Gaimari discussed the possibility of removing the vehicle cameras to save money as the City has the body cameras on the officers. He provided pros and cons of same and stated that this still needs to be reviewed.

Chief Financial Officer – CFO, Trisha McGahhey stated that she started officially back in August, 2022 and this will be her first budget with the City.

Ms. McGahhey discussed various changes within her department such as bringing the QPA to an inhouse position and closing of bank accounts not used or needed.

Ms. McGahhey discussed prior budget issues such as the following: 0% tax increase for 2022, lawsuits and various settlements, union contracts and inflation.

Ms. McGahhey explained that with all things considered a \$0.36 increase would be needed, however, with various cuts and revisions she has brought it down to \$0.19. She continued that after meeting with the Finance Committee and cutting more areas, the increase is now \$0.116.

Ms. McGahhey provided an estimated 2023 tax levy breakdown such as school, county, library and municipal. She also explained the various ways revenues are received for the City. Ms. McGahhey emphasized on the importance of replenishing surplus as it gets used.

Ms. McGahhey explained to Council that a majority vote (4 yays) is needed to move forward tonight and that the Public Hearing and adoption will take place on May 16, 2023.

Council President Bethea asked if the amount regarding the County and School Board tax rate was the true amount. Ms. McGahhey explained that these are only estimated at this time but should know by June.

Council President Bethea stated that the City needs to advocate on the status of cannabis licenses. Mayor Kelly explained that the next meeting is scheduled for June and we should have applications on for approval at that meeting.

Councilwoman DeQuinzio stated that these were great presentations tonight. She continued that the facts were laid out as it should be and she agrees with passing the introduction of same.

Council President Bethea congratulated Ms. McGahhey on a job well done and thanked the Finance Committee for their reviews.

MINUTES:

Council President Bethea presented the City Council Meeting Minutes of April 4, 2023 and Executive Session Minutes of April 4, 2023. It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and seconded by Councilwoman King that said minutes be approved and to dispense with the reading of said minutes as all members have received copies. The motion carried unanimously.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:

Council President Bethea requested Council/Committee Liaison Reports:

Councilwoman DeQuinzio – None at this time.

Councilman Edwards – Congratulated CFO, Trisha McGahhey for her great job on the budget.

Councilman Gonzalez – Stated that Rosalinda Garcia with Main Streets is looking for vendors for their Cinco De Mayo event to be held May 7, 2023.

Councilwoman King – Stated she has been speaking with apartment complexes and would like to create some sort of meeting with them regarding housing quality of life for their residents. She added she will provide updates accordingly.

Council President Bethea – None at this time.

Council President Bethea referred to the Mayor, Business Administrator and Solicitor for their reports.

Mayor Kelly – Stated that he will continue to keep in contact with the CRC regarding Bridgeton's outstanding applications.

Mayor Kelly discussed the need of some sort of homeless shelter on this side of the County.

Mayor Kelly announced that Judge Witcher has resigned effective August 1, 2023 and will need to be replaced. Mayor Kelly stated he would like to meet with Judge Witcher to hear his suggestion on how to improve our system.

Mayor Kelly spoke of the start up for Little League back in the City. He acknowledged Juan Carlos Martinez of the Clerk's Office for a great job getting this put together. He stated they have 4 t-ball teams, 4 coached teams and 4 division teams with an estimated of 10 kids per team. Mayor Kelly stated that he is very proud of Juan and all of his hard work. He also thanked all of the sponsors and provided a few names of the establishments helping.

Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago – Discussed approval of \$90,000.00 grant for the landfill and \$168,000.00 grant for site investigation at the Tin Can site.

City Solicitor, Michele Gibson – None at this time.

ORDINANCES ON 1ST READING:

Council President Bethea announced there was one (1) Ordinance for First Reading. The Municipal Clerk read the Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON
AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CERTAIN PROPERTY OWNED BY THE CITY OF
BRIDGETON TO THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

It was moved by Councilman Edwards and seconded by Councilwoman DeQuinzio that the Ordinance be introduced on first reading and that the second reading, public hearing and final consideration be held on May 2, 2023.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

ORDINANCES ON 2ND READING:

Council President Bethea announced there were four (4) Ordinances for Second Reading. Council President Bethea asked the Municipal Clerk to read the Ordinances.

ORDINANCE 23-08

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON AMENDING
SECTION 149-25 (H) (5) (A) OF THE CITY CODE PERTAINING TO ZOO CAMP FEES**

It was moved by Councilwoman King and second by Councilman Gonzalez this be considered the second reading of said ordinance and the meeting be opened to the public for a hearing on the matter which motion was carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for any one desiring to be heard on this ordinance and this ordinance only.

No one desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilman Edwards the public hearing be closed which motion was carried.

It was then moved by Councilwoman DeQuinzio and second by Councilwoman King this be considered the final reading of said ordinance and that it be taken up for adoption or rejection by roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

ORDINANCE 23-09

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON AMENDING
ORDINANCE 22-34 FIXING THE SALARIES AND RATES OF CERTAIN OFFICERS
AND EMPLOYEES**

It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilwoman King this be considered the second reading of said ordinance and the meeting be opened to the public for a hearing on the matter which motion was carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for any one desiring to be heard on this ordinance and this ordinance only.

No one desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilwoman King and second by Councilman Edwards the public hearing be closed which motion was carried.

It was then moved by Councilman Edwards and second by Councilman Gonzalez this be considered the final reading of said ordinance and that it be taken up for adoption or rejection by roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

ORDINANCE 23-10

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON AMENDING
THE CUMBERLAND DAIRY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN TO ALLOW FOR THE
PRIVATE ACQUISITION OF BLOCK 9, LOT 10 AND TO MAKE EXPLICIT THE
AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNING BODY TO SELL BLOCK 9, LOT 10 PURSUANT
TO N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-8 AND N.J.S.A. 40A:12-13(C)**

It was moved by Councilwoman King and second by Councilwoman DeQuinzio this be considered the second reading of said ordinance and the meeting be opened to the public for a hearing on the matter which motion was carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for any one desiring to be heard on this ordinance and this ordinance only.

No one desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilwoman DeQuinzio and second by Councilman Edwards the public hearing be closed which motion was carried.

It was then moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilman Edwards this be considered the final reading of said ordinance and that it be taken up for adoption or rejection by roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

ORDINANCE 23-11

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON AMENDING
ORDINANCE 23-06 REVISING AMOUNTS TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET
APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND ESTABLISH A CAP BANK PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A.
40A: 4-45.14 FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2023**

It was moved by Councilman Edwards and second by Councilwoman DeQuinzio this be considered the second reading of said ordinance and the meeting be opened to the public for a hearing on the matter which motion was carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for any one desiring to be heard on this ordinance and this ordinance only.

No one desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilwoman King the public hearing be closed which motion was carried.

It was then moved by Councilwoman King and second by Councilwoman DeQuinzio this be considered the final reading of said ordinance and that it be taken up for adoption or rejection by roll call vote.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

PUBLIC PORTION:

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for anyone desiring to be heard. It was moved by Councilwoman DeQuinzio motioned and seconded by Councilman Edwards the public portion be opened.

Esaul Martin and Cassandra Avila representing Bridgeton Housing Authority and SEG Coordinator announced the rescheduled clean-up will be held April 22, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. He added the meet up location will be the warming center on Washington St. Mr. Martin also discussed the monthly SEG meeting being held online and in-person.

Peggy Fleming (Bridgeton address provided), thanked the Police Department for coming to Burlington Manor to help with unsolicited people in the complex. She continued that she likes having them come out and hopes that it does not stop.

Ms. Fleming expressed her frustrations over the conditions of the apartments. She suggested that at least every 6 months Council and/or City comes out and reviews the situation. She continued that there is a giant pest issue and repairs are not being done.

Ms. Fleming shared her appreciation of Kamille Rabago of Code Enforcement as she gets right on top of any issues. Ms. Fleming stated that she is also reporting the issues to Trenton and the Health Department but explains that they come out once or twice and then are never to be seen again.

Police Chief Michael Gaimari shared a social media post with Council regarding a bike event this Saturday. He explained that the City has in the past approved a couple events like this, however, there is nothing in the works for this one. He continued that he will be meeting with State Police to discuss the event and have a plan put together should it turn sour.

Councilwoman King discussed how the City did approve a couple bike ride dates for these residents. She continued that this event takes place every year in memory of a gentleman that passed about 20 years ago. She added she hopes that the Police Department does not over do anything and signs the City up for a lawsuit.

Chief Gaimari explained that he is not trying to discourage the event but feels that the way this is being done is taking advantage of the law.

Discussions ensued by Chief Gaimari and Councilwoman King both expressing their feelings and frustrations from both sides of the event.

Andrea Gillis (Bridgeton address provided) stated that these riders do need a location to ride out of the streets.

Mitchell Sharp (Bridgeton address provided) explained that his home has two adjoining apartments that are not being rented at this time. He stated he went into one and was doing some work in the bathroom and he did not realize that the toilet kept running. Mr. Sharp stated he has

now received a water bill for \$3,000 and asked if there was anything that he could do. Council President Bethea asked Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago to speak with him.

Alan Trzuskoski, Industrial Blvd. provided updates on his Cannabis Incubator project. He stated that conversion paperwork is being submitted to the State. He continued that the Site Plan will be heard at the June Planning Board meeting for approval.

With no one else desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilman Edwards and seconded by Councilwoman DeQuinzio the public portion be closed, which motion was carried. Council President Bethea closed the public portion of the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Council President Bethea announced all matters listed under the consent agenda; M-1 through M-9 will be enacted upon by one motion unless a council member desires to discuss an item, in which case the items will be removed from the consent agenda and acted upon separately.

Council President Bethea called upon the Municipal Clerk to read the Resolutions of the Consent Agenda.

RESOLUTION NO. 84-23, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton imposing liens on various properties for remediation of certain code violations impacting public safety, health or welfare February 2023.

RESOLUTION NO. 85-23, authorizing execution of discharge or release of mortgage for 29 Monroe Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey, designated as Block 73, Lot 25 on the City of Bridgeton's Tax Map.

RESOLUTION NO. 86-23, authorizing execution of discharge or release of mortgage for 91 Summit Avenue, Bridgeton, New Jersey, designated as Block 205, Lot 11 on the City of Bridgeton's Tax Map.

RESOLUTION NO. 87-23, authorizing the execution of an Emergency Contract between the City of Bridgeton and Ricky Slade Construction, Inc. for the demolition of 143-145 S. Pine Street Bridgeton, NJ for the amount of \$5,000.00.

RESOLUTION NO. 88-23, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton authorizing refund of a plumbing permit.

RESOLUTION NO. 89-23, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton authorizing refund of a Recreation Permit Fee.

RESOLUTION NO. 90-23, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton granting Veteran or Widow of Veteran tax exemption (291 E. Commerce Street).

RESOLUTION NO. 91-23, authorizing the Introduction of the Calendar Year 2023 Municipal Budget for the City of Bridgeton.

RESOLUTION NO. 92-23, Governing Body Certification of Compliance with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's "Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964".

Council President Bethea asked for a motion to accept the resolutions under the consent agenda.

It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilman Edwards that Resolutions M-1 through M-10 be adopted which motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. The original resolutions may be found in the Resolution Book.

The Clerk called the roll as follows:

COUNCIL	YEA	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

SCHEDULE OF BILLS:

Council President Bethea asked Council for a motion to approve the Schedule of Bills dated April 18, 2023 in the amount of \$5,213,842.50. It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and seconded by Councilwoman King the Schedule of Bills be approved as read and warrants be drawn on their various accounts and appropriations, which motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote. The original schedule may be found in the minute books.

APPLICATIONS:

Council President Bethea announced there were no applications for approval.

REPORTS:

Council President Bethea announced there were four (4) reports for approval.

1. Tax Collector's Cash Receipts – March 2023
2. Clerk's Monthly Report – March 2023
3. Clerk's Resident ID 2023 Quarterly Report – January – March 2023
4. Vital Statistics Monthly Report – March 2023

It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and seconded by Councilwoman King that said applications be approved and filed, which motion carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea called upon Mayor Kelly for comments:

Mayor Kelly – None at this time.

Council President Bethea called upon Council for comments:

Councilwoman DeQuinzio – None at this time.

Councilwoman King – None at this time.

Councilman Gonzalez- Announced that Main Streets will be looking for sponsors and participants for the Annual Christmas Parade.

Councilman Gonzalez acknowledged Ms. Carol Green for being selected into the Black Hall of Fame.

Councilman Edwards – Acknowledged CFO, Trisha McGahhey on a job well done on the budget.

Councilman Edwards spoke to Ms. Fleming indicating that he would like to come out to the complex and take another look. He suggested that Council invites the Property Managers and/or owners to the Council meetings again.

Councilman Edwards spoke of the dirt bike event and stated that he hears both sides, however, things should be done the right way.

Councilman Edwards provided some updates from the Cannabis Committee. He explained that the biggest hold up is waiting for the CRC to do their approvals on these applications. Councilman Edwards spoke of having cannabis in an area downtown and he explained they are hesitant as we are in talks with a college campus for a location downtown. Councilman Edwards stated that outdoor cultivation has not been approved for the City. He also provided names of the companies that are waiting their licenses to be approved by the State.

Council President Bethea – Congratulated CFO, Trisha McGahhey on the budget.

Council President Bethea spoke of the upcoming departure of Judge Witcher and stated that the last year or so has been a roller-coaster ride. He reminded residents that Judge Witcher came to the Reorganization Meeting to swear Council in for this new term. He stated that Council respects and appreciates all that Judge Witcher has done for the City.

Council President Bethea spoke of the rebirth of Little League in the City and stated he hopes it continues to grow and prosper.

Council President Bethea asked Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago to invite the new Park and Recreation Director John Medica to the next meeting to discuss any plans within the park. He also asked questions regarding the possible Deputy position that would handle youth leagues in the City. He added that we need to make sure we have ample activities for the children of the community.

Council President Bethea stated that he hears both sides of concerns regarding the dirt bikes. He stated that it is frustrating to everyone from the Police Department to residents. He added that this is not unique to the City as it is happening everywhere. He expressed his fears for both drivers and the riders. Council President Bethea explained that the City has made small attempts to provide them a location once or twice now. He continued that they have heard the suggestions of making a place for them in the City, however, that opens the City to be held liable should something happen.

Council President Bethea discussed the issues at Burlington Manor. He explained that Council did reach out and try to get them to come to a meeting to have an open public discussion, however, they did not show. Council President Bethea stated that residents do not deserve to live like they are. Council President Bethea stated that the City does not want slumlords taking advantage of the residents and asked the City Solicitor to look into their options. Council President Bethea asked if he can be provided with an amount of taxes that are being paid by Burlington Manor to the City.


Council President Bethea thanked all 1st Responders – Police Department, Fire Department and all Public Servants.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business before Council, it was moved by Councilwoman DeQuinzio and seconded by Councilman Edwards to adjourn the meeting which motion carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea adjourned the meeting which ended at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Nichole Almanza, RMC, Municipal Clerk

APPROVED


Edward Bethea, Council President

Date Approved: 5/2/2023