



BOROUGH OF OCEANPORT

MAYOR & COUNCIL

MINUTES • DECEMBER 14, 2023

Workshop

Clement V. Sommers Municipal Building

7:00 PM

910 Oceanport Way, Oceanport, NJ 07757

- I. **Meeting Called to Order:** Mayor Coffey called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm
- II. **Statement of Compliance with Open Public Meetings Act:** This meeting complies with the Open Public Meetings Act by adequate and electronic notification on January 5, 2023 of this meeting and its location, date and time to the Asbury Park Press and Two River Times and by the posting of same on the municipal bulletin board and Borough's Web Site.
- III. **Flag Salute, Statement to the Public:** Mayor Coffey led the Council and attendees in the flag salute.
- IV. **Roll Call:**

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Jay Coffey	Mayor	Present
William Deerin	Councilman	Present
Richard Gallo	Councilman	Present
Bryan Keeshen	Councilman	Present
Michael O'Brien	Councilman	Present
Keith Salnick	Councilman	Present
Thomas Tvrdik	Councilman	Present
Jeanne Smith	Borough Clerk	Present
Andrew Bayer	Borough Attorney	Present
Donna M. Phelps	Administrator	Present
Catherine D. LaPorta	Chief Financial Officer	Present

- V. **Proclamation - County Commissioner Lillian Burry:** Mayor Coffey read a proclamation declaring December 21, 2023 as Lillian G. Burry Day:

WHEREAS, Monmouth County Commissioner LILLIAN G. BURRY has a long and storied history of public service, beginning her career as a Councilwoman in Matawan Borough, continuing as a Committeewoman, Deputy Mayor and Mayor in Colts Neck, rising to the level of Monmouth County Chosen Freeholder (now Commissioner) when elected to that position in 2005, and continuing to serve in that capacity by virtue of her re-election in 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017 and 2020; and

WHEREAS, LILLIAN G. BURRY was named as the first female Freeholder Director in 2008 and was chosen to serve by her peers as Director again in 2010, 2014 and 2017; and

WHEREAS, LILLIAN G. BURRY'S tenure as a Freeholder/Commissioner has had a profound impact on the lives of thousands and thousands of people in Monmouth County by virtue of her involvement in myriad areas of responsibility including, but not limited to, Parks, Libraries, the Sheriff's Office, County Clerk, Surrogate and the Prosecutor, liaison to Veterans Affairs, the Board of Elections, Planning Board, Agricultural Board, Historic Preservation Commission, Consumer Affairs, and the Vocational Schools' & Brookdale Community College Board of School Estimate; and

WHEREAS, it is in her capacity as a member of the Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority, however, that LILLIAN G. BURRY has had the most direct impact on the Borough of Oceanport and it is through her stewardship and guidance as the Authority's Vice-Chair and as a member of the Veteran's Affairs and Real Estate Sub-Committees that Oceanport will enjoy the fruits of her labor for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, LILLIAN G. BURRY'S immediate legacy as it relates to Oceanport is and will continue to be reflected in the transformation of the former Fort Monmouth site from a closed, moribund military facility into a thriving, bustling residential and commercial development that will underpin the economic and social growth of the municipalities devastated by the closure of Fort Monmouth in 2010; and

WHEREAS, simply stated, this transformation would not have been possible without LILLIAN G. BURRY and the understated professionalism she brought to the task at hand; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Oceanport would be remiss if it did not recognize LILLIAN G. BURRY for her lifetime of public service and, in particular, the benefits her hard work has bestowed upon Oceanport over the past two decades; now,

THEREFORE, I, JOHN F. COFFEY II, Mayor of the Borough of Oceanport, on behalf of Oceanport's Governing Body and residents, do hereby recognize LILLIAN G. BURRY for her long and exemplary career in public service and her unflinching, altruistic commitment and dedication to making the world around her a better place, and further celebrate her accomplishments

and extend to her our deepest appreciation for being such a marvelous representative for her constituents, and I hereby further declare December 21, 2023 as "LILLIAN G. BURRY DAY" in the Borough of Oceanport.

VI. Proclamation - Shore Boys Basketball State Championship: Mayor Coffey read a proclamation congratulating the Shore Boys Basketball Team for State Championship win:

WHEREAS, the Borough of Oceanport is pleased to honor the members of the Shore Regional High School Boys Soccer Team for their outstanding efforts in the sport of soccer; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Shore Regional High School Boys Soccer Team concluded a triumphant season with a 17-7 record and through their determination captured the 2023 NJSIAA Group 1 State Championship title on Saturday, November 11, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Championship team were led by Senior center-back, Captain Tyler Jackson and Co-Captain goal-keeper, Kevin Barfield; and

WHEREAS, under the capable guidance of Coach Christian Pontier and Assistant Coaches Michael Hurley and Nic Poulos, these exceptional young athletes have demonstrated the finest qualities of true champions; and

WHEREAS, special commendation is due to the entire team's dedication and their families for their unwavering commitment and support.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT I, JOHN F. COFFEY, II, Mayor of the Borough of OCEANPORT, County of Monmouth, State of New Jersey, do hereby commend the **Shore Regional High School Boys Soccer Team** on behalf of the entire Council, for their momentous achievement and historic accomplishment of the Shore Regional High School Boys Soccer Team in winning the Group 1 State Championship for 2023.

VII. Proclamation - Richard Gruskos: Mayor Coffey read a proclamation declaring December 14, 2023 as Richard Gruskos Day:

WHEREAS, RICHARD GRUSKOS was born, raised and educated in Oceanport and has lived in and raised a family in Oceanport in the same house since 1979; and

WHEREAS, RICHARD GRUSKOS has been an integral part of the fabric of Oceanport his entire life as evidenced by the incredible amount of time he has spent since 1954 helping to make Oceanport a great place to live; and

WHEREAS, RICHARD GRUSKOS has demonstrated an unparalleled love for and devotion to Oceanport and its residents via his selfless service on the Oceanport Recreation Committee in the 1980s and 1990s, his work as a coach (along with the REAL coach, his wife, Michele) in the Oceanport Recreation Soccer Program through 1997, the prodigious number of hours he has put in as a member of the Borough's Water Watch Committee over the past five decades, his volunteer efforts as part of Fort Monmouth Redevelopment Committee's Environmental Impact Team and the Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority's Environmental Committee, and, most notably, the total body of work that he has blessed the Borough with as a mainstay on the Borough's Environmental Commission; and

WHEREAS, there is nobody who knows more about Oceanport's environmental history and current conditions, both on land and sea, than RICHARD GRUSKOS; and

WHEREAS, RICHARD GRUSKOS graduated from the New Jersey Institute of Technology with both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Engineering and the Borough of Oceanport has been fortunate enough to enjoy the benefits of that education through his volunteer work on behalf of the Borough for many, many years in many, many capacities; and

WHEREAS, even when RICHARD GRUSKOS wasn't volunteering his time and expertise on behalf of the Borough, he impacted the Borough and the lives of many of our residents as a member of the Shrewsbury Sailing & Yacht Club, where he served in almost every member capacity possible, including his service as Commodore in 1996; and

WHEREAS, there has been no greater champion of Oceanport's environmental health and no greater ambassador for the protection and cultivation of Oceanport's natural assets than RICHARD GRUSKOS; and

WHEREAS, Oceanport is "A Great Place to Live" because of RICHARD GRUSKOS; and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Oceanport would be remiss if it did not recognize RICHARD GRUSKOS for his commitment to Oceanport, his contributions to our Borough's environmental health and, most importantly, the health and welfare of our residents; now,

THEREFORE, I, JOHN F. COFFEY II, Mayor of the Borough of Oceanport, on behalf of Oceanport's Governing Body and residents, do hereby recognize RICHARD GRUSKOS for his unfailing, altruistic service to the Borough of Oceanport through his lifelong dedication to protecting our environment and also for his overall volunteer efforts as our friend, mentor and colleague, and further celebrate his accomplishments and extend to him our deepest appreciation for everything he has done to ensure that Oceanport remains "A Great Place to Live," and I hereby further declare **DECEMBER 14, 2023** to be "**RICHARD GRUSKOS DAY**" in the Borough of Oceanport.

Mr. Gruskos commented he has tried to avoid self-advancement in his years of doing this and credited great mentors and the spirit of volunteerism in Oceanport and thanked Mayor & Council for the recognition.

VIII. Public Comment on Action Items: Mayor Coffey opened the meeting to public comments on Action Items only.

James Davis, Mayor of the City of Bayonne, appeared and presented to the Borough Clerk a Proclamation declaring Mayor Jay Coffey Day which was read into the record:

Whereas: On Thursday, December 14, 2023, John F. (Jay) Coffey II will participate in his final governing body meeting as Mayor of the Borough of Oceanport, New Jersey. Jay Coffey stunned the political world by winning election to the Oceanport mayoralty in 2015 as a write-in candidate. (In 1968, Lyndon Johnson won the New Hampshire Primary as a write-in candidate but the media proclaimed him the loser. Life isn't fair. Coffey got better press. Now back to our story.) Mayor Coffey was re-elected in 2019 as an independent candidate who actually appeared on the ballot; and

Whereas: A proud native of Bayonne, the garden spot of the Garden State, Jay Coffey was prepared for his career as a public servant at St. Vinceny DePaul Grammar School, St. Peter's Prep, Fairfield University, and New York Law School. From 1987 to 1989, he worked mortgage banking. In 1989, he began a law practice as a solo practitioner; and

Whereas: From 1990 to 2022, Jay Coffey served as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Bayonne. He was promoted to Law Director, serving from 2002 to 2009, when he underwent what historians have dubbed the Great Defenestration of Bayonne. From 2009 to 2014, the future Mayor of Oceanport experienced what one PBS documentary has called *Coffey: The Wilderness Years*. Since 2014, he has served once again as Law Director for the City of Bayonne, which another PBS documentary has called *Coffey II: The Sequel*; and

Whereas, Jay Coffey is married to Susan S. Coffey, C.P.A. They are the parents of Clayton and Evan:

Now, therefore, I, James M. Davis, Mayor of the City of Bayonne, do hereby proclaim that Thursday, December 14, 2023, is to be observed as MAYOR JAY COFFEY DAY in the City of Bayonne, and respectfully request all residents to thank him for his outstanding service to the people of both Bayonne and Oceanport.

As no one else from the public appeared, that portion of the meeting was closed.

IX. Action Items - None

X. Clerk's Report:

Old Business: Ms. Smith provided update on incomplete Minutes.

Minutes: Ms. Smith reviewed completed meeting minutes and with no objections, moved forward for action at next meeting

New Business: Ms. Smith reviewed resolutions from the agenda ready for action which were moved forward with discussion on the following items:

40. Resolution requesting waiver of 390-19(F) - 6 Bayview Place – Ms. Smith reviewed the request and the Borough Engineer's recommendation after which consensus of Council was to go with the Engineer's recommendation and deny the waiver request.
49. Discussion: Amendments to Chapter 284 Peace and Good Order – Ms. Smith and Borough Attorney Andrew Bayer reviewed the proposed amendments in response to public appeal to update the ordinance to reflect current statutes
50. Discussion: Fort Monmouth Reuse Plan Amendment #20 – Ms. Smith briefly explained the Borough's role in the plan amendment process, comments from the Borough Planner, Planning Board. Mayor Coffey summarized the developments of the Fort with Netflix and the Nurses' Quarters the only remaining parcels remaining in Oceanport being finalized. Concerns expressed by residents are building heights while the Mayor thinks what is coming is an improvement on what is remaining left by the Army along with restrictions. There will be a host of problems brought on by Netflix but its his opinion is that they are outweighed by the positive impacts including job creation. However, it behooves them to respond on behalf of the constituents. With no objections from Council, Mayor Coffey would prepare a written narrative on behalf of the Governing Body which Council approved for inclusion in the response to FMERA with the resolution to be amended to reflect same.

Ms. Smith concluded her report with expressions of gratitude for her staff, Kim Parent who is her "OPRA" queen and Kelle Burrough who handles much of the day to day and has taken on more responsibilities this year. She also thanked Ms. Phelps, Ms. LaPorta, Mr. Briskey and other department heads and staff for all of their assistance over the last year and expressed gratitude to be able to work with phenomenal employees that feel like family and expressed her gratitude to the community for the privilege of serving as their Borough Clerk. Ms. Smith also thanked Mayor Jay Coffey who has been a leader and a mentor, and has given so much to the town he loves. She expressed regret that he would no longer serve as Mayor and hopes that he will continue to be a part of the Oceanport community and welcomed new Mayor Tom Tvrdik.

- XI. Administrator's Report:** Ms. Phelps reported on items including congratulations to incoming Mayor Tom Tvrdik and re-elected councilmen Gallo and Keeshen; congrats to the Historical Committee for the Main Street banners; assistance with Veteran's Day, Borough Hall display cases in conjunction with the new Wall of Honor; approval of a reimbursement grant from the CJHIF for the Borough's employee assistance program; provided an update on the JIF's decision to defer dividends at that time as the review by the State Division of Banking and Insurance with it possible coming in April/May; application for Firefighter's grant was submitted for turn out gear; updates on the BRIC application for stormwater upgrades and replacement of the Oceanport Ave Bridge along with OEM Buzz Baldanza; she recounted great accomplishments that all have worked at as a team, thanking the Mayor & Council, department heads, Borough employees for going above and beyond. She also thanked outgoing Mayor Coffey for his experience

and knowledge which has been invaluable to her in her role as administrator. She welcomed incoming Mayor Tvrdek and looks forward to working with him in 2024.

- XII. Mayor's Report:** Mayor Coffey offered remarks on the closing of his service, the influx of new families, the changes in town as it should with new families in and old families move out; his 8 years of service as an elected official and the honor and privilege to serve so many years. He continued that the town is basically run by 14-15 people because that's what there is money for and its amazing what gets done here; he encouraged everyone to come out to the Tree Lighting this weekend – its what small town life is all about; he expressed thankfulness for the goodness in life in Oceanport – particularly seeing the athletic fields full of kids and thanked the Council for making it happen. He added that he has every confidence that this governing body is up to the challenges forthcoming with the track and Fort Monmouth. He expressed pride over the past four years on fostering a better sense of community and the relationships with people working together.

Councilman Tvrdek extended an invitation to residents to come out the next night to help decorate and light the Sickler tree on Morris Place.

- XIII. Public Comment:** Mayor Coffey opened the meeting to the public for comments.

Rosanne Letson, 50 Deer Path Ct, Tinton Falls, recalled her years of being a resident, and how she got involved when a developer wanted to build 60 condos at the marina across the street from her home, and the time 8 years ago when she attended a council meeting and the room was packed and Jay Coffey came with a binder and what was shown that day was the most dysfunctional governing body she had ever seen and Jay Coffey was the right person at the right time and Oceanport would not be in the position it was now, which is pretty good in her opinion, with him at the helm. She thanked Mayor Coffey because he saved this town, protected them from the State, and FMERA and more. A debt of gratitude is owed and on behalf of everyone not present, thanked him. Ms. Letson also advised that the Historical Committee was making progress on the 3 historical signs for placement at the Fort. On behalf of the Committee she asked status of Welcome Back to the Fort and Monmouth250 – the celebration of the 250th birthday of the United States.

Keith Salnick, 60 Shore Road, thanked Mayor Coffey for his 8 years of service, wished Councilman Tvrdek best of luck on the new role and asked questions about the process for filling the vacancy that will be created with Councilman Tvrdek's move to Mayor. Mayor Coffey responded that Councilman Tvrdek's seat was elected as an independent so it would be filled by the Council without input from a political party. The seat would then be up in November for filling of the unexpired term. Anyone interested should submit their notice of interest to the Borough Clerk.

Mark Patterson, 40 Itaska Place, thanked the governing body for their assistance and cooperation with the school project for the emergent needs to be done over the next several weeks. Mr. Patterson also extended gratitude to Mayor Coffey for his service, friendship, mentor and that he will continue to look up to him and will miss him. He thanked him also for his service and where he has brought this town and all of his accomplishments. He can see it in his eyes how happy he is and glad he will have more time to enjoy his life.

Steve Briskey, DPW Superintendent, commented he could not emphasize enough what Ms. Smith commented – he has a staff that cares and gives more than 100% and thanked each of the Council members and their involvement on each Committee. Mr. Briskey continued with comments to Mayor Coffey whose thing is the challenge – he has challenged Mr. Briskey on many occasions and forced him to rise up; he's surrounded himself with a team that collectively works together to make this town what it is today. The support Mayor Coffey has given to this town and especially the people who work for this town. He is leaving big shoes to fill and knows that same support will be given to new Mayor Tvrdek. He thanked Ms. Phelps, Ms. LaPorta and Ms. Smith and wants them to know that they have the trust and support of his department. He wished him health and happiness in his future endeavors.

Ms. LaPorta added to the remarks and expressed appreciation and thanks professionally speaking for his support, guidance and for trusting her with the responsibilities she's been given as CFO. She also feels that with this Council, the employees are encouraged to communicate openly and honestly with no dictatorship and wished Mayor Coffey the best in his future endeavors.

As no one else from the public presented, that portion of the meeting was closed.

- XIV. Adjournment:** As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM on a motion by Councilman O'Brien, seconded by Councilman Tvrdek and approved by Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Smith
BOROUGH CLERK