

**BRIDGETON CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 21, 2023**

A meeting of the Bridgeton City Council was held on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 5:30 p.m., at the City of Bridgeton Police and Municipal Court Complex, 330 Fayette Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey in Council Chambers.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Bethea.

The Statement of Meeting Notice was read by Municipal Clerk, Nichole Almanza;

Notice of this Meeting of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton, as required by N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., the "Open Public Meetings Act", has been provided by an Amended Public Advertisement in the South Jersey Times, The Daily Journal on February 11, 2023 and on the City Website setting forth the date, time and place of this meeting of the Bridgeton City Council.

Invocation and Flag Salute was led by Mayor Kelly.

**The following answered to roll call:**

Councilwoman Rosemary DeQuinzio  
Councilman J. Curtis Edwards  
Councilwoman Marian King  
Council President Edward Bethea

ABSENT: Councilman David Gonzalez

**Also in attendance:**

Mayor Albert Kelly  
Solicitor Michele Gibson  
CFO Trisha McGahhey

Administrator Kevin Rabago  
Municipal Clerk Nichole Almanza

**MINUTES:**

Council President Bethea presented the City Council Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2023. It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and seconded by Councilwoman King that said minutes be approved and to dispense with the reading of said minutes as all members have received copies. The motion carried unanimously.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

***2023 Urban Parks Grant***

Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago provided a handout with potential options for the old landfill.

***\*\*Councilman Gonzalez entered the meeting\*\****

Mr. Rabago discussed the various public meetings held where ideas were requested from the public. He provided the following list of ideas provided: walking trails, biking trails, pergolas/gazebos, area for sledding, fitness stations, landscaping and wildflower pollination mix.

Mr. Rabago discussed the planning and budgeting options for the project. He explained that there is a Resolution on tonight's Consent Agenda providing for the approval to apply for the grant which if qualified for will allow payment for most of the ideas provided.

Mr. Rabago stated that there is one final Public meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 23, 2023.

Councilman Gonzalez asked questions regarding the existing methane gas caps. Mr. Rabago explained that the vents/stacks will remain but will be separate from the trails.

Councilman Edwards asked what would type of funding would be used to cover the remainder if the grant does not cover the full cost. Mr. Rabago explained that the project would be done in phases over time.

#### **COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:**

Council President Bethea requested Council/Committee Liaison Reports:

**Councilwoman DeQuinzio** – None at this time.

**Councilman Edwards** – Provided statistics report received by Police Department. He discussed recent gang issues at the High School. He continued explaining that there is now a heavy Police presence. Councilman Edwards stated that the Police Department held a community meeting at a local church providing information to concerned residents. Councilman Edwards thanked the Police Department for their efforts.

**Councilman Gonzalez** – Stated that the Planning Board recently approved the Phoenix Redevelopment Plan for the Townhouse Project. He continued that there has also been Resolutions adopted regarding the Taco Bell and South East Bridgeton area.

**Councilwoman King** – Stated that the Housing Authority has a new Director and looks forward to introducing her to Council.

**Council President Bethea** – Reminded residents that there will be a Joint Meeting between City Council and the Board of Education members on March 28, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

**Council President Bethea referred to the Mayor, Business Administrator and Solicitor for their reports.**

**Mayor Kelly** – Thanked Police Chief Gaimari for meeting families regarding the recent issues at the high school.

Mayor Kelly stated that there has been 45 nights of Code Blue this year which already exceeds last years totals. He continued that he has begun discussions with commissioners regarding the need of a shelter on this side of the County. He added he would like to see non-profits work together to get this started.

Councilwoman King asked if he is looking for locations within Bridgeton for the shelter and expressed her concerns with doing so here.

Mayor Kelly explained he is looking for a location that is remote. He added that possibly in a neighboring town.

Councilwoman King explained that sometimes the remote locations of shelters are also put in place for safety reasons for the residents there (abuse, restraining orders, etc.). Councilwoman King suggested that the Cumberland County Shelter could be expanded to allow more to stay there. She added that she feels the City cannot handle a shelter.

**Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago** – None at this time.

**City Solicitor, Michele Gibson** – None at this time.

**ORDINANCES ON 1<sup>ST</sup> READING:**

Council President Bethea announced there was one (1) Ordinance for First Reading. The Municipal Clerk read the Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON AMENDING  
ORDINANCE 22-35 FIXING THE SALARIES AND RATES OF CERTAIN OFFICERS  
AND EMPLOYEES**

It was moved by Councilman Edwards and seconded by Councilwoman DeQuinzio that the Ordinance be introduced on first reading and that the second reading, public hearing and final consideration be held on March 7, 2023.

**The Clerk called the roll as follows:**

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>YEA</b>	<b>NAY</b>	<b>ABSTAIN</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

**ORDINANCES ON 2<sup>ND</sup> READING:**

Council President Bethea announced there was one (1) Ordinance for Second Reading. Council President Bethea asked the Municipal Clerk to read the Ordinances.

**ORDINANCE 23-04**

**ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BRIDGETON ADOPTING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BLOCK 189 LOTS 3.03 AND 3.04 WITHIN THE SOUTHEAST INDUSTRIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilman Edwards this be considered the second reading of said ordinance and the meeting be opened to the public for a hearing on the matter which motion was carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for any one desiring to be heard on this ordinance and this ordinance only.

No one desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilwoman King the public hearing be closed which motion was carried.

It was then moved by Councilman Edwards and second by Councilwoman DeQuinzio this be considered the final reading of said ordinance and that it be taken up for adoption or rejection by roll call vote.

**The Clerk called the roll as follows:**

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>YEA</b>	<b>NAY</b>	<b>ABSTAIN</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

**PUBLIC PORTION:**

Council President Bethea opened the meeting to the public for anyone desiring to be heard. It was moved by Councilwoman DeQuinzio motioned and seconded by Councilwoman King the public portion be opened.

Alan Trzuskoski of 7 N. Industrial Blvd. stated that he had closing on the property back in December where the future incubator will be located. He explained that he has been discussing the Purchase/Sale Agreement with the City Solicitor and looks to have it brought to Council soon. He stated that he has a number of groups that are interested in working with the project and hopes to have big updates come March.

Esaul Martin of Eagle Street and member of the Bridgeton Housing Authority, provided an update regarding the elevator at the High Rise. He explained that they were able to get a company to look at the elevator and a piece had to be made due to the age of the elevator. He continued that this business has now stepped away from the project and they are contacting another company to help fix the situation.

Todd Edwards of Pine Street discussed his comments at the last City Council meeting regarding the employee health benefits and asked if there was any update.

Mr. Edwards stated he wishes he attended earlier meetings when cannabis was first thought of in the City. He discussed the fallout of the relationship between Mr. Damien Cheeks and Mr. Alan Trzuskoski.

Damien Cheeks of Cedardell Avenue stated he would like to sit with Council and discuss the status of his cannabis license. He also introduced Blaise Menzoni and Brian Cruzan who are looking to help finance his plan.

John Johnson of Chestnut Street asked for Council to take in consideration an exception to policy regarding 512 Chestnut Street. He explained that the attached property is deteriorating and it is taking a toll on his property. He continued that he would like to purchase the property from the City. Council President Bethea asked Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago to reach out to him with some information.

With no one else desiring to be heard, it was moved by Councilman Edwards and seconded by Councilman Gonzalez the public portion be closed, which motion was carried. Council President Bethea closed the public portion of the meeting.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Council President Bethea announced all matters listed under the consent agenda; M-1 through M-6 will be enacted upon by one motion unless a council member desires to discuss an item, in which case the items will be removed from the consent agenda and acted upon separately.

Council President Bethea called upon the Municipal Clerk to read the Resolutions of the Consent Agenda.

**RESOLUTION NO. 52-23**, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton authorizing submission of an Urban Parks Initiative Grant Application.

**RESOLUTION NO. 53-23**, authorizing the City of Bridgeton to amend Resolution 17-23 awarding Contract to ALS Global USA, dba ALS Environmental.

**RESOLUTION NO. 54-23**, authorizing execution of Discharge or Release of Mortgage for 401 Fayette Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey, designated as Block 203, Lot 13 on the City of Bridgeton's Tax Map.

**RESOLUTION NO. 55-23**, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton authorizing submission of the Strategic Plan, Grant Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 thru June 30, 2024) Municipal Alliance to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse.

**RESOLUTION NO. 56-23**, authorizing the City of Bridgeton to award a Contract with LDV Custom Specialty Vehicles (Contract #AM10-20) through Houston Galveston Area Council in the amount not to exceed \$402,899.00.

**RESOLUTION NO. 57-23**, of the City Council of the City of Bridgeton appointing Katherine Flores to the City of Bridgeton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

Council President Bethea asked for a motion to accept the resolutions under the consent agenda.

It was moved by Councilman Gonzalez and second by Councilwoman King that Resolutions M-1 through M-6 be adopted which motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. The original resolutions may be found in the Resolution Book.

**The Clerk called the roll as follows:**

<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>YEA</b>	<b>NAY</b>	<b>ABSTAIN</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Councilwoman DeQuinzio	X			
Councilman Edwards	X			
Councilman Gonzalez	X			
Councilwoman King	X			
Council President Bethea	X			

**SCHEDULE OF BILLS:**

Council President Bethea asked Council for a motion to approve the Schedule of Bills dated February 21, 2023 in the amount of \$309,070.65. It was moved by Councilwoman King and seconded by Councilwoman DeQuinzio the Schedule of Bills be approved as read and warrants be drawn on their various accounts and appropriations, which motion was carried by unanimous roll call vote. The original schedule may be found in the minute books.

**APPLICATIONS:**

Council President Bethea announced there were no applications for approval.

**REPORTS:**

Council President Bethea announced there was two (2) reports for approval.

1. Tax Collector's Cash Receipts – January 2023
2. Vital Statistics Monthly Report – January 2023

It was moved by Councilwoman King and seconded by Councilwoman DeQuinzio that said applications be approved and filed, which motion carried unanimously.

**Council President Bethea called upon Mayor Kelly for comments:**

**Mayor Kelly** – None at this time.

**Council President Bethea called upon Council for comments:**

**Councilwoman DeQuinzio** – None at this time.

**Councilwoman King** – None at this time.

**Councilman Gonzalez**- None at this time.

**Councilman Edwards** – Discussed emails received from a past zoo volunteer.

Councilman Edwards asked if the health benefits can be looked into. Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago explained that we can, however, in order to leave the State program, we have a commitment to pay 2 months premiums up front. He continued that we would have to identify how we can do so.

Councilman Edwards stated it is upsetting to see issues between Mr. Cheeks and Mr. Trzuskoski but is happy to see that he has new investors. Councilman Edwards suggested that the Cannabis Committee meet again to discuss updates.

**Council President Bethea** – Expressed his concerns regarding the recent violence in the City. He stated that he is glad that the Police Department is on top of it and thanked them for the reports. He added that he hates to see the City makes headlines for the wrong reasons.

Council President Bethea stated that he rode through the Riverfront area behind Hummel's and discussed the severe homeless problem. He continued that he is not sure of a solution but it is getting worse. Council President Bethea discussed homeless residents being intoxicated in public and littering the City. Council President Bethea suggested the idea of a Day Center rather than a full shelter just to allow people to get off of the streets.

Council President Bethea reminded residents that the next Semi-Annual Clean-up is scheduled for March 25, 2023.

Council President Bethea stated he was surprised about the falling out of Mr. Cheeks and Mr. Trzuskoski. He asked the Cannabis Committee to meet again and discuss various issues at hand. He continued that we want successful businesses here in the City.

Council President Bethea asked Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago regarding the 2 months premium payment to leave the State benefits program. Mr. Rabago stated that the City can look around and suggested an RFP to be published for brokers to come and allow the City to shop it out as a public entity. Council President Bethea agreed and a small discussion was held regarding procurement responsibilities.

Council President Bethea asked Business Administrator, Kevin Rabago to reach out to Mr. Johnson regarding the Chestnut Avenue property. Mr. Rabago explained that the property in question is actually listed with our next auction being held on March 10, 2023.

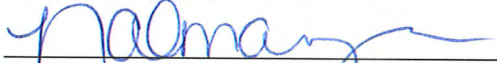
Council President Bethea thanked and saluted all 1<sup>st</sup> Responders – Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works and all Public Servants.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business before Council, it was moved by Councilman Edwards and seconded by Councilman Gonzalez to adjourn the meeting which motion carried unanimously.

Council President Bethea adjourned the meeting which ended at 6:30 p.m.

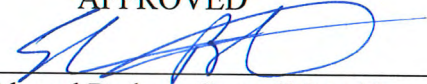
Respectfully submitted,



Nichole Almanza, RMC, Municipal Clerk

Date Approved: 3/7/2023

APPROVED



Edward Bethea, Council President