

## Mayor and Council Special Town Hall Meeting – February 25, 2023

The Special Town Hall Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of North Caldwell was held on Saturday, February 25, 2023. The meeting began at 8:31a.m. at Borough Hall and was held simultaneously via tele/video-conference.

Mayor Raymond called the meeting to order announcing that notice was provided in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 231, P.L. 1975. He provided a statement regarding the conduct of the teleconference which would allow members of the public to participate and be heard during public comment.

Roll Call indicated the following:

Present: Mayor Joshua H. Raymond, Council President Anthony Floria-Callori, Councilman Robert Kessler, Councilman Arthur Rees, Councilman Kenneth Tilton, Councilman Stephen Weinstein.

Absent: Councilman Matthew Atlas.

Also present were: Kevin O'Sullivan, Borough Administrator; Richard Birch, Borough Counsel; Paul Ferriero, Borough Engineer; Erik Nolan, Special Counsel for Affordable Housing; Tom Behrens, Borough Planner; Rich Mondelli, Chief Financial Officer; Karl Strodthoff, Police Captain; and Tami Michelotti, Borough Clerk.

Mayor Raymond asked Fire Chief Tim Peterson to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Mayor's Address**

Mayor Raymond thanked all participants for attending the meeting. He welcomed public comment with the goal of fostering better communication and transparency, sharing ideas and understanding priorities for the future.

### **Borough Department/Entity Concerns, Goals, Priorities**

**West Essex Board of Education** – Damion Macioci, Superintendent of the West Essex Regional School District, thanked the Mayor, Council and Police Department for their support and for the coordination of placing a SLEO Class III officer on campus. He reviewed the WERSD Strategic Plan including the mission, values, vision, gap analysis and milestones. He welcomed all to review the plan which is available on the district's website.

**North Caldwell Board of Education** - Mindy Oppen, President of the North Caldwell Board of Education, described class size and building constraints that face the elementary schools. She reviewed the proposed referendum to expand Grandview and Gould Schools which is scheduled for a vote in September 2023.

**Police Department, Police Foundation** – Police Captain Karl Strodthoff described shared Dispatch services which decrease tax burdens of participating municipalities through sharing of expenses. He proposed enhanced outreach programs and increased safety responses to meet the town's needs. He noted the need to expand police headquarters to meet the growing needs of the department. Councilman Tilton, Co-President of the North Caldwell Police Foundation, added that a traffic signal at Mountain Avenue and Gould Avenue was being negotiated with the County of Essex to provide increased safety at the intersection. He noted that the North Caldwell Police Foundation continues to provide training and equipment to the Police Department to decrease the tax burden on residents. He welcomed new members to become involved in the Foundation.

**Fire Department** – Fire Chief Tim Peterson presented the needs of the department including the replacement of outdated fire engines. He noted that a ladder truck is needed for newer construction with deep front-yard setbacks and taller building heights. He stated the need to update technology in the fire station and continuously update breathing apparatus units. Chief Peterson welcomed new and junior firefighters to join the volunteer department. He offered knock-box services for residents.

**Department of Public Works** - Bill Stickles, DPW Director, commended the department for performing much of the Borough's infrastructure repairs in house. He stated that the growing needs of the Borough has led to more equipment and the need for additional equipment and vehicle storage. Mr. Stickles stated that Animal Control is an area for shared services opportunities.

**Engineering/Building Departments** – Paul Ferriero, Municipal Engineer, stated that grants are continuously sought for the improvement of Borough roads and stormwater drainage projects in order to minimize the burden on taxpayers. He added that many drainage improvements are performed in house. He noted that formation of a stormwater utility was under review.

Paul Milani, Zoning and Construction Official, commended his department for providing efficient and professional services to the residents. He looked forward to streamlining processes in the Building Department to offer online services and applications.

**Finance Department** – Rich Mondelli, Borough Chief Financial Officer and Tax Collector, noted significant effects on the 2023 Municipal Budget including health benefits, general insurance, sewer costs and

pension costs. He noted the potential for cost savings through additional shared services as well as new sources of revenue and additional grants.

**Recreation Department, Recreation Foundation** – Bill Maranz, Recreation Director, reviewed the need to maximize resources and facilities to enhance recreation experiences for all residents. He reviewed the repairs needed for the municipal pool, tennis courts, playgrounds, basketball courts and parking lots. He highlighted recent improvements in technology for online registrations, scoreboards, field lighting and sports team communications. He noted that volunteer coaches, seasonal staffing and participant civility continue to present difficulties.

Greg Filosa, President of the North Caldwell Recreation Foundation, welcomed new members to the advisory committee. He noted that the primary fundraising event is the RUN4NC color run and 5K race held each year which helps to fund facility improvements.

Mayor Raymond looked forward to new recreational activities in the coming year including a Touch-a-Truck event, a Pooch Parade, and an Earth Day community clean-up.

**Health Department** – Colleen Britton of the West Caldwell Health Department presented the health services and opportunities available to North Caldwell residents through a shared services agreement. He noted that health promotion, nursing, activities, environmental health, inspections, public health nuisance complaints, communicable disease investigations, immunizations, maternal and child health, blood health investigations, and chronic illness services can be coordinated through the department.

**Planning Board** – Joseph Brower, Board Chairman, highlighted issues facing the Board including affordable housing responsibility, Builder's Remedy concerns, and increased development. He commended the Board members for their service and noted that hybrid meetings have been conducted successfully throughout and since the COVID pandemic.

**Zoning Board of Adjustment** – Ben Curcio, Board Chairman, provided an overview of the 2022 variance applications and noted common issues such as setbacks in zones with small lots, expansion and the pressure on the schools.

**Walker's Park Conservancy** – John Chiaia, Conservancy Chairman, described events and activities held at Walker's Park. He noted that Nick Walker, grandson of the former owners of the property, is a member of the advisory board. He welcomed new members and donations. Mr. Chiaia noted the desire to allow the property to remain in its natural state for passive recreation. He requested that safety measures be considered for safe, town-sponsored ice skating. He recommended that some of the five subdivided lots on the property be sold to pay off debt from the land purchase. Mr. Chiaia added that the Conservancy submitted a response to the Request for Expressions of Interest regarding use of the Walker's home.

**Camp Wyanokie** – Councilman Kessler, member of the Camp Wyanokie Commission, described recent improvements to the camp and noted that a dam leak requires correction. He welcomed residents to participate in the Family Day scheduled for June 17, 2023.

**Historical Commission** – Bunny Jenkins, Historic Preservation Commission member, stated that the eight-member group were working toward preserving and archiving Borough artifacts.

#### **Walker's Park Request for Expressions of Interest**

Mayor Raymond reviewed the four (4) responses to the RFEI which will help the governing body plan for improvements and uses of the building and the property.

#### **Citizens to be Heard**

Joseph Alessi, 18 Hamilton Drive East – Former Mayor Alessi wished the Mayor and Council Members luck and commended their efforts to coordinate the Town Hall meeting.

Jann Skelton, 17 Spruce Road – Ms. Skelton asked for clarification of ownership and decision-making roles between the Governing Body and the Walker's Pond Conservancy regarding Walker's Park. Mayor Raymond stated that the park is owned by Borough. He noted that the Walker's Pond Conservancy is a non-profit organization comprised of residents that acts as an advisory board to the Mayor and Council.

John Chiaia, 34 Grandview Place – Mr. Chiaia stated that he recommended that only a portion of the five (5) subdivided lots at Walker's Park be sold and not all five (5) lots be sold. Mayor Raymond reviewed conservation easement restrictions that would be placed on the property if the lots are not consolidated back into the 17 acre parcel. Mr. Ferriero described the NJDEP deed restriction and limited permitting that would be imposed without the lot consolidation.

**Priority Identification**

Mayor Raymond thanked the governing body, the staff and all participants for their input that will help to prioritize, plan and act to set and achieve goals. He welcomed continued input as the governing body works to summarize and prioritized improvements and programs.

**Adjournment**

There being no other matters to be addressed by the Governing Body at this time, a motion was made by Council President Floria-Callori, seconded by the Council, that this meeting be adjourned at 10:38am. Said motion was carried unanimously with five (5) affirmative votes.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Tami Michelotti".

Tami Michelotti, RMC  
Borough Clerk