

WORK SESSION
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024
6:00 P.M.

The Work Session of the City Council of the City of Vineland was called to order by the Presiding Councilman, Paul F. Spinelli.

The following members were present at roll call:

Councilman David Acosta (*arrived at 6:04 p.m.*)
Councilman Ronald J. Franceschini, Jr.
Councilman Paul F. Spinelli
Councilman Albert Vargas

President Dr. Elizabeth A. Arthur was absent.

Also present were: Robert E. Dickenson, Jr., Business Administrator
 Richard P. Tonetta, Esq., City Solicitor
 Edwin Alicea, Director of Public Safety
 H. James Neher, Director of Public Works
 Sheena Santiago, Special Events Coordinator

The Presiding Councilman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk stated Public Notice of this meeting, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, has been given on December 13, 2023 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; and;
3. Filing written notice in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Vineland.

The Presiding Councilman asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to be heard.

A rather large crowd of people attended this work session representing the Vineland African American Community Development Corporation (VAACDC). Those speaking included Kathy Williamson, VAACDC CEO; Rev. Anthony Scott, VAACDC President; Albert Porter; Lillian Street; Jonathan Murphy; James Cooper; Victoria Lods, Cumberland County Commissioner; and Chris Wilson.

They outlined their three-year efforts concerning the Carl Arthur Center, with many noting the poor condition of the building, and the ongoing clash they have with the Boys & Girls Club who operates a child day care at that facility. Additionally, some speakers outlined successful programs they host geared to helping the underprivileged and minority populations. Some also complained that their requests to develop three North Third Street city-owned parcels into low-income housing were ignored, although these parcels were handled via Requests for Proposals. It was noted the VAACDC received the documents to submit a proposal, but apparently they did not. County Commissioner Lods suggested the City partner with Cumberland County for improvements at the Carl Arthur Center. She stated the County would assist. The VAACDC also distributed a packet outlining communications with city officials on many of the issues presented tonight.

Administrator Dickenson did explain the historical perspective on the Carl Arthur Center, and noted that he did speak to a VAACDC representative whom he thought was Ms. Williamson, but apparently was a VAACDC board member. President Councilman Spinelli stated that he intends to have a meeting with Mayor Fanucci, Solicitor Tonetta and Administrator Dickenson on the issues presented. He believes work needs to be done at the Carl Arthur Center. He also mentioned that the city is expected to get control of the former Sacred Heart High School and convert it into a community center.

Steve Lewis presented a list of questions he has relating to the needle distribution program. Solicitor Tonetta provided a brief review of the proposal, now called "Harm Reduction Centers." The proposed location is at the intersection of three School Drug-Free Zones, and near the YMCA. There are obvious concerns about bringing drug users to this area that also has nearby liquor store. Councilman Franceschini clarified that when the needles are distributed the users are also provided with a sharps disposal box.

There being no one further to be heard, the Clerk reviewed the agenda.

The Clerk advised that a resolution authorizing the renewal of alcoholic beverage licenses may be added to the agenda, assuming all paperwork has been submitted and fees paid.

The President asked if any Council members wished to be heard.

Councilman Vargas noted that the NJ Fish & Game Commission canceled a fishing class at Campanella Park that was scheduled for tomorrow at 1 p.m. The cancelation was due to only three registrations, but because school is still in session, kids couldn't attend. An effort will be made to have this program rescheduled at a more convenient time. He reported that the Vineland Police Department is closing the Campanella Park gate at dusk and they reopen it each morning. Signage is posted and a four-foot fence has been installed in an effort to better control evening activities that have become the subject of neighborhood complaints. He also noted that the new trash pick-up plan seems to be going great, as all complaint phone calls have stopped.

Councilman Acosta commented that he witnessed the development and construction of the Carl Arthur Center and finds the disagreements between the two groups using it to be disgraceful. He noted that he and Councilman Franceschini visited the Center to observe the day care operation. The Boys & Girls Club is providing a valuable service there. He does believe that the building needs maintenance, but does not currently endorse exclusive use by any one group.

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Presiding Councilman Spinelli agrees that the Carl Arthur Center building needs work. He also stated that when any such work is scheduled the day care operation will likely have to be relocated. He observed that an action plan should be developed that works with both groups. He also requested Administrator Dickenson explore more suitable bathroom facilities for the swimming pool area, to replace the port-a-potty.

There being no further comments to be heard, the Presiding Councilman 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 Vargas
Presiding Councilman Spinelli

Paul F. Spinelli
Presiding Councilman

ATTEST:

Keith Petrosky, RMC
Municipal Clerk