

WORK SESSION  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024  
6:00 P.M.

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

The President 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 President welcomed Georgett Shelton, CEO, South Jersey AIDS Alliance, to give a presentation concerning the proposed Harm Reduction Center.

Ms. Shelton explained that the Harm Reduction Program is a community protection service, adding that research has proven that such facilities save lives and reduce drug use, making a positive impact on the community. She explained that the SJ AIDS Alliance collects and disposes used syringes. They are happy to be here in Vineland. She further stated that our area is in an overdose crisis, reporting that in a local neighborhood recently there were thirteen overdoses in a 24-hour period of time. The SJ AIDS Alliance has made hundreds of referrals to drug treatment centers. They have had a Harm Reduction Program in Atlantic City since 2007, and she said the agency has a good relationship with the Atlantic City police department.

Councilman Vargas thanked Ms. Shelton for appearing tonight, and added that he does not believe the location on East Landis Avenue is appropriate for this program. Ms. Shelton responded that the SJ AIDS Alliance also filed for a mobile unit. She said syringe sweeps are done every day.

Councilman Spinelli acknowledged understanding the mission, but this location is not appropriate with schools and businesses. Ms. Shelton said she understands and is willing to work with the city for the best solution.

Administrator Dickenson asked how the syringe distribution program changes the drug users' intention, and if she has any statistics to back it up. Ms. Shelton said the agency can report how many referrals they make, but they don't track the success rate. Administrator Dickenson also questioned how many Vineland residents are involved. Ms. Shelton responded that all interaction is completely anonymous.

Councilman Spinelli stated the concerns about a fixed location include attracting outsiders. He asked if the mobile unit would go to other towns. Ms. Shelton responded that the SJ AIDS Alliance is willing to work on this and she would be willing to come back again to discuss it further.

Solicitor Tonetta inquired about what is the advantage of having a syringe distribution center. Ms. Shelton made a brief comment and walked out of the meeting room at approximately 6:28 p.m. Solicitor Tonetta explained to the governing body that the application from the SJ AIDS Alliance proposes distribution of 200,000 syringes annually.

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; cannot yield time to another individual; 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 there was anyone in the audience who wished to be heard.

Amanda Mazzoni explained that she owns a law firm directly across from the proposed Harm Reduction Center on East Landis Avenue. The firm was started by her late father in 1985. She further explained that her mother served on the board of the SJ AIDS Alliance, and she also served on that board until they started giving away needles. She stated that our area can't sustain this, and while she is 110% in favor of helping people, she does not believe that a needle distribution program works.

Steve Lewis stated that he understands about helping people, but those on drugs don't care about what they're doing. We have to worry about the kids who might find discarded used needles.

The Clerk reviewed the agenda.

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

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Councilman Franceschini reported that a new Covid vaccine is available, noting that there has been a spike in Covid cases. He stated that September is National Emergency Preparedness month. He also reported that West Nile Virus cases are out there and there is no vaccine for West Nile Virus.

Councilman Acosta questioned the Municipal Alliance resolution. It was explained that the Municipal Alliance is a different entity from the SJ AIDS Alliance, and that the resolution questioned is only to accept into our budget grant funding applied for previously.

Councilman Spinelli reminded everyone about the Karaoke competition this weekend and the Food Truck Festival on Sunday. The VDID Taste of Vineland/volunteer appreciation event is in October at the Greenview Inn. Plans are underway for the Christmas parade for the Saturday after Thanksgiving and the Old Fashioned Christmas event the first weekend in December. He recalled that when he was a teacher in Atlantic City the SJ AIDS Alliance had a rocky relationship with the school administration. He repeated his position that the proposed location for the Harm Reduction Center is not appropriate, and he was disappointed the CEO walked out of our meeting.

Councilman Vargas reported that the Recreation Commission meets tomorrow.

Councilman Franceschini reminded everyone that the CPR recertification course will be on Tuesday, September 17 at 4:00 p.m., just prior to the regularly-scheduled work session on that date.

President Arthur noted the upcoming Patriot Day ceremony on the steps of City Hall on Wednesday, September 11 at 5:00 p.m. She concluded by stating we need to do something about the homeless/drug problems.

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

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Dr. Elizabeth A. Arthur  
President

ATTEST:

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Keith Petrosky, RMC  
Municipal Clerk