

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUMMIT**

Distributed: 6/29/23

Approved: 7/5/23

The meeting was called to order by Council President Vartan Greg at 7:30 PM. The City Clerk then read the following notice:

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the City Clerk's Office in the preparation of the Council Annual Meeting Notice, dated December 15, 2022, which was properly distributed and posted per statutory requirements.

Please be advised that the FIRE EXITS are to my RIGHT, your left, and at the BACK OF THE ROOM.

CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Councilmembers Lisa Allen, Marjorie Fox, Jaime Levine, Andy Minegar, Susan Hairston and Council President Greg Vartan.

ABSENT: Councilmember Delia Hamlet, Fire Chief Eric Evers, DCS Director Aaron Schragar

Also in attendance were Mayor Radest and staff members Michael Rogers, City Administrator; Rosemary Licatase, City Clerk; Steven Zagorski, Chief of Police and Matthew Giacobbe, City Solicitor.

The meeting was recorded on YouTube.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Isabelle Embden

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular and Closed Session Meetings of June 7, 2023 – Upon motion of Councilmember Hairston, duly seconded by Councilmember Minegar, the minutes were unanimously approved.

REPORTS

Items/issues noted hereunder, if any, reflect those recommending and/or needing action by City department(s) or at a future council meeting.

- Mayor, City Administrator and Council President

CEREMONIAL AWARDS

Certificates of Recognition - Louis Bay Scholarship Competition - Mayor Radest presented a certificate to Isabelle Embden, who finished as a semi-finalist in the competition. Participants Emma Vatoci and Edward Vela received certificates but were not in attendance.

ORDINANCE(S) FOR HEARINGS

The Council President called for a hearing of the following ordinance(s), which the City Clerk read by title.

FINANCE

23-3286 **BOND ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING** 06/7/23
\$1,991,000, AND AUTHORIZING THE
ISSUANCE OF \$1,896,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF
THE CITY, FOR VARIOUS IMPROVEMENTS
OR PURPOSES AUTHORIZED TO BE
UNDERTAKEN BY THE CITY OF SUMMIT, IN
THE COUNTY OF UNION, NEW JERSEY.
(Various Purposes Bond)

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Minegar
SECONDER: Allen
AYES: Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT: Hamlet

FINANCE

23-3287 **BOND ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING** 06/7/23
\$3,235,000, AND AUTHORIZING THE
ISSUANCE OF \$3,235,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF
THE CITY, FOR VARIOUS SEWER UTILITY
IMPROVEMENTS OR PURPOSES
AUTHORIZED TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE
CITY OF SUMMIT, IN THE COUNTY OF
UNION, NEW JERSEY. *(Sewer Utility Various*
Improvements)

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Minegar
SECONDER: Allen
AYES: Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT: Hamlet

SAFETY & HEALTH

23-3288 **ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE** 06/7/23
CHAPTER 7, TRAFFIC, SECTION 7-9,
VEHICLES OVER DESIGNATED WEIGHT
EXCLUDED FROM CERTAIN STREETS, OF
THE CODE OF THE CITY OF SUMMIT *(Weight*
limit on High Street Bridge)

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Fox
SECONDER: Hairston
AYES: Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT: Hamlet

FINANCE

- 40772 1. Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Not Exceeding \$1,457,000 Bond Anticipation Notes

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Minegar
SECONDER: Allen
AYES: Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT: Hamlet

- 40773 2. Resolution Determining the Form and Other Details Of \$23,500,000 School Bonds Of 2023 of the City of Summit, in the County of Union, New Jersey and Providing for Their Sale.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Minegar
SECONDER: Allen
AYES: Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT: Hamlet

- 40774 3. Authorize 2023 Salaries Effective January 1, 2023

SAFETY & HEALTH

- 40775 1. Appoint One (1) New Police Officer
40776 2. Appoint Volunteer Firefighters

CAPITAL PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 40777 1. Authorize Extension of State Contract Online Auction Services with Municibid.com, LLC through April 30, 2024
40778 2. Authorize Execution of Grant Agreement - NJ Department of Community Affairs 2023 Lead Grant Assistance Program

CAPITAL PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 40779 3. Authorize Submission - FY2024 Safe Streets To Transit Program Grant Application and Execute Grant Contract With New Jersey Department Of Transportation - Broad Street and Denman Place Sidewalk Project
40780 4. Authorize Submission of FY 2024 Grant Application for Funding from the FY2024 Transit Village Program and Execution of Grant Agreement with NJDOT - Signal Upgrade and Synchronization Project
40781 5. Authorize Submission of NJDOT FY 2024 Grant Application & Execution for Priority 1 - Tulip Street (Ashland to Springfield)
40782 6. Authorize Submission of NJDOT 2024 Grant Application & Execution for Priority 2 - Mt. Vernon & Kent Place from Passaic Avenue to City Border

Terry Armstrong, shared concerns regarding the postponement of the project and questioned the relationship between the resolution and the DAR item later on the agenda to request the County to re-direct grant funding from the Mt. Vernon Avenue & Kent Place Blvd. Pedestrian Improvement Project to the Hobart Avenue Sidewalk Improvement Project.

In response, Councilmember Fox provided an explanation the relationship and gave reasons for same, emphasizing that the project is on pause but is still planned.

CONSENT AGENDA

Staff reports are attached, as appropriate, when resolution is not self-explanatory. Matters authorizing action, licenses, or granting permission have met all department qualifications.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Fox
SECONDER:	Hairston
AYES:	Allen, Fox, Hairston, Levine, Minegar, Vartan
ABSENT:	Hamlet

CAPITAL PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- 40783 1. Authorize Bid Advertisement - Colonial Road and Ridgedale Avenue Improvement Project
- 40784 2. Authorize Refund - Engineering Bond - 46 Miele Place - \$4,500.00
- 40785 3. Authorize Refund - Road Opening & Storm Sewer Deposit - 121 Hill Crest Avenue - \$1,000.00

FINANCE

- 40786 1. Amend Budget - Chapter 159 - Sustainable Jersey Grant
- 40787 2. Amend Budget - Chapter 159 - Clean Communities Grant
- 40788 3. Authorize Refund - Department of Community Programs
- 40789 4. Authorize Payment of Bills and Payroll - \$1,664,654.53

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION OR REFERRAL

(Comments are solicited from Council members and the public. Staff reports are attached as appropriate. Items are listed according to Council Committees, those in italics indicate secondary committee reference.)

CAPITAL PROJECTS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

- (ID # 10484) Memo - A. Schragar, DCS Director/City Engineer, re Authorize Request to Re-direct Union County Grant Award to Hobart Avenue Project

Councilmember Levine recused herself from the discussion and exited the Council Chamber.

Councilmember Fox reiterated the reasons for the request to Union County. Key points were as follows:

- 1. In 2022 neighbors of Mt. Vernon/Kent Pl. Blvd. met with the City and some changes to the project resulted.
- 2. Consequently, additional concerns were brought forth by some of the neighbors which needed to be addressed by the CAP Committee.
- 3. Based on the need for time to explore neighbors' concerns, it was determined that the project would most likely not be completed within the calendar year in which the grant funding was

awarded, which is a stipulation of receiving grant funding from the County.

4. In order to not lose the \$75,000 grant funding, the Cap Committee inquired with the County to see if it could re-direct the funds to another project that was ready to go.
5. The County advised that it would consider same if the project was similar, and that a formal request in writing would be required.
6. The recommendation of the DCS Director and the Cap Committee is to obtain authorization from Council to submit a formal request written request to the County to request to re-direct the funding to the Hobart Avenue Sidewalk Improvement Project.
7. If approved by the County, the Mt. Vernon/Kent Pl. Blvd. project would then be planned for 2024.

In response to Councilmember Allen's question regarding timing of Mt. Vernon project and sidewalk installation before school starts, Councilmember Fox advised sidewalk installation would most likely not happen this year. City Administrator Rogers advised that the Mt. Vernon project could very well be planned for 2024 and explained the timing of sidewalk installation and roadway paving and cost effectiveness of doing both at the same time as opposed to separately.

In response to a question from Councilmember Minegar, Council President Vartan explained the process of prioritizing various improvement projects.

Consensus of Council was to consider a resolution at the July 5 council meeting authorizing submission of a formal request to Union County to re-direct grant funds from the Mt. Vernon project to the Hobart Avenue project.

Upon conclusion of the discussion, Councilmember Levine returned to her seat at the dais.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

2023 Operating Budget - James Bennett, Fairview Avenue, read from a prepared statement, hereto attached.

Roadway Paving - Diego Hoic, Argyle Court, questioned the paving schedule of various roadways such as Park Avenue, Morris Avenue and Kent Pl. Blvd., from Passaic to Morris. In response Mayor Radest advised that Morris Avenue is slated for paving in the next couple of weeks.

COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS/NEW BUSINESS

Items/issues noted hereunder, if any, reflect those recommending and/or needing action by City department(s) or at a future council meeting which are not already being addressed by a committee.

Fernwood Road Median - Councilmember Levine gave an update on the project, advising that council approved acceptance of funding and now the City is waiting for NJDOT "green light" to start the project.

Street Lighting - Councilmember Levine explained the protocol for street lighting improvements, recommendations and evaluations.

ADJOURNMENT REGULAR MEETING – Upon motion of Councilmember Fox, duly seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalia M. Licatase, City Clerk

MINUTES ATTACHMENTS

Public Comment - J. Bennett, Fairview Avenue, re 2023 Operating Budget

Public Comment
June 20, 2023 Council Meeting

James M. Bennett
38 Fairview Ave
Summit NJ 07901-1728
908-578-4975 Cell
908-598-2888 Fax
james@jamesbennett.com

May 9, 2023

Common Council of the City of Summit
c/o Ms Rosemary Licatase, City Clerk
512 Springfield Ave
Summit NJ 07901-2607

Dear Members of the Common Council,

Please accept this letter in lieu of a personal appearance at the May 16, 2023, Council meeting to discuss the 2023 budget. I ask Council to take a long view of public debt and consider the merits of amortization.

The issue has received attention because low-interest rates over the decade are ending. According to the 2023 Municipal Budget Snapshot, this year's municipal debt service represents the most significant budget item increase - \$981,618 - and the third largest budget item at \$6,593,190, or 9.6% of the total financial budget.

Comparing current debt levels to debt levels of 1960, when my father was new to Council, is revealing. And I wish to thank City Treasurer Tammy Baldwin for providing that information. Then, the municipal budget was \$2.77 million, with an anticipated surplus of \$570,000. Payment on bonds and notes was \$19,645. The budget included \$64,000 towards the amortization of the bond principal.

Ms. Baldwin's information does not show the amount of municipal debt, but we can make a good guess. In 1960, high-grade municipal bonds paid 3.73%, according to Standard and Poor's. Capitalizing interest of \$19,645 at 3.73% indicates a debt level of \$26,675.60. That debt level was 19% of the 1960 municipal budget. Summit became exceptional.

The total 2023 financial budget for Summit is \$68.64 million. The net debt total is \$65.57 million, or 95.5% of the financial budget.

*Correction of typo provided by J. Bennett 6/21/23
\$26,675.60 in paragraph #4 should be \$526,675.60

Currently, we may accept debt levels at parity with municipal budgets, but benefits come from amortization. For example, the tax base responds inversely to tax rates. Therefore, lower municipal debt enables lower tax rates on a higher tax base, making Summit more attractive.

So, how do we get there? The municipal debt took years to come and will only go away slowly. But if today's Council could resolve to budget, though already tight, \$2.3 million each year on top of planned amortization, the current debt would be gone in thirty years. Then the City could keep building equity - a sort of Saudi "fund for the future" - providing current income.

Doubtlessly there will be demands for new capital projects and new borrowing as we go. Providing for those items is a must. But if Council can stay the course, even if fulfillment comes after we are gone, present benefits will become evident.

When our County Commissioners burnished their excellent credit rating, I appeared and admonished them that the ability to borrow does not compel its exercise. I repeat that admonition to Council.

If Council embarks on this new course, the ramifications will transcend the City limits.

Sincerely yours,

James M. Bennett

cc: Mike Rogers, City Administrator
Tammy Baldwin, City Treasurer