

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
OF THE BOROUGH OF OGDENSBURG
14 HIGHLAND AVE. OGDENSBURG AT 7:00PM
AUGUST 29, 2022**

Mayor Hutnick called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Mayor Hutnick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Alvarez, Cowdrick, DeMeo, Nasisi, Poyer, Mayor Hutnick

Also, in attendance was Robert McBriar, Borough Attorney and Mike Marceau, CFO

STATEMENT BY MAYOR: “Notice requirements of P.L. 1975, Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA10:4- et.seq. have been satisfied with a schedule of all meetings, together with the time, location and agenda of same being sent to the NEW JERSEY HERALD and NEW JERSEY SUNDAY HERALD and posted on the bulletin board in the Borough Hall on August 23, 2022.”

Mayor Hutnick commented before we begin he thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting. He would like to keep the meeting orderly, none disruptive, we only have one topic to discuss tonight because this is a special meeting not a regular council meeting so we stick to that one topic.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Department of Public Works (DPW), positions, matters involving employment, appointment, evaluation, performance or promotion of DPW personnel.

Mayor Hutnick commented we have had a turn over this year; difficulties with the DPW he is sure everyone is aware of, Mr. Struble is here. The meeting is about his department. We have a resolution before us to appoint him as the temporary Assistant Supervisor of Public Works per Civil Service Code 06651. We are also here to discuss what is going to happen with the DPW with the preparation for the upcoming fall and winter. Which he knows several people have become concerned about and hence why we have an audience here.

Mayor Hutnick asked Mr. Struble if he would like to say anything based on their conversations today.

Mr. Struble commented he feels like he has been thrown under the rug all these years because he has already been doing this job for Mr. Ross because he never wanted to appoint anybody. He doesn't know the reasons he has no clue why; he does his job every day, he commented he does his job properly he knows the town, he knows how to do his job, but yet he has been neglected. Mr. Struble continued he thinks its pretty said and now you want to temporarily promote me because Mr. Ross got hurt and there is nobody down there in charge. That is the only reason we are here. If it wasn't for him getting hurt this would have never even came up. Would have never even been mentioned. In the past when it has been brought up by Mr. Ross that he should be promoted, it has been brought up in the past many times and its been ignored and now all of a sudden you want to promote me because Mr. Ross is not here and by civil service we need somebody down there in charge. Mr. Struble commented he thinks it's pretty sad that we got to this point.

Mayor Hutnick commented what Mr. Struble is referring to is the current DPW supervisor Chris Ross has been injured off the job and he is unable to come to work. Therefore, leaving the DPW without any supervisor positions.

Mr. Struble commented he is pretty upset and sad about this town and the people running it right now.

Mayor Hutnick commented you and I had several conversations that he thought were productive. But they seem to have changed.

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Mr. Struble commented they have changed everything is a lie. Why except temporary when Chris is back I'll be moved back down.

Mayor Hutnick comment we haven't gotten that far.

Mr. Struble commented I just don't trust you people to be honest with you. You do what you have to do for your own selves and not for the town. Mr. Struble commented I'm personally disgusted with my job right now.

Mayor Hutnick commented so, with that do I move to go through with the resolution to attempt to have you promoted.

Mr. Struble commented I don't want your promotion because then I have to be responsible for who is hired in the town and if anything goes wrong it will be put on my shoulders. When Dennis Wottle was here we had a plan and explained that plan and what lead to Mr. Wottle leaving, Mr. Struble explained we lost a person with fifteen years of experience in the town.

Mr. Struble commented no I don't want your promotion you can keep it.

Mayor Hutnick commented, ok. That is what he is asking; if you wish to take it or not.

Mr. Struble commented we would never be here if Chris didn't get hurt; you didn't respect him in the first place.

Mayor Hutnick commented so now we need to come up with an alternate solution.

Mayor Hutnick asked Mr. McBriar if we keep going.

Mr. McBriar commented it is the Governing Body's decision; if there is any other discussion on these points.

Mayor Hutnick asked the Council if anyone had any discussions they would like to bring up; comments, questions or concerns.

Mr. Struble commented since Mr. Ross took over he has been acting as an assistant supervisor which he shouldn't have been doing because of civil service and he was never appointed. So, every time he was off or an emergency or anything that needed to be done he took care of those problem which he had no right to do according to his title. He still helped the town out and did his job. But do I get respect for that no. He worked for 20 years in this town.

Councilman Nasisi commented Jim you have seen a lot of people come and go up here. Councilman Nasisi commented he doesn't want to see Jim not take this position. It is going to be a big problem for the town.

Mayor Hutnick commented he agrees and that's why we are here to discuss this amongst us.

Councilman Nasisi commented he doesn't feel that Jim is 100 percent wrong or even close to that.

Mayor Hutnick commented he is sitting here trying to come up with a solution to make it right.

Mr. Struble commented we are way underpaid for all these years in the first place. He doesn't know why he stayed the pay is horrible he should have moved on years ago.

Mayor Hutnick commented he knows a couple of days ago we discussed an increase.

Mr. Struble commented he thought about it [he was wrong about that].

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Mayor Hutnick commented he is just putting all the facts out there we have had these discussions you and I. This morning everything changed he understands that.

Mr. Struble commented a lot of thing have changed. The past actions of this council. They had the chance to do the right thing for this road department. Its to the point he doesn't want to work down there, he doesn't want to plow snow with one guy who has no experience. It is hard enough with Mr. Ross and Mr. Wottle who knew this town and knew how to plow; the three of us we were always short handed anyway we used to have four guys when Mr. Smith was in charge. We had a lot of snow people, people on the snow list a lot more pickups to use. That all changed when Kenny left and then Mr. Ross took over it was just the three of us taken care of this whole town. Especially in the big storms and everything else. Way understaffed, way underappreciated. He doesn't want to be involved this winter with one guy that has no clue about this town trying to plow these roads and keep them open in the winter. Kenny Smith told us he doesn't want to plow anymore.

Mayor Hutnick commented for the record Mr. Smith has agreed to come back and plow for this winter.

Mayor Hutnick commented part of the discussion will be putting out a job search for a new supervisor because regardless of Chris status right now he is still retiring in December. So, we still need a supervisor that is licensed. You understand that.

Mr. Struble said he does understand that.

Mayor Hutnick commented he will put out another job enquiry for another Laborer. Mayor Hutnick commented you have to understand it's not that the council doesn't want to pay the money or that we are cheap.

Mayor Hutnick commented tonight was supposed to appoint him [Jim], somehow between Thursday and Friday of last week and this morning that changed. The conversation his morning with him [Jim] went in a completely different direction but he wasn't going to stop tonight's meeting because we still need to come up with resolutions of things. It's all open plan B is to post for a supervisor job which we have to do anyway. Mr. Ross is retiring on December 31; his current medical status is unknown. Mayor Hutnick commented we will post for a supervisor and continue to post for a labor 1. It is going to be tight to fit everything in financially. The money we spend on hires we only have so much, we have no industry. Have I waited too long to correct this situation yes, he isn't happy it came to this point it is unfortunate. He was hoping to go in the direction of a promotion and a hire then we are done.

Mayor Hutnick asked if Council had anything they wanted to add.

Councilman Nasisi asked what the pay would be for a supervisor. There was a brief discussion on salary and the borough just passed an ordinance raising the pay scale.

Mayor Hutnick commented now we are at the point of appointing but there is no voting on that; do we need to vote on the approval of putting those ads out.

Mr. McBriar commented we will have to work with civil service if that is the direction the Council wants to go it would be appropriate to entertain a motion to express the Governing body's intent to post the job for supervisor. So, if there is a motion that motion can be made at this time.

Councilman DeMeo made a motion to post the job for supervisor and laborer. Seconded by Councilman Nasisi.

Mr. McBriar commented this motion is just for posting. Later on, there will be a resolution if and when the time comes to make a hire.

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Upon Roll call Vote:

Yeas: Alvarez, Cowdrick, DeMeo, Nasisi, Poyer

Nays: None Absent: None Abstain None

PUBLIC SESSION - Open to the public for comments on agenda and non-agenda items.
(Comments limited to three minutes.)

Councilman DeMeo made a motion to open the meeting to the public. Seconded by Councilwoman Cowdrick. All were in favor.

Mayor Hutnick asked member of the public to state their name and address for the record. Ron Donegan, 13 Ogden Way, asked his question to you in regards to this position was there a job description. You agreed there is by Civil Service standards. Mr. Donegan explained if you want someone to be supervisor you need someone capable in all capacities; you are going to have your hands full with problems, the conditions around the street, grass growing up etc. This has been brought to the town's attention for years. The town shouldn't be in the position it's in; referencing what happened several years ago. Start thinking about starting to do right in this town in the proper direct manner instead of this little bit of nepotism here or this little venue here. He has lived in the town for years and never has seen such a disaster that it is in now. You should get you act together every one of you.

Mayor Hutnick commented the supervisor job hasn't been posted yet and we haven't hired anyone yet. That is why we are having this meeting.

Mr. Donegan suggested getting grants for the town giving examples and explaining.

Bob Armstrong, 32 Adams Dr. asked how many DPW worker will be there tomorrow.

Mayor Hutnick commented hopefully two.

Mr. Armstrong asked who are the two. Mayor Hutnick answered Jim Struble and Joe Marino.

Mr. Armstrong asked if you are prepared to handle any catastrophes. Mayor Hutnick explained that is why we are going through this process to hire more people.

Mr. Armstrong explained he is here to support Jim Struble and explained he has dealt with him over the years he is experienced and seems approachable. Why aren't we promoting from within. Why don't we offer him the job as supervisor?

Mayor Hutnick commented he is not licensed to be a supervisor he needs to be an assistant supervisor first then go through the time period and through schooling and then get certified.

Mr. Armstrong asked is he aware of that.

Mayor Hutnick commented yes that is the whole point of all this to appoint him as the assistant supervisor, because the conversations he had with him last week prior to tonight meeting when I called this meeting specifically for this changed over the weekend or this morning. Which is why he was surprised when he spoke to him this morning in person and he told him all this stuff and you heard what he [Mr. Struble] said. He was assuming he was going to accept it because he was going to meet the requirement he asked for but the requirements changed and he can't currently meet those requirements.

Mr. Armstrong commented so we are in a bad spot. Mr. Armstrong asked to name four projects the road department has completed in the last two years; because he has never seen them work. What did they complete.

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Mr. Armstrong asked tell me what the road department does Monday through Friday in this town of Ogdensburg.

Mayor Hutnick asked besides normal maintenance.

Mr. Armstrong asked does normal maintenance require being on the road.

Mayor Hutnick commented yes.

Mr. Armstrong commented I never see them and he is town all day long. Who is the Council road department supervisor?

Mayor Hutnick commented as of this meeting me.

Mr. Armstrong asked who was it prior.

Mayor Hutnick commented it was council person DeMeo and Councilwoman Cowdrick.

Councilman DeMeo commented that is a good question it is not for lack of trying. So, you understand we send them work orders, you say they don't do it, we ask them to get projects done and we get told there is not enough staff. Or we get told that it's not on the calendar; we he asked for a calendar for the year he got a blank calendar. We put trackers on the trucks this year; we kind of know were they are now. He doesn't want to sit here and criticize them.

Mr. Armstrong commented I do, I pay taxes like all the rest of us; he wants to see them do some work. I want to see you promote from within. I want to see you take action when you know for 12 months that the supervisor was going to retire.

Councilman DeMeo commented number one we couldn't hire a new supervisor until the old supervisor retires because we don't have the money in the budget. Number two we did not anticipate one of the employees [leaving] in July. He gave two weeks' notice and went on vacation. That was not anticipated. We did not expect to be out one employee in the department at the end of July. We are now trying to dig our way out of it.

Mr. Armstrong asked the plan is to post the job in the paper.

Councilman DeMeo commented we are civil service we have to post the job.

Mr. Armstrong asked how many DPW staff is there supposed to be.

Councilman DeMeo commented when he came in January it was three.

Mayor Hutnick commented it was four and we are trying to put it back to that.

Lorraine Horlacher 26 Madison Drive, asked about posting the job in the herald and suggested posting on a town website to reach out to more local residents. Mayor Hutnick commented it actually goes to the NJ League of Municipalities and explained.

Mrs. Horlacher asked are we in the right [pay] range for supervisor. Mayor Hutnick commented we just raised the full range of salary.

Mrs. Horlacher commented she heard we were going to have Sussex Wantage. Mayor Hutnick commented no, he heard that today too and explained.

Mrs. Horlacher commented they are not doing their job she heard a lot of people complain about the road department in the last two years. At the same time Mr. Struble is saying we don't have the man power.

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Mayor Hutnick commented he understands what you are saying and explained a software package that has been implemented. Mayor Hutnick also explained grants the borough was working on with our engineer.

Pat Fitzgibbons, 51 Edison Drive, commented it sounds like personal problems it isn't just one item as of today. It seems to be Council should get some help maybe a volunteer in town somebody that has some experience to work with personal on some of these problems.

Mayor Hutnick commented the personal issues are only with one department.

Mr. Fitzgibbons commented aren't you going to be facing some similar kinds of problems with the police department in an upcoming year or so.

Mayor Hutnick commented within four years the police will go up for retirement.

Mr. Fitzgibbons commented you have to plan for that.

Mayor Hutnick commented [with DPW] the plan was to overlap the supervisors; the plan was to bring in an assistant supervisor whether it was internal or external get all the training completing then transition once the retirement happened. Due to unforeseen circumstances that is no longer possible.

Mayor Hutnick explained he can solve all this with the next budget but no one will be happy about it with raised taxes. Mayor Hutnick also asked if anyone knows of any grants or sees any grants to contact him.

Vickie Schroder, 12 Willis Drive commented she started coming to council meeting years ago on the suggestion of Mr. Ciasullo. She gets most of her information here at the meetings. These guys need help they can't do it by themselves. Week after week they are sitting here every other Monday night and she sees what they go through. They are doing a great job; we also have to remember we went five years with no tax increase at all and explained she was told after the fourth year that could be dangerous. We are dealing with that now; and yes, she is sitting here defending them they need the towns support. They need to have a meeting that looks like this and not have meeting with only one or two people because that is when rumors get around. She has been in a vehicle when DPW was told to do something and they turned around and said no. They aren't going to tell you that but she will. Yes, there is a management issue but there is also a money issue. We as a town don't have enough volunteers it is always the same people over and over again.

Steve Ciasullo, 37 Glenbrook Road, commented he would like to address something Ms. Schroder said and he doesn't think it was done in a negative way. Mr. Ciasullo commented he served up here for a while, he was the culprit of the not raising the town taxes. He believes Mayor Hutnick and Councilman Nasisi were here; nobody else. He wanted to bring up about that is he doesn't want anybody here or listens to the recording or reads the minutes to think that not raising the taxes in Ogdensburg was a detriment and explained we had a CFO at the time, Tom Ferry Auditor, when he became mayor one of his first priorities was to learn the towns finances. When he got in Ogdensburg there was ninety thousand dollars in surplus and asked Mayor Hutnick how much we have now in surplus.

Mayor Hutnick commented somewhere around a million and change.

Mr. Ciasullo commented we had ninety thousand in surplus when he became the mayor. People told him he was crazy; the first year he was mayor he didn't raise taxes as George did you are learning the ropes the first year three or five years after that he thinks it was five years in a row we didn't raise taxes. Tom Ferry and Monica told him we are flat broke, and asked what would be a comfortable number for Ogdensburg. They told him if you could ever get to three hundred thousand in surplus which is your bank account that could be pretty comfortable for Ogdensburg. After all the years of not raising the taxes and never raising them more than over one percent the whole time he was here he took the town from ninety thousand, when he says I he means the

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council, we took the town from ninety thousand to 1.3 million dollars. That is money he saved the town and we didn't lose any services. Working together as a team you can do a lot. His point is not raising taxes isn't the negative part of it; not managing the town correctly is a negative part of it. He is happy to hear the money is still there.

Mr. Ciasullo explained he has dealt with DPW. Jim obviously doesn't want to stay, he [Jim] doesn't want to do what we did for Chris gave him the opportunity to take steps go to school get everything he needed to become the supervisor in Ogdensburg which he did do and he is currently. Does Jim not want to do that or did you guys not really talk about that.

Mayor Hutnick commented that was on the table. What I was trying to explain as Jim and I were talking he said things changed over the weekend. He doesn't know what changed.

Mr. Caisullo commented so, the town offered him incremental steps to stay.

Mayor Hutnick commented he offered him that this is what we are going to do; what do you want. He wanted to take on the supervisor, he wanted a pay increase that we could handle for this year and he wanted to be able to have time put in to decide whether or not he wanted to do the schooling and apply for supervisor. Jim's knowledge isn't something he is looking to lose. He fully admits that out in the open; every company every town has people with different personalities you tolerate it because of what they offer and explained. Things have happened as you know you had the same issues over the years; he was trying to reverse that. It was using his [Jim] words a little to late. We didn't expect Mr. Wottle to resign he was hoping to go through a step process. One left one was injured and he is left with one [DPW employee]. To be completely honest he brought on the new hire so we had a new person assuming the new hire was going to be trained by the supervisor.

Mr. Ciasullo commented obviously there have been issues between DPW and the liaison and asked do they have tracking devices in their trucks. Was that for disciplinary reasons.

Mayor Hutnick commented as Mr. Armstrong was saying we don't see they guys doing anything so the device tells us where the vehicles are. It tied into the management software package.

Mr. Ciasullo commented his last thing is to do everything you can to keep Jim here now and explained his reasons why.

Mr. Donegan 13 Ogden Way suggest to go back to when Ron Search was here and there was a game plan for everything. When was the last time there was a taring and chipping, go back and look at the notes there should be a calendar of when this was done?

Fred Rowett, 14 Clark Street asked how many years has the assistant supervisor [position] been available.

Mayor Hutnick commented he would assume since Chris was promoted.

Mr. Rowett commented it's been open for 12 years until tonight.

Mike Nardini 5 Ridge Court commented he was on Council and did run DPW for a year and a half, we can talk another time about projects he did see them do like Glenbrook putting a 50-foot French drain into the catch basins to prevent flooding down there. They have done some good work and he has had a lot of good communications with them. A year ago, he had an agenda item and Councilman Nasisi was the only one that agreed that he should be promoted to assistant supervisor; it was turned down and said we are not going to do that. It was discussed by many of you that they didn't want him assistant. There was a minimal raise to get him to assistant and there would have been a bridge; he knew Chris was retiring you can't train someone in two months. Mr. Nardini wanted him [Jim Struble] to get that assistant [position] to have that time frame. To see how he is and maybe he can be the supervisor. Last week you had a meeting after he had stepped down and Councilman Nasisi brought up an offer he wanted to nominate Mr.

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Struble for assistant. It was tabled ignored, not one discussion in the public meeting last week. This isn't like hey Jim come to a meeting Monday we are going to promote you. The guy has been burnt been in the room multiple times he has had support of very few people and no support from anywhere else until tonight. So, everyone has to keep that in their mind that might be the reason he walked out; how many times are you going to offer this and have it pulled out from under him.

Councilman Nasisi commented he remembers first day after he was sworn in Steve [then Mayor Ciasullo] told him go down to DPW and start writing people up. There was head butting for a long time and personalities that don't get along. Mr. Nardini commented he had a good relationship with them. Recently it was realized there wasn't a good relationship. Councilman Nasisi asked Mayor Hutnick is that way you are now [looking over DPW].

Mayor Hutnick commented he was trying to make things right by having open discussions.

Mr. Armstrong commented you guys are the leaders you have to solve these problems not Jim Struble. Keep Struble on the job.

Mr. Rowett asked about Mr. Nardini and him being replaced.

Mayor Hutnick commented no Mr. Nardini stepped down from Council.

Mr. Nardini commented because he knew this day was coming; he thought this was coming down in December, unfortunately Chris had an accident that just advanced the problem he knew was coming. That is why he was upset and resigned he doesn't want that on his conscience. If Jim walks away tomorrow there is a new hire that's who is blind. When he was in charge of the road department he had a great relationship with Chris.

Mayor Hutnick commented Mr. Nardini stepped down from DPW this year; you told me you no longer wanted DPW you wanted water and explained why DWP was assigned two council liaisons.

Brendan Donegan, 13 Ogden Way and 100 Main Street, Board of Education President commented he was here last meeting when this matter was discussed. The School District sets its calendar year in advance, the school district sets the amount of snow days; tonight's situation leaves that in jeopardy. Mr. Donegan commented he as the Board President and Mr. Astor who could not be here tonight have to make a decision as to whether to inform the parents of a potential radical change to our school system. Based on what he heard tonight; the fact you don't have an assistant supervisor promoted, you have a new hire that has no supervisor, you are not [properly] staffed to plow the roads we can't guarantee the school will open regularly. So, based on that we have to let the community know. He has a responsibility to the parents of this district to keep them informed as to what is going on in the community. The district will be letting them know we have a problem we may not have school on a regular basis because of weather and explained.

Stacy Walsh 7 Cedar Court, asked if the new guy doesn't come in tomorrow do you have a plan.

Mayor Hutnick explained we can ask another town to help us.

Mr. Rowett asked how many employee's do you plan on hiring.

Mayor Hutnick commented 2 with a total for 4 employees if Mr. Struble stays and explained.

Mrs. Horlacher explained a situation regarding a storm drain.

Ray Alicata, 53 Passaic Ave. asked does the road department also take care of the water department.

Mayor Hutnick commented yes and explained.

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Councilman DeMeo made a motion to close to the public. Seconded by Councilwoman Cowdrick. All were in favor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman DeMeo moved, Councilwoman Cowdrick seconded motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20p.m.

Robin Hough, Borough Clerk

George P. Hutnick, Mayor