

**TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG**  
**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**FEBRUARY 21, 2023 — 7:00 P.M.**

- 1. **CALL TO ORDER - 7PM** - By CP Wyant
- 2. **OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT STATEMENT** - Read by VP Clark
- 3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - All
- 4. **INVOCATION** - Led by Cnclman Piazza
- 5. **ROLL CALL – Present** - Wyant, Clark, Marino, Piazza **Absent** – Kennedy

Also in attendance, Attorney Wenner, BA Hall, Mayor Tersigni, Deputy Clerk Loudenberry

6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 4-0-1**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza	X		X			
Councilman Marino		X	X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**Discussion - None**

7. **BILLS LIST**

**Passed 4-0-1**

**ROLL CALL**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza	X		X			
Councilman Marino		X	X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**Discussion** – Cnclman Marino asked about gasoline usage and the tracking of non-emergency usage.

BA Hall noted he would ask CFO Merlo if possible to break out and will get answer to the Councilman.

- 8. **ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS - None**
- 9. **MAYOR’S REPORT/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS - Attached**
- 10. **PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Joe Meyner – 392 South Main Street

Inquired about Budget and CP Wyant informed not an Agenda item and to share during Public Petitions.

No others – CP Wyant Closed

**11. ORDINANCES FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> READING**

**\*\*Reintroduced pursuant to mandated Board of Public Utilities amendments\*\***

**ORDINANCE 2023-03**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING MUNICIPAL CONSENT TO COMCAST TO CONSTRUCT, CONNECT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A CABLE TELEVISION AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IN THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, NEW JERSEY

**\*\* 2<sup>ND</sup> Reading and public hearing to be held March 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.\*\***

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed – 4-0-1**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza	X		X			
Councilman Marino			X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark		X	X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**Discussion** – None

**12. ORDINANCES FOR 2<sup>ND</sup> READING**

**ORDINANCE 2023-02**

AN ORDINANCE BY THE TOWN COUNCIL AMENDING THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG SALARY ORDINANCE

**ROLL CALL**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza			X			
Councilman Marino		X	X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark	X		X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**DISCUSSION** – None

CP Wyant asked Mayor Tersigni when would he be presenting his Budget to Council; to which he replied by Friday, February 24,2023. With that CP asked Council if they received Budget on Friday would they be ready to discuss Budget at a Work Session the following Tuesday, February 28? They all responded yes. CP asked Acting Clerk Hall to advertise a Work Session for Tuesday, February 28 at 7PM – Budget Meeting Only.

CP Wyant asked if any Council member wished to remove anything from Consent Agenda to which Cnclman Piazza responded he would like to Table R2023-39 as he did not have enough time to read the very lengthy document. CP Wyant responded, it is something we must do, adding we don't expand upon it and asked BA Hall if he had anything to add. BA Hall noted it is mandatory and must be adopted as per HUD.

**13. RESOLUTIONS \*\* CONSENT AGENDA \*\***

*Matters listed on the Consent Agenda Resolutions are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion of the Council and one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member requests an item to be removed for consideration.*

**R2023-40**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING YEAR THREE NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**R2023-41**

RESOLUTION CERTIFYING FUNDS FOR CLOSING COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH PURCHASE OF FREEMAN SCHOOL

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 4-0-1**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza		X	X			
Councilman Marino	X		X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**R2023-39**

RESOLUTION APPROVING TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG DCD SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

**Motion to Table R2023-39**

Councilman Piazza motioned to Table R2023-39. The motion was seconded by Councilman Marino

AYES: Wyant, Clark, Marino, Piazza

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Kennedy

**14. NEW BUSINESS**

**DISCUSSION-RENT CONTROL VP Clark took control of Meeting as CP Wyant abstained.**

Cncلمان Piazza noted thought this would be discussed at a Work Session, continued there is a precedence for introductory of Rent Control, noting it comes in many forms. Noted would be conducive to inspecting rental properties, if Property Owner were to raise rent in excess of 3% would trigger an auto inspection. Stated, he knows that there is trouble with Inspections at this time and doesn't know if can handle additional Inspections right now.

Cncلمان Marino stated in Warren County rents have had 20-25% increases. Added he knows of only (1) Landlord who never raised rent in 16 years. He proposed a 5% Cap, noting you cannot continue to raise rents on those people who cannot afford.

CP Wyant abstained from the discussion.

VP Clark stated, generally in favor of some type of Rent Control, but feels it would be regressive for TOP. Continued does not see benefit right now. Explained if rising rents were a symptom of gentrification – but not the case here. Noted it is a sellers’ market, but not a buyers’ market, adding rising rents is a national problem; which we have no control over. Stated if you attempt to control rent – landlords will not be able afford maintaining their properties and may even cut their losses and leave Town. Problems affecting us all – inflation keeps going up, there is a housing shortage. Talked with State Governor about Anchor Program; which is a property tax relief program for Landlords and Tenants. He continues to encourage everyone to apply for the Anchor Program, deadline is approaching.

Cnclman Piazza stated the current Ordinance in Place treats the Tattoo Parlors on same level with massage parlor, where each employee is an individual contractor, needing a background check/fingerprinting and fees for each employee. Whereas other municipalities, may treat the Tattoo Business more like a salon, where a skilled professional provides a service. Asking Council to consider changing the Ordinance.

CP Wyant asked the matter be put on a Work Session in March.

**15. OLD BUSINESS**

CORLISS AVENUE UPDATE  
R2023-28

CP Wyant asked Engineer, Tim O’Brien to comment on the state of the former Municipal Bldg. at 675 Corliss Avenue. He stated that the specs for the environmental abatements have been sent to the State and we are awaiting feedback from the State.

**16. MOTIONS**

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT – HOPE DAY

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 4-0-1**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza			X			
Councilman Marino		X	X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark	X		X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**FIREFIGHTER APPLICATION**

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 4-0-1**

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Piazza		X	X			
Councilman Marino	X		X			
Councilman Kennedy						X
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Wyant			X			

**17. PUBLIC PETITIONS**

**Joe Meyner 392 South Main Street**

Noted he had sent copy of his Rent Control proposal previously and anyone who wanted copy he would email. Stated he has not raised his rent in (16) years either. He continued he has maintained his property properly and improved what he could afford and the rent he charges is \$532/month for a 2 bedroom. Noted the (1) negative is inspected every (5) years or so and does not have a cert of occupancy every year. His plan, landlord must post (1) year ahead, posting cannot exceed, if 3 times then criminal, misdemeanor, refund of difference goes to the tenant. We fill the greatest need – affordable housing.

VP Clark stated – we are at 3 minutes.

**Meliss Paulus – 26A Glen Avenue**

Inquired when last work session had been held. Continued, there is a need Police Department’s lack of headquarters and lack of working equipment along with Parking deficiencies, and other items that require discussion at a Work Session need to be addressed.

CP Wyant we are having a Work Session on Tuesday, February 28 to discuss the Budget.

Mayor Tersigni noted for the time being Police headquarters will remain at the former Andover Morris school, 712 South Main Street.

**Gary Willis 35 Riverview Road**

Asked about former Municipal Building – wanting clarification.

CP Wyant noted Specs have been put together regarding remediation and sent to the State. Continued we are waiting for the State to respond.

GW stated the water company is not stopping at Stop Signs in the Delaware Heights neighborhood and he wants traffic code enforced. Would like to see more stop signs in the heights.

Told time is up.

Terry Urfer – resides in Hope, but Landlord in TOP

Stated having problem getting Permits from the Inspections Department. He had property that had water leak, was a health risk because of mold and he was unable to get Inspector Jack Daniels into the property. Glenn Fisher, electrician for 30-40 years experiencing similar problems. Noting he wants to do it right – experiencing no rent payments for 2 years in some cases due to Pandemic. Stated has 13 houses, asking why limit my increase to 2 or 3%, why not limit what a property can be sold for. Inspections Department is the problem, trying to tell you what is going on – Services need to be provided – people at risk – team needs to fix the problem.

Cnclman Piazza suggested dissolving the Inspections Department and go out to the State for Permits.

Attorny Wenner stated there are laws to be considered.

CP Wyant noted not during this time.

John Ringhoff

Spoke to 253 Washington Street – been in the family over 50 years. Continued, he knows there is procedure – Aunt who lived there died. Building fell into disrepair and was condemned. Next of kin, unable to contact or no current address, behind in back taxes 4k, floor fell in due to freezing pipes. Stated went to Tax Sale and nobody bid, he continued wants to pay back taxes and get back on tax roles. Stated there were 15 children raised between 251-253 Washington Street. As he is fixing 251 Washington Street, being told by Contractors – don't understand, doing business in TOP requires more paperwork, longer waiting for Permits. Continued had issue with Jack Daniels regarding Filmore Street and reached out to DCA which is now settled but threatened with fines.

CP Wyant suggested he talk with BA Hall, set up appointment and come to Council and will address at a future meeting.

James Flynn – Firth Street

Stated, wanted Council and residents to be aware of increase of pollution from McWane Ductile. Noted large cranes and stacks at their location. Asked if there was an increase to effluent release under EPA. Noted Channel 69 News reached out to him, continued he knows Council is not the DEP, but asked if any updates.

Mayor Tersigni stated, spoke to Plant Manager (2) weeks ago and decision still pending with the State, not yet determined.

JF stated he knows the company had petitioned to release more cadmium, mercury and other harmful things into the air, into his backyard and would effect the Walter's Park Pool.

David Morrisette 5 Fairview Hghts.

Noted Minutes and Ordinances are being further updated on Website and it is appreciated. Also, noted Firth Youth Center purchased lot on Fleming Drive, preventing development of working class housing previously suggested for that sight. Continued in agreement with VP Clark regarding rent control. Stated when you restrict rents, those who own will sell – those who buy will be homeowners, further diminishing the housing stock available to rent. Added Rent Control decreases value of properties. Stated goal of Rent Control is to get rid of renters, it decreases the number of rentals.

Dan Boyce 1526 Warren Street, Alpha

Safety concerns for our Police Department if they have deficient tools to perform their daily tasks. Added there is a (12) year low - selling of properties.

Kelly Lefler 549 Congress Street

Noted her father is 91 years old and in the apartment he rents the ceiling had fallen in, adding had he been home he would have been killed. Continued the rent for this apartment went up \$300! Noted his Social Security went up only 8%. Noted the Seniors in this complex, some experiencing a \$500 increase, need help.

Public Petitions Closed – 7:53

## **18. COUNCIL OPEN TIME**

Cnclman Marino asked if the 500k from the Apothecarium could be used to reduce Sewer Rate or Taxes.

CP Wyant stated could address at Budget Meeting on Tuesday's Work Session.

Cnclman Piazza noted Rent Control can mean a broad spectrum of solutions. Continued must do better for our residents, noting that 40% of our residents rent. Stated Lopatcong Township has rent control areas; which can work if implemented correctly. Addressed statement made by Mayor Tersigni questioning his integrity and alleged crimes of allies. Stated could have been cleared up by a simple phone call. Never charged criminally for anything more than a speeding ticket. Defense of his record.

VP Clark stated, not a campaign stage, no politicking.

Cnclman Piazza noted integrity does matter and takes his reputation seriously.

VP Clark stated he had nothing new to discuss. Continued we as Councilmembers are elected officials, making policy as a governing body. Wished all a Good Night.

CP Wyant stated at last meeting he brought up about Inspections possibly being moved to the State. He asked if the BA had researched this possibility.

BA Hall stated would have to notify the DCA officially, adding they do not have to take us on. Continued, they are facing their own staffing issues. Council needs to consider in depth.



CP Wyant stated he wanted the BA to look into and share knowledge if feasible. Stated Council only funds it. Continued we are hearing from folks – not getting their permits. Ability to expand businesses in TOP or home improvements – people not doing it, because they can't. Stated we need to know what we can and can't do. Continued changes need to be made in this department, adding this has been going on for some time now.

**18. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None Required**

**19. ADJOURNMENT - 8:02 PM**

VP Clark moved to adjourn the meeting.