

BOROUGH OF ELMWOOD PARK
WORK MEETING
June 4, 2020
7:00PM

The Work Meeting of the Elmwood Park Mayor and Council for June 4, 2020 was called to order by Municipal Clerk Erin Delaney at 7:00PM. The Statement of Compliance was read.

Councilmembers Fasolo, Golabek, Ingui, Pellegrine, Wechtler, and Council President Balistrieri were present. Also present were Mayor Colletti, Municipal Clerk Erin Delaney, Borough Administrator Michael Foligno and Borough Attorney Salvatore A. Ingraffia.

**Please note that Council President Balistrieri participated by way of teleconference.*

Whereas Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of the State of New Jersey requires at the commencement of every meeting a Statement of Compliance be read by the presiding officer.

Now, therefore be advised, that the meeting requirements for this meeting have been met by publishing an annual notice in The Record and Herald News of Woodland Park and by posting such notice in the office of the Borough Clerk as well as in a public place within the Municipal Building and by notifying interested citizens. Notice was posted on January 8, 2020.

Due to the Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, precautionary measures were taken in an attempt to prevent further spread of the virus and to protect the health and public safety of the Governing Body, Borough Professionals, and members of the public. As a result, the public was unable to physically attend the meeting. In order to participate in the meeting, the public was required to use the free access number which was provided and advertised in advance.

Work Meeting Agenda Items:

PUBLIC HEARING:

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Glenis Perez and asked to be read into the record:

In light of the ongoing police brutality against people of color, why has our town not released a statement concerning recent events and what measures are being taken to ensure our police officers are not taking part in similar oppressive behaviors?

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Kimberly Cartagena and asked to be read into the record:

To whomever this may concern,

To say that I am appalled by the way Elmwood Park has remained silent on issues regarding racial injustices is an understatement. The racism that stems within the school system is so rampant that students have had to physically remove themselves and leave the school district to seek education else where. Not one person but SEVERAL. Please take a moment to digest that. Each and every one of my peers remembers or has been personally affected by an experience in which they were subject to sexual assault, verbal harassment, or racial discrimination. I am proud to say that I excelled academically and athletically throughout my high school years; I am, however, embarrassed to say I attended a school in which me and other minorities succumbed to becoming complacent and tolerant of this behavior. I recommend enforcing political classes in which these discussions are brought up. Stop telling us that these are conversations we cannot have simply because they may seem daunting or controversial. Do not hesitate to question whether a faculty member is meant to be cultivating the minds of our future doctors, lawyers, leaders etc. Diversify your faculty by embracing the black community and allowing teachers to teach on behalf of their experiences. First teach these young minds about consent above all. Start believing the girls who come forward considering it is far from easy to do so. For had I not seeked this knowledge on my own I would be just as unaware as the rest of the student population. As for history classes, I understand there is a curriculum to follow, nonetheless, that does not mean only some of that history should be taught. There are an IMMENSE amount of issues that matter that are not being

addressed. I am so thankful to attend the university I do now, because it encouraged me to see the truth of what this school district has to offer. Please take this seriously and advocate for REAL change. A change that is not just felt now, but instead a change that can be felt even when the issues at hand are no longer trending.

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Nimmy Roy and asked to be read into the record:

Elmwood Park Mayor and Council,

On behalf of Elmwood Park's Junior Class, being part of student congress allows us to be a voice for our fellow students. That being said, it has been brought to our attention that there must be a change in our education system, to provide our peers with a safe environment in which they feel comfortable in at all times.

We have witnessed several alleged social media posts across platforms such as Instagram and Twitter by high school students in our public school and who have graduated as well, regarding sexual assault. Students who have experienced blackmail, groping, rape, harassment, grabbing, fondling, nude photography and videography being spread across high school students, sexual assault, false rumors and abuse are now taking this time to tell their stories.

As a part of student congress and as a woman, it breaks my heart to know the many young-adult females who have stood in silence, worried about what people would think of them after hearing their stories. Worried their stories would not be found as credible. Men are speaking out as well, letting their stories be heard. Everyone must be made aware of these situations. Regardless of gender, sexual assault and sexual predators are real, and are found within our high school population. And they are doing such disgusting actions on and off school grounds, in person and through a phone screen, without being held accountable for their despicable doings.

We need change in our society. We need change in our education system. We need change in safety regulations. We need to allow students to feel comfortable while attending school. We need students to know their voices need to be heard. Their words matter. Their stories matter. We need to give them the opportunity to speak up. On behalf of our Student Congress, it is our duty to seek change for the better of our education system and school environment. We need to bring awareness to these real-life events happening in not one, but many of our own high school students' lives. Racial Discrimination and Sexual Assault has to be spoken about and illuminated to enlighten students. Grief, relief concepts and educated courses in regards to these topics would inculcate a safer, healthier, environment for high school students physically and mentally.

Please take a moment to listen to those who want their stories heard. It has happened numerous times before and continues to happen. We can't let any more students rue and suffer in silence, alone and in pain. Change is needed and is needed right away.

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Cynthia Carmenaty and asked to be read into the record:

Dear Mayor Colletti and members of the council,

My name is Cynthia I am a former student of EP Memorial Highschool and am currently studying to become a teacher. There have been many issues in EPHS resurfacing from current and past students today about both racial discriminations in which students are posting offensive messages to their social media and sexual assaults. I am not at liberty to discuss the assaults that have come to light as it is not my right to share their story. Personally, as a student, I have witnessed multiple occasions in which students have experienced both but have had nothing happen to make them feel secure and protected. There were some teachers I liked to call safe havens such as past teacher Mr.Fasolo who truly showed compassion for their students- this is a trait EVERY SINGLE TEACHER, COUNSELOR, ADMINISTER, BOARD MEMBER, COUNCIL MEMBER, COMMUNITY MEMBER should have and have clearly forgotten and must be reminded that students are NOT just a number on a piece of paper that will graduate in a few years. These students will carry these memories with them. There are no words that can express the pain I have seen students go through and no adult to help them when it should be EVERY educator and everyone

with the power to do so make sure that every student NO MATTER the color of their skin, the religion they believe in, their sexuality, their socioeconomic status, the millions of things that make up each and every amazing child who they are, should have the very best education possible or to feel safe in their environment. I am emailing to implore some changes to be made.

Students should not feel utterly alone and unsafe in a place that should be considered a safe haven for all children and young adults. I am asking you to add school courses to educate and reeducate both students AND the teachers of EPHS, also grief counselors to help students who are essentially screaming for help but feel no adults were there to help them. I am not asking to rewrite the past but to acknowledge it and make a change for the future of OUR community for OUR children.

Thank you for your time.

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Gabby Insignares and asked to be read into the record:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of myself and many other students, both former and present, who may be afraid to speak out during these times. To say that I am disappointed and appalled by the way that Elmwood Park has remained silent on all the issues regarding racial injustices is an understatement. The racism that runs through the school system is so out of control, that there have been incidents where students have had to leave the district to seek education else where. Not one individual but many. The environment set in Elmwood Park schools has resulted in both students and faculty to think that such comments and actions are tolerable. Each and every one of my fellow peers has been a witness to, or has been personally affected by an encounter where sexual assault, verbal harassment, and/ or racial discrimination was present. I have personally been affected by such encounters. On multiple occasions I was verbally harassed by a faculty member and have also gotten disrespected due to my ethnicity and racial background. I am proud to say that I have surpassed these experiences and excelled in my academic studies. However, I am embarrassed to say I attended a school in which myself and other minorities have had to tolerate such disrespectful behavior and actions. I highly suggest enforcing political classes in which these discussions are brought up. Stop telling students that these are conversations we cannot have simply because they may seem daunting or controversial. For the history classes,

I understand there is a curriculum to follow. However, that does not mean that only some history should be taught. There are so many issues that matter that are not being addressed or taught. Diversify your faculty by embracing the black community and allow teachers to teach on behalf of their experiences. Educate your staff and remind that although they are in charge, that DOES NOT give them the right under any means, to disrespect or harass any other faculty member or student. Being individuals of authority does grant them this right nor does it put them in a position in which they are better than or above others. Educate the young minds about consent above all. Start believing the girls who come forward, because it IS NOT easy to do so, and it is even more traumatizing when no one believes you. If I had not branched out, educated myself, and gained knowledge ON MY OWN, I would be just as oblivious as the rest of the other students and faculty members. I am beyond grateful to attend a university where diversity is not only present, but ACCEPTED AND RESPECTED. I am blessed to surround myself with family and friends who have the same mentality and approach that I do. Surrounding myself by all these Individuals has educated me, and allowed me to learn, what Elmwood Park schools was never able to teach me. Please take this seriously and advocate for REAL change. A change that is not just felt now, but instead a change that can be felt even when the issues at hand are no longer trending.

Thank you for your time.

Borough Clerk Delaney read the following into the record which was submitted via e-mail by Nicholas Bykov and asked to be read into the record:

I am not a resident of Elmwood Park myself, but I would like to speak out against the instances of racial discrimination and sexual assault that have occurred in the Elmwood Park community. It is truly despicable that people commit such heinous crimes; I condemn the perpetrators, and hope

that Elmwood will/ has officially condemned them as well, and will make sure that justice is served.

I think that it is very important that Elmwood Park establishes new and bolsters current educational programs on inclusivity and on consent so that students in the Elmwood Park school system feel more safe.

Thank you.

Jeffrey Freitag, Hillman Drive, asked about the status of the replacement Veterans sign on Hillman Drive and Mola Boulevard.

Dominick Scalcione, E. 54th Street, affirmed his support of the peaceful protests surrounding George Floyd. He commended the Borough's COVID-19 testing operation with New Bridge. Mr. Scalcione appreciated the Nixle message that was used to inform residents and encouraged the Borough to use the system more as receiving these messages is important. He then discussed funding through the CARES Act and CDBG which was detailed at the County Freeholder Board meeting. Mr. Scalcione noted that there will be a small increase in the County's budget this year.

1 – ENGINEER'S REPORT

Ali Mohamed of Alaimo Group, the Borough Engineer, called into the meeting to review the Monthly Status report and answer and questions posed by the Governing Body.

2 – RESOLUTIONS:

- a. **Coronavirus Relief Bonds** – A resolution will be placed on the June 18th, 2020 Regular Meeting Agenda of the Mayor and Council.
- b. **Retirement Compensation – Ralph Sigona** – A resolution will be placed on the June 18th, 2020 Regular Meeting Agenda of the Mayor and Council.
- c. **Fire Department Corrective Resolution** – A resolution will be placed on the June 18th, 2020 Regular Meeting Agenda of the Mayor and Council.
- d. **Road Opening Performance Bonds** – A resolution will be placed on the June 18th, 2020 Regular Meeting Agenda of the Mayor and Council.

3 – ORDINANCES:

- a. **Mobile Food Truck Ordinance** – Conversation ensued in regards to the clashing Board of Health mobile food vendor licensing and the Borough's semi-recent Mobile Food Truck ordinance. Potential changes to the amount of licenses and duration of time a mobile food truck can remain stagnant were also discussed. Borough Clerk Delaney suggested that the Ordinance committee meet with the Borough Attorney prior to the next work session meeting to come up with a recommendation to the Governing Body.

4 – DISCUSSION

- a. **Parking Restrictions Memorial Place** – Chief Foligno reviewed a recent study done by the traffic division that resulted in the recommendation of some changes on Memorial Place. Ultimately, an elimination of some parking along the curve (Church Street) is necessary for safety purposed. The Governing Body supported doing so. Borough Attorney Ingrassia will draft an ordinance with the assistance of the Chief.
- b. **Raffle Refunds** – Clerk Delaney informed the Governing Body that organizations have paid to host bingo and instant draw raffles but have been unable to host said games as a result of the COVID-19 virus. The fee per bingo game is \$20 which is recommended to be refunded in these instances. Additionally, the instant draw raffle fee is \$20 per day or \$750 per year. In these instances, it is recommended that the organization be refunded at a pro-rated rate of \$62.50 per month they were unable to host. The Governing Body was in favor of approving these refunds. Clerk Delaney stated that the refunds would be place on an agenda following the re-opening of the organizations.
- c. **Outdoor Dining** – The Borough Clerk and Borough Administrator reviewed recent changes to outdoor dining following the state guidelines. Administrator Foligno stated this would be reviewed on a case by case basis.

- d. **Borough Parks Maintenance** – Administrator Foligno stated that the DPW is taking over the maintenance of the Borough parks such as the tank monument and Veterans Memorial, for a trial period. This would eliminate the need for a professional landscaper. The Mayor and Council were on board with the trial period and hopeful that the DPW would do a good job doing so.

5 – COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Councilman Fasolo address the students’ comments that were read aloud during the first public hearing. He stated that he feels changes need to be made such as a more open school environment and acceptance of students coming forward. He also felt that students should have a place at the table and suggested that a meeting be put together to discuss putting together a Youth Advisory Committee. Councilman Fasolo ended by saying he would love to chair the committee and that he stands in solidarity with the students.

Councilman Golabek informed the public that Topology has completed their study for Market Street and a presentation should be following shortly. Additionally, a future project is being discussed for redevelopment in the area of a warehouse near Marcal. He stated that a PILOT may be considered to generate money for the Borough. He commended Councilman Fasolo on the idea of the Youth Advisory Committee. Councilman Golabek stated that he stands with those that want to be heard and commends those young people who are speaking up. Lastly, he ended by sharing the details for the demonstration to be held for Black Lives Matter on Monday, the 8th.

Councilwoman Ingui shared that she is saddened to hear about the content of the letters and the state of the world right now. Being that she works in the school district, she stated that she has personally only experience a loving environment. Therefore, she would be willing to help bridge the gap and build on communication by being a part of the Youth Advisory Committee.

Councilwoman Pellegrine, too, felt saddened by the letters read into the record. She commended Councilman Fasolo on the thought to form a Youth Advisory Committee. Additionally, she thanked everyone involved in the Borough’s response to the COVID-19 virus.

Councilwoman Wechtler requested a library update from Mayor Colletti. In regards to the Ambulance Corps. she stated that she is happy things are moving forward with our shared service occupying the building. She commended the DPW for assisting with its clean-out. Lastly, Councilwoman Wechtler said that she would be happy to sit on the Youth Advisory Committee.

Council President Balistreri stated that she is also sad about the letters read this evening. Though she will not be on the Youth Advisory Committee she feels that it is a great idea by Councilman Fasolo. She concluded by announcing the date for the Borough’s upcoming Drive-in Movie Night.

Mayor Colletti shared his disgust in the video of George Floyd. Mayor Colletti said he hopes Monday’s presentation is done legally, right, and peaceful so that the purpose does not get lost. He went on to say that the first step to make something right is to admitting that there is a problem and then correct it. Therefore, he thinks the Youth Advisory Committee is a good idea so that issues can be corrected and that students can articulate themselves.

6 – 2nd PUBLIC HEARING:

Cynthia Carmenaty, Donor Avenue, thanked the Mayor and Council for being genuine and willing to listen. She stated that she graduated 2 years ago and that the formation of a Youth Advisory Committee is beyond her expectations but she is very grateful for the great idea.

Komal Bains, Bellevue Avenue, thanked Councilman Fasolo and the rest of the Governing Body. She stated that the community cannot stay blind to racism, and verbal & sexual assault.

Dominick Scalcione, E. 54th Street, complimented Councilman Golabek on his paving initiatives. He suggested that the Ordinance Committee include the Chamber of Commerce when discussing the Mobile Food Truck ordinance. Lastly, he inquired if there is a plan to bring a food drive to the Borough.

Salvatore Ingraffia, Cadmus Avenue, stated that his heart goes out to everyone who submitted letters. He remembers being involved in a similar youth group in high school that shaped his future.

7 – EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- a. Legal Reports/Litigation**
- b. Personnel – Maintenance**
- c. Personnel – Police Department**

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist; and

WHEREAS, the Governing Body wishes to discuss:

Legal Reports/Litigation
Personnel – Maintenance
Personnel – Police Department

Minutes will be kept and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes can be made public.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the public be excluded from this meeting.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Wechtler and seconded by Councilman Fasolo to enter into Executive Session. Motion carried by the members present.

Legal Reports/Litigation
Personnel – Maintenance
Personnel – Police Department

A motion was made by Councilwoman Ingui and seconded by Councilman Golabek to return to the public portion. Motion carried by the members present.

A motion was made by Councilman Fasolo and seconded by Councilwoman Pellegrine to adjourn. Motion carried by the members present.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Delaney, MPA, RMC
Borough Clerk

Minutes approved at the June 18, 2020 Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council.