

SPECIAL MEETING - OPEN SESSION

Mayor Robert Patten called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read the Open Public Meetings Act statement which stated that adequate notice and posting of the meeting had taken place in accordance with the requirements of P.L. 1975, Chapter 231.

The flag salute was followed by the roll call.

ROLL CALL

	PRESENT	ABSENT
<i>Mayor Patten</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Harinxma</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Quattrone</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Rosenberg</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Schneider</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Sikorski</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Thompson</i>		✓

Also in attendance: Candace Gallagher, Borough Clerk/Administrator; Larry Blake, Superintendent of Public Works; and George Lang, Chief Financial Officer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was moved by Council President Sikorski, seconded by Councilmember Quattrone and unanimously approved as submitted.

GARBAGE CONTRACT VS. IN-HOUSE COLLECTION

Ms. Gallagher explained that the Borough has been investigating the possibility of returning to in-house garbage collection as of January 1, 2008. She noted that, when garbage collection was first privatized in the Borough in 1998, it was a controversial decision that passed by a 3 to 2 vote. At that time, a petition signed by over 400 residents was submitted objecting to privatization. Because of the public sentiment surrounding the issue at that time, she said, a special meeting was called so that all relevant information can be presented, and the public heard on this issue, before Council is asked to make their final determination.

Ms. Gallagher stated that we have only until February 5, 2007 to award a contract for this truck. After that date, we would need to rebid in order to proceed, and the truck would take seven to nine months to build once a contract is awarded. The Borough's recently awarded three-year contract with Central Jersey Waste & Recycling, she said, may be terminated by the Borough at the end of each year, given 90 days written notice.

Ms. Gallagher noted that Roosevelt's administrator was present at this meeting and that, if we purchase this truck, Roosevelt is interested in having Hightstown collect its garbage beginning in 2008.

Ms. Gallagher then introduced representatives of the firm submitting the successful bid for the automated truck and containers – Tony Odhner, Jack Lutz and Skip Berg. The three gentlemen had brought along a sample of the 95-gallon container that would be used, and demonstrated its capacities and its wearability. They offered a brief video presentation showing an automated truck in action, and, along with Public Works Superintendent Larry Blake, provided a great deal of information regarding the containers, the truck and the logistics of moving to an automated service.

It was noted that having this equipment would allow the Borough to begin single source collection of recyclables if it were to choose to do so in the future.

When asked about the possibility of having East Windsor pick up our garbage, Mr. Blake noted the difficulties in communication between the two towns, and added that there is much that could be shared. He said that, even with the purchase of this truck, it would make sense for East Windsor to collect garbage from our dumpsters, from the apartment complexes and from Wyckoff's Mill condominiums.

Ms. Gallagher then offered an in-depth review of the financial data relative to this purchase, concluding that the purchase will offer both immediate and long-term savings to the Borough. A full copy of the report she presented is included at the end of these 1/23/07 minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Patten opened the floor for public comment.

Pete Klapsogorge, 418 North Main Street, said, "It's hard to bash -- it's a great idea -- but in the next breath, the government is talking consolidation. We should have done this nine years ago. Are we doing this to save money or not to consolidate? Maybe we should swallow our pride and consolidate." He said that the Borough would save money by returning to in-house collection, we would have greater control over tipping, and the system works well. "How easy was that?" he asked. "I feel like the taxpayers were ripped off for the past nine years." He added that only he and Amy Aughenbaugh voted in 1998 to keep garbage collection in-house.

Mayor Patten noted that he was present as a member of the public during that discussion in 1998, and supported retaining in-house collection at that time.

Torry Watkins, 68 Meadow Drive, thanked Mr. Odhner, Mr. Lutz and Mr. Berg for an informative presentation, and commended the Borough Council, Mr. Blake and Ms. Gallagher for their concern in seeking solutions to "Hightstown's never ending fiscal problems." He added, "this is a solution in search of a problem. It doesn't exist. If it does, it is in Hightstown's sustainability. The answer is continued outsourcing, and consolidation of services with every town in sight." Mr. Watkins stated that this is the "wrong juncture, time and place for Hightstown to make such a radical turn," and it would require additional labor costs and a "massive capital investment when the political culture is thinking CONSOLIDATE." He expressed doubt that Mantua Township would have seen a 25 percent reduction in its tipping fees, as Ms. Gallagher had reported, and said that he would expect tipping fees to *increase*, as people would be looking to fill their containers. He urged Council to "go very slow on this."

Jeff Bond, 210 South Main Street, stated that this was a good presentation and a good program, and it is well to look into this. The possibility of an interlocal agreement with Roosevelt is a positive thing, he said, and "the biggest thing is control. When we lost control eight years ago, we lost control over what we pick up. ... Central Jersey picks up everything and anything. ... If there is one 95 gallon container, that is all that would get picked up." Mr. Bond added that this will encourage recycling, and give the Borough a lot more control over its waste stream. It is worth doing, he said, adding "even if we consolidated with Washington or East Windsor, that would take three or four years, and if the truck is

still here, it would get used somewhere. The possibility of consolidation down the road is not reason enough not to do this."

Chris Emigholz, 138 South Street, stated that he does not have a problem with the current contractor, but it looks like this will save the Borough money. If it saves money next year and helps our property taxes, he said, it is something the Borough has to think about. "It's all about the money," he said, and if it will save money, we should do it.

No one else came forward and the floor was closed.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Council President Sikorski stated that the presentation was most informative, and he was encouraged by Mr. Blake's analysis and his grasp of the situation, as well as by his statements regarding consolidation of some aspects of this with East Windsor Township. "The Mayor and I need to address that," he said, "with the powers that be in East Windsor." He said that he would like to meet with Mr. Lang during the coming week to ask questions regarding bonding, as he does have some reservations about that. Mr. Sikorski also stated that he was impressed with the presence of a representative from Roosevelt at this meeting.

Mayor Patten stated, "We hear about outsourcing and sharing services ... what is wrong with *our* becoming the source?" Just this week, he said, he had a conversation with Mayor Fried of Washington Township, and there are great possibilities for shared services that will be beneficial to the Borough. We need to look beyond East Windsor for sharing services, he said, and "we continue to have fruitful discussions with as many people as possible from other towns."

Councilman Quattrone thanked the Solid Waste Committee members, and commended Ms. Gallagher for the research she did during this process. "Looking at this program, it is a win-win," he said. "We are trying our best to work 'outside the box.'" He noted, regarding the timing, that, as with the fire truck, delaying this purchase would add about \$15,000 to the purchase price due to new emissions regulations.

Councilmember Rosenberg stated that, while this does seem to be a "win-win" situation, "we would not be doing due diligence without an answer from East Windsor" regarding whether they could pick up our garbage. "That would give us a third option," he said, "and would make this decision much easier to make."

Council President Sikorski stated that he is willing to meet with Mayor Patten and anyone from any other town regarding shared services, given one day's notice.

It was generally agreed that the Resolution to award this contract and the introduction of the bond ordinance to fund it will appear on the February 5 agenda.

Adjournment was then moved by Council President Sikorski, seconded by Councilmember Rosenberg and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candace B. Gallagher, RMC
Borough Clerk