



**MINUTES  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF PERTH AMBOY  
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING  
MARCH 24, 2009  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

Special Meeting of the Council of the City of Perth Amboy was held on Tuesday, March 24, 2009, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Perth Amboy, New Jersey at 6:00 p.m.

Presiding Officer of the Council Peter J. Jimenez, advised the audience that notice of this meeting has been filed with the Home News Tribune, The Star Ledger and posted on the bulletin board in the City Clerk's office.

Council President Peter J. Jimenez: At this time, as a courtesy to the Governing Body, I would ask all individuals present, including members of the audience, to please turn off all cell phones, pagers and electronic devices. Should you need to make a telephone call, please go out into the hallway and speak in a low voice so as not to disturb the ongoing meeting.

The sole purpose of this meeting was to conduct a review of the PARA report.

Meeting was called to order by Council President Peter J. Jimenez with the following Council Members present: Kenneth Balut, Geraldine M. Bolanowski, Fernando Gonzalez and Robert R. Sottilaro.

Also present at this meeting were: Helga van Eckert, Ex. Dir. Of PARA; Mayor Wilda Diaz; Joseph Maraziti, Attorney for PARA; Tom Herits, Engineer for PARA; Mark J. Blunda, Director of Law and Elaine M. Jasko, City Clerk.

Council Member Jimenez: I reviewed this report and I submitted the issues that I had concerns with to the City Attorney. I don't believe the Council should be holding this investigation.

Council Member Gonzalez: I requested an analysis of PARA. We are looking to see what the goals of PARA are. I thank the Executive Director for preparing this report. Is there any item in this report that is currently under investigation?

Joseph Maraziti: Not to my knowledge. PARA is not part of any investigations. We are in negotiations with parties for new projects.

Council Member Jimenez: One of the properties, 322 Market St., is under investigation.

Mark Blunda: That property should not be questioned this evening because it is under ongoing investigation.

Council Member Gonzalez: The City Council created PARA to get projects done. I want to make the public aware of what PARA does and its future goals. PARA has powers that the Council does not have.

Joseph Maraziti outlined the powers and business of a redevelopment agency under the redevelopment and housing law.

Council Member Gonzalez: Property can be sold/conveyed without public auction. I think some of the conveyances were done improperly.

Council Member Jimenez: I have concerns about 284 Bertrand Ave.

Helga van Eckert: This was not a PARA matter. It was resolved before PARA sold it.

Council Member Gonzalez: We should limit this meeting to 9 pm. We should have another meeting if necessary.

Mayor Diaz: We are doing an audit of PARA. There are many positive changes to PARA. If there are any discrepancies, we will find them and take the proper steps and provide the information to the proper authorities. I understand the concerns. I am the new chair and we will do everything properly. PARA is beneficial to the City. We are going in a new direction. We have a process that needs to be followed. We have a direction and we hope to work closely with the Council.

Council Member Gonzalez: PARA is an asset to the City. History will repeat itself if we don't go through the history of PARA.

Council Member Gonzalez questioned the mission statement with regard to bringing tourists to the city.

Ms. van Eckert described improvements to the waterfront area.

Joseph Maraziti: The Council and other government agencies will have a say in the changes. A redevelopment plan is adopted by the Council. PARA implements the plan. The plan can be amended by the Council.

Council Member Gonzalez: I would like a copy of the agreements between the City and Landings for the municipal buildings on High St.

Council Member Balut: Landings and future developments should incorporate restaurants and recreational elements.

Barry Rosengarten, Developer, described the "V Zone" in the "Landings" project area.

Council Member Gonzalez: Can the Council make changes to the redevelopment plan?

Joseph Maraziti: Yes.

Council Member Balut: We should revisit Focus 2000 and come up with changes to the plan.

Helga van Eckert: Yes, it should reflect current conditions. It should be updated.

Council Member Gonzalez: We should redesign the plan. Where are the ratables for all these projects? The purpose of PARA was used to keep the ratables down.

Helga van Eckert: Taxes are not generated by PARA. The City's tax rate would be higher if PARA didn't exist.

Council Member Jimenez: Do the projects bring in more revenues now than they brought in the past?

Helga van Eckert: Yes.

Council Member Gonzalez: Do we have enough money to continue PARA?

Joseph Maraziti: Redevelopers pay for Helga's salary, engineering and attorney costs.

Council Member Gonzalez: If there was no Redevelopment Agency, the monies would go to the City.

Helga van Eckert: If that were the case, a city employee would have to be hired to do the work. The \$500,000 donation from Morris Co. was used for a city project...wireless connectivity.

Mayor Diaz: The lands are being rehabbed by developers. The city would have to hire someone to oversee the projects.

Mark Blunda: There were 6 items that were provided to me for review and they will be reviewed.

Council Member Gonzalez: I would like a report of all the members of LLC's on these projects.

David Szilagyi, former Council Member and former PARA Member: Regarding the major projects, the principals were before PARA in person.

Council Member Gonzalez: Did the Council know about the change in density of Barclay St.?

Dave Szilagyi: Yes.

Council Member Balut: I would like to make it a policy that in the future any property is put out for bid and that it be an open process.

Helga van Eckert: It was open in the past. We will be issuing RFP's in the future.

Joseph Maraziti: There's a new policy in place.

Council Member Gonzalez: We should get a copy of each proposal.

Council Member Bolanowski: Are proposals public information?

Helga van Eckert: Yes.

#### **AMBOY CORPORATE CENTER**

Helga van Eckert: Two proposals were submitted.

#### **CONVERY BLVD./SMITH ST. (City Landfill)**

Helga van Eckert: The City acquired the property in In-Rem and turned it over to the City. (Explained the issuance of a note in the amount of \$3.68 million to the city's budget --- to keep taxes down.) We are issuing RFP's for this project.

Mayor Diaz: Going forward, each property will go out for RFP's.

Council Member Sottilaro: I commend PARA for all the work in bringing the ratables into the City.

Council Member Bolanowski: PARA is a money maker for the city.

Council Member Jimenez: I commend all the volunteers for this and all the other boards.

Council Member Gonzalez: Our development leaves a great deal to be desired. I compliment PARA, but we should encourage different ideas.

### **CORNUCOPIA**

Helga van Eckert: The property had pcb contamination and had to be capped. We would like to see a ferry at that location. We're looking for a water taxi.

Council Member Gonzalez: I am anti-residential. We should have commercial/retail/restaurant at that property. Housing is not the answer for Perth Amboy. We need to be creative.

### **COUNTY CREEK STORAGE FACILITY**

Ms. van Eckert described the difficulties encountered by the developer, and advised he is looking to continue construction of a storage property.

### **FEDERAL HILL**

David Szilagyi: This was envisioned as a professional development with not many children. The YMCA is close to the project, as is Patten Center.

Council Member Gonzalez: There should be a recreational component to such projects. 490 children live in the Harbortown complex.

David Szilagyi: Harbortown is a good example of why we need PARA.

Joseph Maraziti: We will be trying to get the most that can be gotten.

Council Member Balut: There should have been at least a small park there for its people.

### **FERRARRA'S BAKERY**

Helga van Eckert: They might open up a retail component to the project. They moved from New York.

### **FIREHOUSE PLAZA**

Council Member Gonzalez: This is a great project.

Helga van Eckert: The principal is Ali Rada.

**GLOPAK**

Helga van Eckert: They moved from NY. They own the property.

**I-PORT 440**

Council Member Jimenez: When will we get our next payment?

Helga van Eckert: There will be none.

Joseph Maraziti.: We are in negotiations on this project now.

Ms. van Eckert provided the project history on this parcel.

Council Member Gonzalez: We should not put warehouses on that property. It's waterfront property.

Helga van Eckert: There's a lot of contamination on that land. We are looking into a movie studio.

Joseph Maraziti: We are negotiating and have a meeting scheduled for next week.

Council Member Gonzalez: We should be looking at different projects for that area.

**BARCLAY STREET**

Council Member Jimenez: This is in litigation.

**179B FIRST STREET**

Council Member Gonzalez: This was my property. I lost it. I filed for bankruptcy. This property could have been developed.

Council Member Jimenez: The cost to demolish this was extremely high. I asked Mr. Blunda to look into this building.

Tom Herits, Civil Engineer: This was an unsafe structure. This was a hand demolition. A local person was used for the demolition. The work was not bid out.

**314 GOODWIN ST.**

Council Member Gonzalez: This was an excellent sale.

**322 MARKET ST.**

Council Member Gonzalez: This cannot be discussed.

**615-617 AMBOY AVE.**

Council Member Gonzalez: This is not a good sale.

Helga van Eckert: We requested the LLC disclosure for this developer, and have not received it yet. This property is not in-rem.

**190-192 HALL AVE.**

Council Member Gonzalez: This is a terrible sale.

Helga van Eckert: There were very few bids on this property.

Dave Szilagyi: We received a minimum bid on this property.

Council Member Gonzalez: PARA should have had appraisals of properties.

Council Member Jimenez: This property is up for sale.

Helga van Eckert: We will look into whether they need PARA's approval.

**PUBLIC PORTION  
(5 MINUTES MAXIMUM PER SPEAKER)**

David Szilagyi, 42 Market St.: The City continues to need housing, but we should control it. The population in Perth Amboy is trained to do warehouse work. The new Mayor will rectify the previous problems.

Maria Garcia of 124 Kearny Ave., questioned the number of in-rem and currently owned properties of PARA. I don't feel that PARA is bad. A study should be done to see if we need housing in the City. Neither Helga nor the attorneys should be blamed for the problems of PARA. From here on, we should be alert and read everything that comes before us. We should bring tourism into the city. Celotex is the place where we should build a special something.

Alan Silber, 244 Rector St.: Just because something looks better than before, that doesn't make it the best use. We lost checks and balances in the past. The things that happened weren't the fault of PARA, only the chairman of PARA. There should be no political donations given by the law dept. Sheridan St. property should be reviewed.

Natasha James Walden, PARA Commissioner: I commend and acknowledge the people of PARA for this forum. We're trying to move the city forward.

Councilmember Bolanowski: How many people work for PARA

Helga van Eckert: One.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, motion was made by Council Member Jimenez, seconded by Council Member Bolanowski to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 pm, and was carried by the following vote: Yea--Council Members Balut, Bolanowski, Gonzalez, Sottilaro and Jimenez. Nay--none.

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Elaine M. Jasko  
City Clerk