

THE WORK SESSION OF THE CITY OF BURLINGTON COMMON COUNCIL, COUNTY OF BURLINGTON, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, WAS HELD ON TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025, AT 7:00 PM, IN THE CITY HALL, 525 HIGH STREET, BURLINGTON, NJ, PURSUANT TO THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT.

This meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. This meeting of April 15, 2025, was included in a list of meetings notice sent to the Burlington County Times and the Trenton Times on January 6, 2025, and advertised in said newspapers on January 10, 2025, posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on January 6, 2025, and has remained continuously posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

Cindy A. Crivaro, RMC
Municipal Clerk

The Municipal Clerk advised the public of the location of the two fire exits: one on the left after exiting the Council Chamber and the other being the entrance to the building.

Governing Body Members present: Dave Ballard, Dawn Bergner-Thompson, George Chachis, Timothy Hutton, Geneva Rijs, Richard Spaulding, Suzanne Woodard.

Also present: Mayor Barry Conaway, Administrator Johanna Conyer, Municipal Attorney Justin Strausser, Esq., Director of Public Works Bill Curry, Police Chief Ryan Elbertson.

SALUTE TO FLAG

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Christina Cecchi, 10 Riverbank, Beverly, NJ – spoke as owner of a commercial property at 340 E. Broad Street; expressed concern with a fence added along the railroad tracks on Broad Street across from the Lawrence School; her tenant’s truck traffic can’t get in and out for deliveries; provided pictures; requested two parking spots be eliminated and/or moved closer to the corner to give the trucks more room.

Phil Augustyn, 307 High Street - the Council meetings have always started with a prayer on the Agenda; asked why no longer.

Rev. Dr. Lonnie Gibbs, 31 Dunbar Homes – reiterated comments made by Mr. Augustyn regarding the prayer no longer on the agenda.

Sam Richter, 2 E. Pearl Blvd. - disagreed with the previous comments; suggested prayer and the flag salute are necessary, but not at the same meeting.

Claudine Conaway, 110 James Street – stated she asked the Board of Education to put the fence up; spoke of people crossing the tracks; people will still park in the spots even if eliminated; encouraged everyone to visit the site when school is being let out before making a decision; suggested the Police Department give an opinion before eliminating the spots.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Rijs spoke of the HS musical “Rent” and the Kids Art Bash event; spoke of the fence installed at the Lawrence School; happy to see safety for the school children; asked for an update on the City Boardwalk event.

Mayor Conaway said as of last week there were 60 vendors, 14 food trucks; the Host of the event also put in a bid to purchase a building in town.

Councilwoman Woodard spoke of the issue related to the fencing and parking spots; suggested BA Conyer and the Police Department investigate and report back to Council with a recommendation.

Councilman Chachis asked when the O’League will open its doors on Federal Street. (A: I have had no information, per BA Conyer.)

Council President Bergener-Thompson reminded everyone of the Easter Egg Hunt in Columbus Park this weekend.

CONFERENCES

Update Current Cannabis Applications

BA Conyer – The Council President requested an update on businesses with cannabis activity; to date, Council has approved 4 letters of support; 1. Friendly Flower, Class 5 Retail to be located at 1137 Bordentown Road, appeared before the Land Use Board in March and was approved; 2. Flower Power, Class 5 Retail to be located at 450-460 Veterans Drive, has not appeared before the Land Use Board; 3. Blue Sky, Class 1 Cultivation and Class 2 Manufacturing to be located at 302 Commerce Square Blvd. has not appeared before the Land Use Board; 4. Northeastern Alternatives, Class 5 Retail to be located at 909 E. Route 130 has not appeared before the Land Use Board; Resolutions of support have a statement that indicated that the support is only good for 180 days; they automatically expire unless the applicant requests an extension in writing and Council approves the extension via resolution; the 3 that have not gone before the Land Use Board but came before Council, their resolutions of support have expired; noting further is needed by Administration or Council.

Discussion regarding Business Lighting ordinance

Proposed Lighting Ordinance Presentation by Councilman Spaulding

Councilman Spaulding – Drafted an ordinance for downtown lighting and gave a PowerPoint presentation; In 2019 was Main Street Burlington President; just beyond that time, MSB received a NPP grant from the NJDCA for 5 years which was earmarked for the New London section of the City; was able to get the grant district extended down High Street to get grant funding to businesses in that part of town, which included lighting; as a result, as recipients of the grant funding, the business owner is required to keep the lights on until 10pm every evening; showed examples of types of lighting; worked with grant recipients and merchandising consultants for guidance on different types of lighting that would be best; we have this information from the grant to refer to; showed examples of virtu millinerie kelvin color temperature lumens in storefronts; spoke of 3

components: well lit, backdrops so you can't see into the space, and nice displays; spoke of the impact of lighting; it looks pleasing, it is marketing and creates a sense of safety; consistency in the look is important; this would be the landlord's responsibility; proposed the following to have storefronts/facades lit in a consistent manner:

- Identify District for ordinance (High Street, Broad Street, West Union Street?)
- Require all storefronts in the district to have lighting on in windows and/or on the street-facing exterior of the building from dusk until 10 PM, and create parameters for lighting, such as kelvins, lumens, etc.
- We establish in the ordinance a deadline for this ordinance to be satisfied by the building owner.
- The specific type /style of lighting fixtures can be determined by the property owner.
- Because the city is establishing these new requirements for current property owners, we offer ONE TIME reimbursement grants to the building owner, not to exceed a cap of \$1000, for any changes needed from the building's current condition to meet these requirements. Eligible expenses include fixtures (if none exist), bulbs, replacing incandescent bulbs for low energy LED bulbs, and timers. We source these funds through UDAG and/or American Rescue funds and/or NPP funds, or other possible sources yet to be determined.

Councilwoman Woodard suggested this should come from MSB or the Chamber of Commerce, not Council; they can get a grant and the City can help; it is not up to Council to do the work of the landlords; not inclined to reward folks that won't fix their buildings; its Council's job to encourage development downtown but not to do the beautification.

Councilwoman Rijs said MSB recently mentioned something similar a few months ago; maybe it can be brought up again; there are already ordinances on lighting, Ch. 207-33 and 207-46; asked if there is anything more specific, to add. (A: For the lights to be on and in a uniform way, per Councilman Spaulding.); asked if there are any other towns doing this. (A: Will look into it, per Councilman Spaulding.)

Councilman Ballard said he agreed with Councilwoman Woodard.

Council President Bergner-Thompson asked how long ago this lighting was done at Phil's and the hat store. (A: 2021-2022, per Councilman Spaulding.); concern is a comment made last week in reference to business owners not keeping up the sweeping out front; how will the City get them to buy into this (idea); asked if a survey was done. (A: No, no survey, per Councilman Spaulding. When managing the MSB grant, went door-to-door offering the grant funding; most were skeptical; the City has been the same for the last 10 years; businesses come and go; we can/should enact this ordinance.)

Council President Bergner-Thompson suggested business owners have the right to do what they want with their property but we need to make sure everyone is following the rules so that they are safe so we can get tenants upstairs and downstairs.

Councilwoman Rijs suggested someone could come talk about commercial leases.

Council President Bergener-Thompson suggested that another Chamber of Commerce gave benefits to people who joined, such as legal services; to put more pressure on small businesses to come downtown makes it difficult; agreed that MSB and the Chamber would be best to do this.

Councilman Spaulding suggested that other Main Streets are effective because they have a budget and are funded; the landlords buy into it because they know it will help their business do better; we don't have a budget, we have a wish list; MSB is stuck.

Councilman Chachis asked if this proposal has been discussed with Richard Gober. (A: Have no problem doing so, per Councilman Spaulding.); come back with a survey of how the landlords feel about this; asked how this will be enforced, will someone sue?

Mr. Strausser said the Solicitor's Office would do a review of the ordinance; the City can certainly request businesses to keep exterior lights on until 10pm; Atlantic City requires 24/7.

BA Conyer said that she and the Mayor had a meeting with the president of MSB; asked if they will apply to the State of NJ to be a registered NJ MS, we were told, yes; if they do, there are a lot of grants they would be eligible for through the State.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon the motion of Councilman Chachis, seconded by Councilwoman Woodard, this meeting of April 15, 2025, was adjourned.

Cindy A. Crivaro, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Dawn Bergner-Thompson, President
Common Council