

Richard C. McCarthy Commission Chamber  
Millville City Hall  
Work Session  
July 18, 2023, 6:00 P.M.

The Board of Commissioners met in a **WORK SESSION** with Mayor Orndorf presiding. Members present: Hewitt, Watson and Romanik. Absent: Vice-Mayor Sooy. City Solicitor, Brock Russell was also present.

#### **Salute to the Flag**

The salute to the flag was led by Mayor Orndorf

#### **Open Public Meeting Statement by Mayor Orndorf**

"This meeting is being conducted in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975 and was advertised, posted and made available to the public as required by Statute. The Municipal Clerk is directed to include a statement in the minutes of this meeting."

#### **City Clerk To Review Changes To the Agenda**

Mayor Orndorf asked the City Clerk if there were any changes to the agenda with Jeanne Parkinson. City Clerk responding no.

#### **Public Comment on Agenda Items Only**

Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion open on agenda items only and asked if any person present wished to be heard. There being no response Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion closed.

#### **Discussion of Commissioners**

Commissioner Hewitt reported that the Department of Public Safety is hard at work on a daily basis and the city is very busy with various events.

Commissioner Hewitt announced that if the citizens need to report a crime or an emergency to please call 911, although he oversees the Millville Police and Fire Departments, he is not the person to contact to report an emergency and neither is social media.

Commissioner Hewitt further advised the homeless situation needs to be addressed, because this problem is not going away on its own and reported that the Department of Public Safety is being as proactive as possible in order to make a difference in the City of Millville

Commissioner Hewitt reported on the various past city events he attended and in particular an event he attended at Hankins Pond where there was a gathering of community leaders to sadly discuss what has been going on in our city. In attendance were parents, kids, the County Prosecutor, Sheriff and the Community Police Unit. Commissioner Hewitt pointed out that he understands the Board of Commissioners are busy but felt this event should have been a priority for them to attend.

Commissioner Hewitt further addressed residents that call him to report crimes or via Facebook posts and urged them to please call 911 in an emergency or call the Millville Police Department's non-emergency line for minor offenses and emphasized that the Police Department does not respond via Facebook.

Commissioner Hewitt further addressed the homelessness in the City of Millville and discussed the various organizations that help them and proposed that the City of Millville's Business Administrator look into one large homeless camp similar to what other municipalities have done.

Commissioner Hewitt concluded by stating that it is crucial that all the governing body members work together and have a call to action because one department cannot solve all the problems noting his department needs assistance from all the other departments to address code enforcement, cut and clean properties, problem properties and financing.

Commissioner Romanik reported that his department is working on an abandoned property list, which will be submitted later this week. Further discussion ensued regarding the abandoned property list between Commissioner Romanik and Commissioner Hewitt.

Commissioner Watson stated that he will consult with his department head to come up with solutions in order to work effectively and efficiently with Commissioner Hewitt's department.

Mr. Russell suggested the public officer submit a report to him regarding any unsafe/nuisance properties so he can file a complaint that is heard by the governing body, which is recorded at the County Courthouse and then sort of becomes a quasi-lien and further explained the notice and hearing process.

Mayor Orndorf stated that she responds most of the time to people who reach out to her on Facebook, but there are times she is not able to respond for various reasons. She urged everyone to please call city hall and/or email her directly, the same applies if someone would like her to attend an event. She advised Commissioner Hewitt that she did respond to the person who invited her to attend the event at Hankins Pond but could not attend because she was out of town on vacation, otherwise she would have been in attendance.

Mayor Orndorf stated that the homelessness issue is not just in New Jersey it is a problem across the country and the City of Millville can try to do as much as possible, but our hands are tied at various levels and advised that they have had numerous meetings to address this problem with various organizations in order to come up with solutions to help our community.

Mayor Orndorf reported her department recently had a land sale that brought in \$300,000.00 of revenue and selling those properties will alleviate a lot of the city's issues as long as those property owners respect and maintain their property. She advised Commissioner Hewitt that all of the departments have been working together and some of the things he has mentioned are already in place. She urged everyone to continue working together.

Brock Russell explained the abandoned property list, tax foreclosure entities and foreclosure procedures.

Mayor Orndorf expressed her appreciation to Commissioner Hewitt for being her backup when her daughter was in the hospital.

#### Public Comment Portion

Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion open and asked if any person present wished to be heard. There being no response, Vice-Mayor Sooy declared the public comment portion closed.

Mary Messick stated that she agrees with the commissioner's sentiments this evening and suggested that the city enforce the fines that are in place for nuisance properties in the municipal code and put more information on the website on how addicts can get help and explain the process along with listing the organizations that can help.

Timothy Sparagna applauded Commissioner Hewitt for continuing to address the homelessness situation and advised that there are some actions that can be taken to address the ongoing problems at the mini park noting that everyday valuable resources are wasted there for the same issues/people that refuse Narcan because they don't want it to ruin their high and advised that there are various ordinances in place for panhandling, etc.

Mr. Sparagna addressed Commissioner Hewitt's suggestion of creating an encampment for homeless people and asked what happens to the people who don't want to go there and are still homeless, can they be forced to go there with Commissioner Hewitt responding no. Mr. Sparagna stated that unless they have a liquor store across from the encampment, he does not believe many people will choose to live there anyway with Commissioner Hewitt stating that he agreed with him 100 percent.

Brock Russell advised that all of the loitering and vagrancy ordinances have been stricken as unconstitutional and the only way they may be subject to law enforcement is if they were obstructing the entrance of a commercial facility.

Further discussion ensued regarding the panhandling issue and law enforcement's inability to enforce the problem and possible solutions.

Patricia Kears stated she worked for social services for 36 years and is offended by some of the things that she has heard and understands that everyone has a right to their opinion. She advised that no one wants to be homeless and mentioned various underline causes, one being mental illness. She further reviewed the history of mental illness programs.

Patrica Kears further addressed the comments that offended her, such as refusing Narcan, because it will ruin their high and advised that is probably 1 of 10,000 cases and believes people need to show a little more compassion. She stated she does not believe they should be putting people on buses and shipping them out of Millville or placing them in homeless camps.

Mayor Orndorf stated she hopes she did not offend Ms. Kears with anything she said because a few years ago she walked the streets in Philadelphia and gave free haircuts to homeless people and discussed her experience in detail.

Commissioner Hewitt advised Tim Sparagna that he puts a lot of time in addressing the mini park and advised they inspect all the cookers out there. He stated 601 N. High Street mini park is not the issue, the issue is where the cooking is occurring and at the liquor store noting the rescue squad has responded to calls involving intoxicated people numerous times and once discharge they just go right back to the liquor store. He stated he has had numerous conversations with Brock Russell and when they think they have reached an avenue they run into a road block every time.

Commissioner Hewitt advised Ms. Kears that he had no intention of offending anyone and explained he has lived it and has been raising his grandson since he was four months old because his parents did not want help back then and still do not want help now and realizes there are a lot of people that do want help, but the system fails them.

**Adjournment**

There being no further comments, the meeting was adjourned on a motion made by Commissioner Romanik and seconded by Commissioner Hewitt subject to the call of the chair. All were in favor. None were opposed.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeanne M. Parkinson, RMC  
City Clerk