

REGULAR WORK SESSION
TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023
6:00 P.M.

The Regular Work Session of the City Council of the City of Vineland was called to order by the President, Dr. Elizabeth A. Arthur.

The following members were present at roll call:

Councilman David Acosta
Councilman Ronald J. Franceschini, Jr.
Councilman Paul F. Spinelli
Councilman Albert Vargas
President Dr. Elizabeth A. Arthur

Also present were: Richard P. Tonetta, Esq., City Solicitor
Robert E. Dickenson, Jr., Business Administrator
H. James Neher, Director of Public Works

The President led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Municipal Clerk stated Public Notice of this meeting, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, has been given on December 13, 2022 by the City Clerk in the following manner:

1. Posting written notice on the official bulletin board in the lobby of the City Hall;
2. Providing written notice to the offices of The Daily Journal and The Press of Atlantic City;
3. Filing written notice in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Vineland.

The President announced that City Council is hearing a presentation about Vineland's Mobile Home Park Municipal Services Fee Study, presented by the firm, HFA, Certified Public Accountants. She stated that after the report, City Council members will have the opportunity to ask questions. Then, the meeting will be opened to the public for comment.

Joseph Sarno and Nick Ackerman represented HFA. They outlined the analysis they performed which included reviewing the financials of the City of Vineland and of the Vineland Public Schools. They were comparing revenues to costs. They reported that Vineland has 1,992 mobile homes and an estimated 5,378 people reside therein. According to information from the Vineland Board of Education it is estimated that 613 students reside in mobile homes. The firm calculated the expenditures attributable to mobile homes, as well as real estate revenues and mobile home park fee revenues. According to the presenters, Vineland has not amended the mobile home park fees since 2002, and the rate remains at \$16 per lot space per month. This compares with nearby municipalities who charge between \$50 and \$60 per lot space per month. They said it's an issue of fairness of who pays their share. While lot rent goes to the owners of mobile home parks for things like on-site road maintenance, sewerage or septic fees, etc., costs associated with funding public schools, general government services, and health and welfare are not paid through lot rents. Councilman Franceschini asked, if the city does nothing, how much are we losing? Mr. Sarno replied that their analysis shows a loss of \$110 per space per month, or \$2.9 million annually. In order to close that gap the firm is recommending lot fees of \$150 per space per month, going from the current \$16, over the next five to ten years. Solicitor Tonetta explained that it's not really a "loss," because property owners (taxpayers) are picking up the slack and paying an unfair amount. The President emphasized that no decision will be made tonight. This is only a presentation, and further discussion and questions will take place.

The Clerk read the following: *Public comment provides an opportunity for members of the public to inform the governing body about their views. The governing body prescribes to City Council's by-laws and the NJ Statutes on Open Public Meetings when engaging during public comment. As such, each individual shall have a 5 minute limit to comment; s/he cannot yield time to another individual; s/he may only approach the podium once during public comment for any one topic; vulgar/offensive language is prohibited; and City Council will not engage in dialogue with the public during this time. The governing body maintains model courtesy and respect and requires members of the public to do the same.*

The President asked if anyone from the public would like to comment.

Chris Chapman from Chapman's Manufactured Home Community distributed a booklet to members of City Council and disputed the rationale used by the city's consultants. For instance, he claimed the consultants did not take into consideration the Municipal Service Fees paid by mobile home parks that in 2022 totaled \$386,112.00. His detailed summary outlined all of Vineland's mobile home parks and what they pay in property taxes, municipal service fees and breaking it down to per unit averages.

The following local residents approached the podium to voice concerns. Topics included communities that are age restricted and do not permit children, with a request to exempt them from paying for school expenses; requests for a senior citizen lot rent 'freeze;' complaints of unfair lot rent increases that now approach \$800 per month for some communities; the fact that mobile park communities are supposed to be affordable housing options; requests for rent control; the use of mobile homes as 'apartments' rather than long-term 'homes.'

Gail Davies, Penn Lincoln	Debbie Saul, HOA president, Berryman's Branch
Nicole, Lake Acres	Sandra Cugino, Berryman's Branch
Vivian Johnson, Berryman's Branch	Herbert Fisher, Lake Acres
Kelsey Warfle, Berryman's Branch	Helen Petritus, Berryman's Branch

There being no further comment from the public, the Clerk reviewed the agenda.

The Clerk reminded Council members that the next work session, scheduled for April 4 is the next scheduled quarterly Board of Health meeting. He also reminded Council members that annual Financial Disclosure Statements will need to be filed by April 30. He will be sending e-mail reminders about filing in the coming weeks.

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Councilman Franceschini reported that the Health Department recently received a grant of \$466,215. A recent rabies clinic Cunningham Park was successful. Covid-19 booster vaccine clinics are planned for tomorrow at the former Amish Market, and on Monday at the Salvation Army.

Councilman Spinelli stated the Boys & Girls Club received a grant to expand their Crystal Avenue building. He noted the recent ground breaking for the Newcomb #2 Senior Citizen apartment complex. He also promoted the Landis Theater's many activities, including good food. Referencing tonight's presentation, he thought it should have been a visual PowerPoint presentation to be better understood. He also noted that Sr. Citizen tax freezes are income related.

Municipal Clerk Petrosky stated that he had served several administrations in dealing with the issue of rent control. He commented that many people don't understand the concept, incorrectly thinking it means a rent 'freeze.' Typically what happens is a municipal ordinance will permit a certain percentage annual increase for landlords. Any proposed rent increase above the permitted level would require an appeal before the rent control board who would evaluate and rule on increase requests exceeding the allowable percentage. It is almost certain that landlords will automatically increase annually at least up to the permitted level.

The President entertained a motion by Councilman Acosta, and seconded by Councilman Franceschini, to adjourn the meeting. The Clerk called the roll: YEAS: Councilman Acosta
Councilman Franceschini
Councilman Spinelli
Councilman Vargas
President Arthur

Dr. Elizabeth A. Arthur
President of Council

ATTEST:

Keith Petrosky, RMC
Municipal Clerk