

**LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
October 26, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Ralph Paolone called the meeting to order at 6:31 P.M., noting that the meeting had been advertised in compliance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

FLAG SALUTE:

Councilman Matt Levinson led the flag salute.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Darren Matik; Councilwoman Blair Albright; Councilwoman June Byrnes; Councilwoman Stacy DeDomenicis; Councilman Matt Levinson; and Council President Ralph Paolone.

Absent: Councilman Eric Ford; and Councilman Todd Michael.

Also Present: Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr., City Solicitor; Jen Heller, Engineer's Office; and Leigh Ann Napoli, Municipal Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES WITHOUT FORMAL READING

Councilwoman Byrnes motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Albright, to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2022 Regular meeting without formal reading. All present members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

ORDINANCES

17 OF 2022 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 263 VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC, ARTICLE I GENERAL REGULATIONS OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF LINWOOD AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES HERETOFORE ADOPTED, THE PROVISIONS OF WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT HEREWITH.

The City Clerk read Ordinance No. 17 of 2022 by title only. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilwoman DeDomenicis, to approve Ordinance No. 17 for final reading. Council President Paolone opened the floor for discussion on Ordinance No. 17. Seeing and hearing no members of the public wishing to be heard, Council President Paolone closed the floor. A roll call vote was heard with five in the affirmative and Councilman Ford and Councilman Michael absent. Motion was approved.

RESOLUTIONS WITHIN CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under item, **Consent** Agenda, are considered to be routine by City Council, and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed. Any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of Funds and any item requiring discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda and discussed separately. All Consent Agenda items will be reflected in full in the minutes.

164-2022 A Resolution authorizing the issuance of a Raffle License, #2022-21, to Mainland Performing Arts Parent Organization

165-2022 A Resolution confirming the appointment of Thomas Kimble to the Linwood Planning Board

Council President Paolone asked if any member of Council would like to remove any other items from consent. No items were removed. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilwoman DeDomenicis, to approve Resolutions No. 164-165 of 2022. All present members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST: \$1,441,425.30

Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Byrnes, to approve the bills for payment. A roll call vote was heard with four in the affirmative, one abstention from Councilman Levinson, and Councilman Ford and Councilman Michael absent. Motion was approved. (The bill list is attached as Exhibit A)

NEW BUSINESS

Council President Paolone opened the floor to the public for discussion on the Referendum question for a Synthetic turf field and lighting upgrades at All Wars Memorial Park.

Larry Lhulier 1300 Woodlynne Boulevard, Linwood – Mr. Lhulier explained that he is not abdicating either for or against the turf field and lighting upgrades. He is questioning some of the information on the brochure that was created on the projects, specifically the user fees, noted surplus, source of information cited and if a cost benefit analysis was done. He also reviewed some comments on open space from the 2018 Master Plan update. He suggested that City Council appoint a committee of professionals to study the costs prior to the project.

Christian – Christian attended tonight's meeting to get more information on the turf field and asked about the expenses and if any studies were done on injuries obtained from playing on synthetic turf verse natural grass. The Mayor advised that he would email him the information. Councilwoman Albright advised that she has looked into the safety concerns and read from the Department of Environmental Protection and the state Health Department that the results between synthetic turf and natural grass were negligible and discussed her findings.

Arthur Chew, 130 W. Seaview Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Chew advised that he worked as an engineer for the City of Ocean City when they developed their synthetic turf field and discussed the studies completed at that time. He indicated that besides Ocean City, both Egg Harbor Township and Pleasantville have synthetic turf fields. He explained that a synthetic turf field creates more open space as it can be used around the clock. The City's grass fields have to rest in order to keep them playable. However, there is no rest for the fields. A turf field will allow time to rest the fields. There are many times the fields cannot be used because of weather. A turf field can be used during the rain and immediately following.

Dan Miller 505 Barr Avenue, Linwood – Mr. Miller indicated that a synthetic turf field in Linwood has been talked about for years and as a tax payer, he welcomes it. He believes it is a win-win for everyone and would be a benefit for Linwood. As President of the Mainland United Soccer Association, he speaks for 250 Linwood children who are also in favor of it. The existing grass fields continue to lose money every year and are dangerous to play on. If these conditions continue, the children of Linwood will leave the program and play somewhere instead of their home town. Mr. Miller and other volunteers will be putting signs out to support the turf field and will also be going door to door. He applauds Council for doing their due diligence to bring the question of a turf field to the voters. Seeing and hearing no other members from the public wishing to be heard on the referendum, Council President Paolone closed the floor.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Council President Paolone opened the floor to the public for discussion on any topic.

Seeing and hearing no members from the public wishing to be heard, Council President Paolone closed the floor.

FINAL REMARKS BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Mayor Matik – The Mayor thanked everyone for their comments. He presented Mr. Lhulier with a cost sheet comparison between synthetic turf and natural grass. He reviewed all the costs associated with both and concluded that it is cheaper to have synthetic turf. The Mayor explained that prior to becoming Mayor, he served on City Council since 2012 and discussed the money that has been spent to maintain the existing grass fields. He would not do anything to increase costs in the City. Every volunteer, elected official, City employee strive to make Linwood the best. The Governing Body tries to provide them with the tools needed to do so. He wants to provide the best opportunities for the children of Linwood. The City seal has the word recreation inscribed on it. The \$183,000 annual bond payment for the synthetic turf field will be offset by other bonds coming off the books. If the Governing Body cannot give the residents a tax decrease, they can give them extra value for their properties. He explained how health benefit costs are anticipated to increase up to 20%.

Councilwoman Albright – Councilwoman Albright thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing their comments. She researched information on synthetic turf fields. She understands the concerns for spending money on the field. However, the City cannot keep up with the existing grass fields. The turf field would be an investment in Linwood, the children, and the future. Improvements have recently been made at the Library and Poplar Field which are also investments. Linwood has a great school system and with continued investments more people will want to move here and residents will want to stay here.

FINAL REMARKS BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL (continued)

Councilman Levinson – Councilman Levinson thanked the sports organizations for their support on the referendum. Now all the residents support is needed. A synthetic turf field opens up a lot of opportunities for use even in bad weather. This is an investment in the children, City, and property values. The timing is right with the other bonds coming off the books. He appreciates everyone for attending the meeting and providing their comments.

Councilwoman Byrnes – Councilwoman Byrnes extended condolences to the Settle family and the Linwood Police Department. She has served on City Council for four years now. The topic of a synthetic turf field comes up every year. It was finally determined to go out for the support of the community. She was at Memorial Park this past Saturday and several sports were going on. The park was extremely busy. The existing fields do not get any time to rest. She reminded everyone about the Fall Fest this upcoming Saturday.

Councilwoman DeDomenicis – Councilwoman DeDomenicis thanked everyone for their comments. She appreciates all the time the Mayor, Council, and Engineer have spent on the topic of a synthetic turf field and a lot of information has been provided. This is a time to make an investment in the City. At City Council's annual reorganization meetings, she always talks about the City seal and its words "recreation, family, and education." . The members of the Governing Body all serve because of the values on the seal. What the Mayor and City Council do now affects the past, present, and future. She implores everyone to reach out to the residents for support on the issue. Councilwoman DeDomenicis extended her condolences to the Police Department.

Council President Paolone – Council President Paolone explained that he coached soccer for years and his three children played soccer. He could never understand why the fields in Linwood were in such bad shape until he learned there was not enough room to rotate the fields so they could rest. He believes a synthetic turf field is best for the City. The Mainland United Soccer Associations spends tons of money on the fields yet they continue to deteriorate, no matter what they do. City Council looked at turf ten years ago. It is now made safer and the City will spend less money in maintenance. This subject will not come back up on the ballot. It is on the ballot now because in 2009 voters voted no for a turf field at Mainland Regional High School. He encouraged all the coaches, kids, and Recreation Board members to get information out to the voters. He loves Linwood and loves the park. He wants to see a turf field there.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to be addressed by Council, Councilman Levinson motioned, seconded by Councilwoman DeDomenicis, to adjourn at 7:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
Municipal Clerk