

MINUTES
REORGANIZATION MEETING
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - CITY OF RAHWAY, NEW JERSEY
JANUARY 3, 2012
7 P. M.

Deputy City Clerk Jeffrey J. Jotz called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. and called the roll:

PRESENT: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

The Deputy City Clerk announced the meeting had been advertised and posted in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey.

This meeting of January 3, 2012 was included in a list of meetings notice sent to the *Star-Ledger*, *Home News Tribune* and the *Union County Local Source*, posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on December 30, 2011 and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In the absence of a member of the Clergy, Councilmember Mione offered an invocation.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

Deputy City Clerk Jotz stated that the first order of business was the election of the Council President and Vice President for the year 2012 and asked for nominations.

Motion made by Councilmember Scaturo to elect Councilmember Steinman as Council President for the year 2012.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mione.

The Deputy City Clerk asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed.

Roll Call on the Nomination of Councilmember Steinman for Council President:

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

The Deputy City Clerk declared that Councilmember Steinman had been duly elected Council President for the year 2012.

Motion made by Councilmember Cox to elect Councilmember Brown as Council Vice President for the year 2012.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rachlin.

The Deputy City Clerk asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed.

Roll Call on the Nomination of Councilmember Brown for Council Vice President:

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturro, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

The Deputy City Clerk declared that Councilmember Brown had been duly elected Council Vice President for the year 2012.

Councilmember Steinman thanked the City Council and read a statement.

Council President Steinman proceeded with the next order of business on the Agenda by introducing the Mayor and stated the Mayor would give the State of the City Address at this time.

2012 State of the City Address
Mayor Rick Proctor
January 3, 2012

I just completed the first year of a four-year term. 2011 was fraught with challenges. First, on January 3rd redevelopment efforts were dealt a blow when the apartment complex nearing completion on St George Av was destroyed by fire. Today, rebuilding has already begun and the project again nears completion. The City of Rahway was hit with record snowfalls that continued through April tasking employees, business and residents alike. Pothole repairs were prioritized as residents utilized the pothole repair hotline system. July subjected the city to a heat spell that held the city in triple digit heat for days. Mid August the east coast was shaken by 5.8 earthquake and days later, Hurricane Irene ravaged the city with a historic 100-year storm, testing our flood levies for the first time. Then, the October snowstorm caused extensive damage and electrical outages. Again, requiring a massive cleanup effort just as leaf season was upon us. Year 2011 was a year that tested the emergency response capabilities of many City Departments.

I'm proud of the exemplary performance and often heroic service our employees provided to the citizens of Rahway. They, too, should be proud of their achievements and this community should be grateful for their dedicated service as employees and volunteers to the City of Rahway. I witnessed first hand the tragedy of all disasters that occurred in Rahway by walking and inspecting every ward in this City. I opened my home to offer food, shelter and bathing facilities

- Councilman Mione can attest to this. I listened and spoke to residents while learning first hand of the hardship and challenges that they faced.

The unprecedented devastation caused by Hurricane Irene galvanized the political resources of affected communities and in response; a Bipartisan Mayor's Rahway River Flood committee was created to develop local solutions that will benefit our residents. As Mayor, I have already met with NJDEP and Army Corp Engineers to seek hydraulic studies needed to plan remediation programs to mitigate future flooding. Meeting with legislative leaders and congressional delegates to obtain meaningful funding the projects we so desperately need is my immediate priority. To support flood mitigation efforts, I'm asking Council to appoint a FEMA Program Administrator, paid for by any applied grants to benefit the citizens of Rahway with repetitive loss properties.

As Mayor, I am proud of the accomplishments of this Administration. For example:

- When they weren't involved in the overwhelming clean up efforts of every single storm, it was DPW staff who: assisted in the renovation of various city offices; installed the new scoreboard at Madden Field; installed energy improvements in city buildings valued at \$173,000; utilized inter-local service contracts to improve delivery of services and income opportunities. Every resident witnessed the dedication of new DPW Director, Mr. Mike Smalling (whom I appointed because I believed in his leadership ability) as he led the versatile and vital DPW department through every challenge facing this City.
- The Building Department issued over 1500 building permits and performed more than 4000 inspections to *monitor compliance* for more than \$46M in *new* construction costs. Safety is paramount to me as Mayor and must be as we move forward with development.
- Many times the library is spoken for as "the New Library" but that's not good enough anymore. It's the services that are offered at the library that we should focus on. Upgrading its security and collection systems is what I am proud of, as well as the new ebook service program for every resident to utilize. The ability to interface with new technology, such as the Kindle, iPads, Nooks etc. is critical. The library also serves as a vital partner and community education resource providing career resources for residents seeking employment and partners with the Board of Education early literacy programs for children.
- The Health Department conducted over 4500 nuisance complaints, housing inspections and retail food inspections. As the former Health Officer, I understand and appreciate the necessity to conduct chronic illness screening, over 800 in 2011, and monitor NJDHSS reportable disease, in one year alone more than 300 cases. The Department issued over 4000 vital records consisting of birth certificates, death certificates and marriage licenses performing another important service for city residents.
- The retirement of the Tax Collector resulted in an opportunity to reduce costs and improve efficiency by pursuing and entering into an inter-local services contract with the Township of

Woodbridge. Sharing services works, and I will continue to evaluate the need as we move forward.

- Recently, a new Tactical Patrol Unit was implemented in the Police Department and has already had a positive impact on public safety. In addition, and as a result of the many serious weather events - a Flood Response Team is being formed with volunteers from various agencies. Addressing public safety and implementing improvements, where necessary, is a priority.
- I have witnessed first hand the variety of recreational activities offered by the Department of Recreation. Athletic, educational, cultural and just plain fun family activities for residents of all ages are the hallmark of this department.
- The Senior Citizen Center has a variety of programs for our senior residents. Birthday breakfasts, organ concerts, exercise programs, healthy lunches and more are offered each month providing a rich educational and social environment for all to enjoy.

As Mayor, I revisited the road repair strategy because of the rapidly deteriorating condition of many roadways. As a result, the city paved more roads in 2011 than recent years and we have already embarked on developing a “priority” list moving forward.

The ability to market Rahway is critical if we expect to move Rahway forward. As Mayor, I have promoted Rahway through Comcast commercials, highlighting the qualities of the City’s economic potential, the redevelopment possibilities and the cultural assets that we have grown to love. I am proud to mention that at this year Rutgers University Municipal Public Information Contest, the *Rahway Review* publication earned a “Special Recognition” award. Weekly Mayor’s office hours was met with huge success as many residents and business owners met with me in City Hall for the first time. Unfortunately, access to my office was barely utilized by Council. I find this an interesting fact considering the criticism I have received from Council for an alleged failure to communicate with them. I have been and will continue my 24/7 availability that is expected of the Mayor. There is no greater accountability than to oneself.

First Thursdays continued to be a highlight of the summer months in the City of Rahway. The classic car shows and numerous outdoor concerts were an effective means to bring people together. For the first time in Rahway, we held the enormously successful Columbian Festival. Over 30,000 people visited Rahway in one day, surpassing all estimates of participation. As Mayor, I participated in the event and wanted all cultures to know we are a community of diversity. Afterward I circulated a “survey” to downtown businesses and I am proud to report I received an overwhelming supportive response as well as suggestions to improve the next event.

Rahway’s natural disasters were matched by financial disaster. Residents were faced with decreasing home values and increasing unemployment. The economic environment remained a dark cloud over the nation and Rahway was not immune to its effects. The global economic trends that have battered and bruised the nation impact Rahway as well. As elected officials, we need to open our eyes to this reality.

We know the tax assessor experienced a 72% increase in tax appeals and this reality resulted in assessment reductions of over \$2M dollars to include the Merck tax appeal which accounted for a significant \$1.6M dollar reduction in revenue in 2011 and will continue to impact the city into the future. Despite the bleak economic environment, several businesses opened their doors downtown. Patria Restaurant and the Rail House have received recognition and rave reviews in statewide press. The Black Box Theater is scheduled to open this year adding to the already impressive cultural offerings of the UC PAC and the New Jersey Arts Guild. We all recognize that The Arts District is critical to Rahway but, at the same time, we can't afford to rely solely on the Arts to bring about a renaissance downtown. We need to support every Rahway business, the taxpayers and our visitors with renewed Redevelopment efforts.

It is no longer is it good enough:

- To call a train station, built thirteen years ago, the new train station. We need to focus on enhancements to the downtown that will attract new businesses.
- To highlight the Recreation Center and Library as "New" when they have been established for years. I have been focused on the programs and community benefits brought to our children and seniors at these facilities.
- To say the city budget has only grown 1 % a year, or that the city's tax rate is among the lowest in Union County. The reality in Rahway is that taxpayer's incomes have remained static and our taxes have increased each year. Together, lets find a way to be the lowest, not among the lowest.
- To say that the city's redevelopment program was (or is) a model for the state. Lets re-earn that recognition by brainstorming rather than head butting because my experience tells me that a head butting approach will not reassure potential investors and certainly will discourage long and short-term interest in the City.

Lets face it - No matter how good we think we are - we can do better and must discontinue the business as usual mindset. We are operating in a new environment and we will need new approaches to conduct business if we expect to survive and thrive.

Going forward, the 2012 budget will be subject to the 2% tax Levy Cap and, as Mayor, I am committed to controlling property taxes and this requires a willingness to work together. There is a need to define the quantity of services provided by the city and evaluate their quality. For example: The State of NJ is in the process of developing a new strategy for solid waste management and I intend to revisit trash collection and recycling for residential, business and commercial establishments.

To protect and preserve our infrastructure, the city will begin an aggressive roadway crack-sealing program that was discontinued by the past administration. It will help preserve roads and prevent potholes and save tax dollars in the long term. Next spring, the city will work with

Amtrak to paint and repair the railroad trestles on Main St. and Poplar Street. These improvements coupled with a new street design will create a more pedestrian friendly thoroughfare and improve the streetscape in the downtown business district.

These new challenges are new opportunities to improve our processes and streamline our services. I invite members of the public, employees and elected officials to share ideas for improving services and/or reducing expenses. I will continue with an open and transparent administration, encouraging public participation and involvement. I am eager to hear public input.

I am proud of the many accomplishments over 2011 so it is inexcusable that certain individuals have labeled me inexperienced. The residents voted for me because of my experience, dedication and desire to move Rahway forward. I came to the Mayor's Office with:

- Two Master's degrees - Management and Homeland Security
- Municipal Government - Over 35 years experience
- Union County Board of Freeholders - Nine years
- Board of Education - 13 years
- Parking Authority - 3 years
- Democratic Chair - 20 successful years responsible for the election of every Democratic Council Member.

I refuse to let personal motives interfere with what I was elected to do - LEAD - AS MAYOR OF THE CITY OF RAHWAY. The taxpayers deserve it, they voted for it. Status quo is passe - and unacceptable. Later in this meeting the council is set to continue their vindictive actions and override my veto of ordinance O-38-11. Doing so without benefit of public comment prior to the vote and without consideration of a budget being introduced is simply unfair to the taxpayers. Reducing the mayor's salary by 68% with overall increases to others is incomprehensible and sets the tone entering into 2012.

However, believing transparent government is better government, I placed a new ordinance on the January agenda designed to improve transparency in government by reforming campaign financing. Approving this ordinance is necessary to avoid the perception of improper influence in local elections as we move forward.

In closing, I want to personally thank everyone who has expressed his or her support for me for professionally, publicly and privately. I wish everyone in Rahway a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Thank you.

RESOLUTIONS

AR-1-12 Councilmember Rachlin presented and moved A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LEGAL NEWSPAPERS.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cox.

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

Council President Steinman declared the motion carried.

AR-2-12 Councilmember Cox presented and moved A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LEGAL DEPOSITORIES FOR PUBLIC MONIES.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Scaturo.

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

Council President Steinman declared the motion carried.

AR-3-12 Councilmember Scaturo presented and moved A RESOLUTION OVERRIDING THE VETO OF ORDINANCE # O-38-11 ENTITLED AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN THE CITY OF RAHWAY AND PROVIDING FOR COMPENSATION FOR MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF RAHWAY, NEW JERSEY AND AMENDING ALL ORDINANCES CONCERNING SUCH COMPENSATION HERETOFORE ADOPTED, VETOED BY MAYOR RICK PROCTOR ON OR ABOUT DECEMBER 22, 2011.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Brown.

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

Council President Steinman declared the motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS - Hearing of Citizens

Seeing no one appearing, Council President Steinman closed the Public Hearing.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilmember Scaturo, seconded by Councilmember Steinman to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

YES: Councilmembers Baker, Brown, Cox, Mione, Rachlin, Saliga, Scaturo, Steinman

ABSENT: Councilmember Wenson Maier

Council President Steinman declared the motion carried.