

REGULAR MEETING
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MARCH 25, 2024

Mayor Chegwidden called the Meeting to Order.

Mayor Chegwidden read the Open Public Meeting Statement.

Roll Call

Mayor Chegwidden requested Roll Call:

Council President Yeager – Present
Councilman Binkoski- Absent, Excused
Councilwoman Jones - Present
Councilman Norton – Present
Councilwoman Vasquez - Present
Councilwoman Wickenheisser - Present

Flag Salute

Mayor Chegwidden led those present in the Salute to the American Flag.

Mayor Chegwidden thanked the Boy Scouts and Assemblyman Barranco for attending. Assemblyman Barranco advised that he is proud to support the Boy Scouts and the residents of Wharton. His office is available to everyone, they are happy to help.

Open to the Public

Mayor Chegwidden opened the meeting to the public.

Glenn Corbett, Wharton's RVRSA Representative: Mr. Corbett came to provide an update on the ongoing litigation between the RVRSA and Jersey City. He advised that, there were oral arguments held on March 6th relating to Jersey City's appeal of the judgement that was basically in the RVRSA's other member towns favor. Our attorneys think it went well. We are not sure how long it will take for the appellate division to decide, but he will keep the Mayor and Council updated.

No one else wishing to be heard, Mayor Chegwidden to close the meeting to the public.

Presentation

Maureen from Avidd Community Services made known a grant application. They have applied to Morris County Community Development for a grant for a group home in Wharton on Walnut Street. They are applying for \$105,000 to renovate bathrooms and laundry. The application is considered to be "County-Wide" and therefore not counted to be against an application from the Borough of Wharton. Mayor Chegwidden wished them luck with the application and thanked them for all that they do.

Ordinance

Council President Yeager presented O-11-24, "An Ordinance Establishing an Energy and Natural Gas Aggregation Program" on second reading, by title only.

Mayor Chegwidden opened the meeting to the public for questions or comments on this Ordinance only.

No one wishing to be heard, Mayor Chegwidden closed the meeting to the public.

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilwoman Wickenheisser to adopt O-11-24 on second and final reading.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

Ordinance

Councilwoman Vasquez introduced O-12-24, “An Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a CAP Bank (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14),” on first reading, by title only.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Vasquez and was seconded by Council President Yeager to adopt O-12-24 on first reading.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

Mayor Chegwidden set the date of April 8, 2024 for second and final reading.

Resolution

Council President Yeager introduced R-65-24, “Resolution to Cancel Reserve Balance.”

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilwoman Jones to adopt R-65-24.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

2024 Municipal Budget

Council President Yeager introduced R-66-24 – the 2024 Municipal Budget.

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilman Norton to adopt the introduction of the 2024 Municipal Budget.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

Mayor Chegwidden set the meeting of April 22, 2024 for the public hearing on the 2024 Municipal Budget. He advised that we will have the budget presentation and discussion at that meeting, but the average home should see a reduction of approx.. \$116.44.

2024 Special District Budget

Councilwoman Vasquez introduced R-67-24 – the 2024 Special District Budget.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Vasquez and was seconded by Council President Yeager to adopt the introduction of the 2024 Special District Budget.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

Mayor Chegwidden set the meeting of April 22, 2024 for the public hearing on the 2024 Special District Budget.

Resolution

Council President Yeager introduced R-68-24, “Resolution Authorizing the Appointment of Police Officers.”

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilman Norton to adopt R-68-24.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5	NAY: 0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN: 0
MOTION CARRIED			

Discussion

- **Tax Reassessment Program:** Mayor Chegwidden asked the Borough's Tax Assessor, Glen Sherman to attend the meeting this evening and give a short presentation about the Borough's Tax Assessment Program. Mr. Sherman gave an overview of the program and how it was started in 2013 in order to better reflect market values. The presentation included how this program doesn't give any new taxes, it redistributes the tax burden more accurately. Some of the benefits outlined include reducing in tax appeals from stagnant values, keeping the County equalization for the purpose of appeals at 100%, ensuring our County tax liability is accurate, eliminating the significant cost of reevaluations, making things easier to understand and greater uniformity. Following the presentation Mr. Sherman answered questions from the audience and Council about the program and how certain items like sheds and garages are taxed.
- **PILOTs:** Mayor Chegwidden asked Mr. Kovalcik to give a short presentation about PILOT agreements (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) because we have had a lot of questions recently. This also was included in the Mayor's newsletter in March. These are agreements that only properties in redevelopment areas are eligible for where the property owner pays the Town pursuant to a financial agreement instead of paying taxes conventionally. After the PILOT expires the property owner pays conventional taxes. Following the presentation there was discussion about the Borough's 4 current PILOT agreements, school funding, the need for them for redevelopment, the Borough's use of the funds for capital projects, and length of the agreements.
- **Updated Filming request from Apple TV:** Ms. Evangelista advised that we received an updated request with new dates from the people from Apple TV who previously were approved for filming. The previous dates were cancelled due to the actor's strike last summer. No one had an issue with the new dates.

Consent Agenda

The following items are considered to be routine and non-controversial by the Mayor and Council and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a council member or citizen so requests, in which case, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in a normal sequence on the agenda.

Approval of Bills: Approve all bills referred to the Finance Committee

Approval of Minutes: 7/17/23, 8/14/23, 9/11/23, 10/16/23, 10/30/23, 11/13/23, 11/27/23, 12/4/23, 12/18/23, 1/8/24

R-69-24: 2024 Safe and Secure Application

R-70-24: Approve Tax Sale Redemption TSC 2023-007

R-71-24: Public Auction

R-72-24: Prof. Services- CHA Columbia St. Park

Approve Recreation Application Wharton Area Little League 3/1/24-10/31/24

Approve Fire Fighter Applications: Gabrielle Nunn and Cristain Garcia Reyes

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and seconded by Councilwoman Wickenheisser to approve all items listed on the Consent Agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA:5	NAY:0	ABSENT: 1	ABSTAIN:0
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Correspondence

- Notice of Ordinance from Roxbury
- Letter from Assemblywoman Dunn

Council Reports

Council President Yeager: No report.

Councilwoman Jones: She attended a class on Municipal Budgeting. She attended the Library Board meeting. She met with Chief Young about parking.

Councilman Norton: No report.

Councilwoman Vasquez: She also attended the class on Municipal Budgeting. She thanks Mayor Chegwidden for the invitation to attend the National League of Cities Conference in Washington DC. She learned a lot and it was very interesting to see how everything is done. While there, they met with Congressman Kean and spoke with him about getting some help for Wharton. It was nice to see how the Mayor works for the Borough and she thanks him.

Councilwoman Wickenheisser: No report.

Mayor Chegwidden's Report: He attended the Governor's budget address. There was a lot of focus on transit, including a new gas tax. He attended the NJLM legislative meeting. As Councilwoman Vasquez advised he attended the National League of Cities Conference. One of things discussed was PFAS in water. After the conference he spoke with Mr. Quillinan and we are in good shape with them in our water system. He also had some Mayor's calls about various bills, including the housing bill which recently passed. The NJLM did not support this bill, it will cause more building to happen throughout the State. The State will be reviewing Master Plans by Counties and then towns and will let us know what they want changed. They also discussed bills relating to transportation and OPRA. He congratulates Councilwoman Wickenheisser on her coffee and conversation event last Saturday. It was a very nice event. He would like to mark the recent passing of two longtime Wharton residents- Anne Korpita and Frank Wheatley. We are currently preparing a bid packet for the demolition of the 2 homes we recently purchased to be turned into parkland. We are also preparing a bid packet for the refurbishment of one of our water towers. There has been a lot of towns in recent years who have sold their water systems to private companies and then the towns become beholden to them. We actually take care of our water system, and will not sell it because it is a part of our collective wealth. He thanks the Boy Scouts for attending the meeting this evening.

Open to the Public

Mayor Chegwidden opened the meeting to the public.

No one wishing to be heard, Mayor Chegwidden closed the meeting to the public.

Closed Session

Council President Yeager introduced R-73-24 to close the meeting to the public for discussion upon Personnel.

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilman Norton to approve R-73-24. This motion was approved via voice vote.

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilman Norton to return to open session. This motion was approved via voice vote.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Council President Yeager and was seconded by Councilwoman Jones to close the meeting. This motion was approved via voice vote.

March 25, 2024

ATTEST:

Gabrielle Evangelista,
Borough Clerk

BOROUGH OF WHARTON

WILLIAM J. CHEGWIDDEN,
MAYOR