

REGULAR MEETING  
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
COUNCIL MEETING ROOM – UPPER LEVEL

April 17, 2018

The following are the Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Lawrence Township Council that was held on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, at 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was opened with the Inspiration and Pledge of Allegiance, led by Municipal Clerk.

At the commencement of the meeting Mayor Bobbitt read the following statement of proper notice:

**STATEMENT OF PROPER NOTICE:** "Adequate notice of this meeting of the Lawrence Township Council being held on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, has been provided through the posting of the annual meeting schedule of said Council in accordance with Section 13 of the Open Public Meetings Act." Said Notice was forwarded to The Trentonian, The Times and The Princeton Packet on December 26, 2017.

The roll was then called as follows:

Present: Councilmembers Kownacki, Lewis, Maffei, Powers and Mayor Bobbitt.  
Absent: None.

Also in attendance were Kevin Nerwinski, Esq., Municipal Manager, and David Roskos, Esq., Municipal Attorney and Peter Kiriakatis, Chief Financial Officer.

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Special Proclamations, Recognitions and Presentations

**Sikh Awareness Month Presented by Amman Deep Singh Seehra, Esq.,**  
**Northeast Regional Director and Board Member**  
**Sikh American Legal and Education Fund**

Mayor Bobbitt stated it is his pleasure to introduce Mr. Seehra who will be providing the Council with a special presentation this evening about Sikh Awareness Month. He then turned the floor over to Mr. Seehra who greeted everyone and indicated he is a Mercer County lifer...born, raised and after attending school found his way back to the Mercer area and his wife also grew up in Lawrence Township where she attended Slackwood Elementary and Lawrence Intermediate School.

Mr. Seehra stated hopefully after the presentation they will have an idea of what Sikhism means and the experiences they have here in America and indicated Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world even larger than Judaism which most people do not realize as they have 500,000 to 700,000 Sikhs that live in America with 100,000 of those living in New Jersey and Lawrence being home to very many Sikhs including a Gurudwara which is the Sikhs place of worship and a Community Center located on Bakers Basin Road in Lawrence Township. They have regular services on Fridays and Sundays with about 500 to 600 people that attend and there are other special occasions and services where people attend as well. And, the interesting thing about a Gurudwara is it also embodies what Sikhism stands for. The buildings are generally squared with four entrances on all the sides which represent the equality that everyone is welcomed and anyone can come. The other unique thing about the Gurudwara is that it serves something called luger which is a free meal opened to everyone which reinforces the concept of helping those in need as well as equality.

Mr. Seehra advised that Sikhism is a religion founded approximately 500 years ago and it is one of the youngest of the major religions and the core values of the religion being truthful living and seva which is selfless serving and part of the reason people do not know about Sikhism; because when service is done it is meant to be done for the sake of service and not talked about or publicized. Also, the fundamental core values of it all revolves around equality as it relates to religion, race and one of the first gender equality movements as it came at a time when they were fighting against the Caste System. They also focus largely on social justice where they are taught to stand up for those that are in need and less fortunate and lot about freedom given it is based off of freedom of religion no matter what religion you are and everyone being created equal.

Mr. Seehra indicated one of the most interesting facts that people do not understand or realize is that (99%) ninety-nine percent of the people with turbans are Sikhs and the other (1%) one-percent has a really awesome fashion taste. So, if they see someone with a turban they are more than likely a Sikh and explained traditionally the turban represents royalty or nobility and takes the concept that everyone should be treated like that...so it is essentially an equality movement that everyone can wear a turban and everyone should be treated as if they are royalty. Another symbol of the turban is it a badge of identity and a constant reminder to do what is good in life and what is right. It also symbolizes social justice and someone you can go to for help which has somewhat been skewed here in America by the media and other sources.

Mr. Seehra stated he would be explaining why April is designated as "Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month" and there are a few things he would be talking about with regards to the misperception of Sikh Americans and Sikhism, reframing what the turban means and educating the public, addressing the uptake of acts of hate against Sikh faith and its members and the celebration of Vaisakhi which is the biggest Sikh holiday celebrated all over the world.

Mr. Seehra continued to discuss at length the following misconceptions of Sikhism as it relates to a study that was done by Stanford University Peace Innovation Lab and their key finding of specific bias and hate against Sikh articles of faith in particular the beard and the turban; the media making the bias of Sikhs acceptable and people not being able to identify people from the Sikhs faith and religion; fundamental fear of the turban worn by Sikhs; Sikhs partnering and providing law enforcement training to county, municipal and state law enforcement officers throughout the country on Sikh Awareness and how to handle Sikh articles of faith; the turban commonly being associated with Islam, terrorism, Osama bin Laden, taxi drivers, doctors, engineers and Abu from the Simpsons; a study done and published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology that pictured a person with a gun and coffee mug and a person in a turban holding a coffee mug without a gun and them having the people shoot at the target that they thought was the most dangerous and the study showing that people were more likely to shoot at a person with the turban holding a coffee mug with no gun than the person without a turban holding a coffee mug with a gun.

Mr. Seehra further discussed the pre-existing stereo types and unconscious bias against Sikhs and more education needed to overcome that problem and the misperception against Sikhs Americans who wear turbans and how hate crimes are acted out with vandalism of the Gurudwara and personal attacks by people who perceive them as dangerous and the brunt of abuse/hate crimes being underreported to authorities and it being part of their culture to respond to the abuse in a positive constructive way and not report the incidents to the police. He further discussed other issues of employment discrimination as well as Sikhs surrendering their faith to find employment; school bullying and harassment being a huge issue amongst Sikhs; shooting in 2012 at the Gurudwara in Wisconsin where 6 people were killed and 4 others were injured; the large uptake against Sikhs post 911 and one Sikh American being shot and killed in Arizona after 911 and the abuse and fear he and his family have suffered since 911 which is not the county or state he was born and raised in, know and love and them wanting to bring more education regarding the issue.

Mr. Seehra stated he would also like to talk about Vaisakhi which is an annual festival that takes place mid-April to commemorate the birth of the Sikh's diaspora known as the Khalsa and the celebration includes a special service at the Gurudwara and different acts of community service (seva). He then discussed an act of service that was done on the previous Saturday where members of the Lawrence community went out and served veggie burgers, chips, coffee and gave first aid kits to about 50 to 200 people outside of the Trenton Train Station which is something that is done every third Saturday of the month along with other weather related community services - such as the distribution of thermals and hats in the winter and personal hygiene kits in the spring. They have also participated and/or donated to the March of Dimes walk, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, purchase space in Lawrence Township Cultural Festival and Food Truck Rally and organized a Sikh Heritage Night with the Philadelphia 76ers where they tied over 900 turbans to raise awareness about Sikhism.

Mr. Seehra advised that they also honor people who have given back to the community and on one of the projects the community came out and packaged 100,000 meals with over 1,200 volunteers which were distributed to low-income children throughout Mercer County. They also did a literacy project where they collected, sorted and donated over 2,600 books which were given to needy students including Mercer Street Friends and the Isles Youth Institute. He then discussed six states that have declared April as "Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month" including a lot of neighboring states and towns in various counties and the public education component of getting the message out about the Sikhism and the turban and aspiring outside communities not just in the Sikh community to do events so other people can understand exactly what Sikhism is about and getting the right knowledge out to the public and fixing the media coverage on what the turban truly represents as well as reclaiming the Sikh identity that focuses on their core values of love, equality, freedom, honesty and service and changing the perception of the turban from fear to respect which is the story of every Sikh America who resides in the United States.

In closing, Mr. Seehra thanked the Council for allowing him the time to speak and he hopes that the "Sikh Awareness Month" can lead to greater things which are greater education and greater understanding of what the turban means and helping others. He then opened the floor for comments and questions.

Mayor Bobbitt thanked Mr. Seehra for the presentation and indicated he is slightly familiar with the Sikh religion but this presentation was a very nice overview of the challenges Sikhs face and all the good things that come out of it like many religions.

Councilman Powers advised that the Human Relations Committee is having their Diversity Day on May 6<sup>th</sup> at Lawrence High School and Mr. Aurora, who is in the audience, son, came over from the Gurudwara to do a presentation on Sikhism. And, one of the things the Council will be considering is a "Welcoming Community Ordinance". Unfortunately, due to the snow storm the HRC had to cancel their meeting but they will be presenting the ordinance to the Council soon for consideration that echoes Mr. Seehra's sentiments.

Councilman Maffei stated that there are Creole people along the Mississippi River down in Louisiana who wear colored turbans and questioned if they were the same as the turbans worn by the Sikhs. Mr. Seehra replied that there are many different colors and styles of turbans that are worn for different reasons but in the Sikh faith the color is just about fashion. Additional discussion took place relative to the different color and styles of turbans and whether the Creole people who wear turbans experience the same bias and racism as Sikhs.

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Public Participation (5-minute limitation per speaker)

*Mr. Mohinder Bathala, resident of Lawrence Township,* stated that he has been a resident of Lawrence Township for 38 years and his children attended Lawrence Schools and his son was an honor student as well as the Captain of the Soccer Team but they lost him when he was a senior and asked that the Council honor his son's memory by dedicating the soccer field and score board in his memory and conveyed that the Lawrence community is so good last year the school honored his son by inducting him into the Lawrence Township Soccer Hall of Fame. He then thanked the Council for the presentation bringing awareness of Sikhism and communicated what an honor it is for his community to be part of such a wonderful township.

*Mr. Gene Truncellito, 4 Penlaw Road,* asked if the Council has any plans to consider a resolution banning retail marijuana sales as other municipalities around the State and some counties such as Ocean County and Monmouth County have been doing it. And, if they do not have any plans he would like to encourage the Council to adopt a plan against it.

Mayor Bobbitt replied that he has not been thinking about the matter because he has been waiting for the State Legislature to figure out their next move and what they plan to do and not move out of sequence or prematurely.

Mr. Truncellito stated in response to moving prematurely there is a pro-marijuana trade group called the National Cannabis Industry Association and they have been raising the issue in press reports about the resolutions against the retail sale of marijuana when their association is in the process of running an active propaganda campaign throughout the state to get pot sales primed and ready to go the moment the State law passes even though the law may never pass they do not think their active advance lobbying is premature but try and push back on county and town resolutions as being so. He then suggested municipalities against the issue start their own conversations now against the well-organized efforts of the organization so that they do not find themselves scrambling later and proceeded to discuss members of the organization cruising around the State for potential retail sale locations and he thinks a resolution can help take Lawrence off their shopping list. Additional discussion took place relative to municipalities being stuck for five (5) years if legislation is enacted and no ordinance is put in place prior to the State's deadline.

*Mr. Paul Larson, Chair of the Lawrence Township Stewardship Advisory Committee,* advised that the National Trails Day is coming up in June and Mayor Bobbitt forwarded him a program from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection about Lawrence Township participating in the event which would include putting together a weekend of events for June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and asking the Township Council to provide a resolution designating it to be "Lawrence Township National Trails Weekend".

*Mr. Clay Ervin, 102 Alcazar Avenue*, inquired about the Trenton Water Works multitude of water issues and the letters that are sent out to residents way after the incident has occurred stating there is no emergency when varied amounts of lead and other products builds up in the system and can become harmful, possibly causing cancer, when consumed over a period of time and indicated he scared to use his own water that TWW is not being responsive and doing a great job and he is curious to know what the Township knows about the quality of the water and whether or not it is safe to drink.

Mayor Bobbitt replied that he has been assured by representatives from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that the water has never been a health issue; it is more of a quality issue in terms of the triviality and other things. And, in January, Trenton Water Works had an Administrative Consent Order issued that they had to sign off on. All the mayors of the different communities that are served by TWW was brought in on the meeting where they talked about TWW having to follow certain step for the next two years to get back up to speed. One of the first things they had to do was hire approximately 30 people to address the understaffing problem of critical positions. He also attended an assembly hearing in which Assemblyman Wayne D'Angelo, who represents Hamilton, presented three Bills that were discussed dealing with the reporting issue to try and speed up the process along with a few other items of concern and he advocated on behalf of Lawrence residents for more notices to be sent out regarding the water issues in timely manner.

Mr. Nerwinski imparted that he receives two to three calls a day from concerned residents relative to the Trenton Water Works problem and that Lawrence elected officials are working to resolve such an important issue given water, outside of air, is the most essential element needed and that NJDEP is fully engaged in overseeing the operations of the Trenton Water Works now. In addition, there is a new management company that will be taking over TWW who are certified to handle a utility where that was not exactly the case before; it was the City of Trenton who owns TWW and was charged with maintaining and operating it and maybe the employees that were working there may not have been to the level of qualifications that are necessary that prompted the now oversight. As for the notifications, the problem always existed but they are just becoming more transparent with their problems and the residents now have more information which in his view is good as they are addressing the oversight and management problem and hopefully in time they will be in a place where everyone is confident and comfortable with the water they are receiving and continued to discuss his opinion as it relates to the safety quality of the water. Additional dialogue took place relative to the lead in the water, possible cancer concerns and ownership of Trenton Water Works.

Mr. Arora part owner of Arora Associates, PC advised that their business was founded in Lawrence Township and has been headquartered here since 1981 and hopefully it will be in existence for another forty years. They also own real estate in the area, and he is a Trustee at the local Temple in Lawrence Township on Bakers Basin Road and his family is one of the founding members of that institution.

Mr. Arora advised that he and Mr. Seehra was born and raised in Mercer County and they grew up together on parallel streets in Hamilton and lived a life in which they had to see a lot of obstacles growing up in the high schools and fighting the battles of discrimination by having to wear a mask to cover up his beard in order to wrestle on the school team or what Mr. Seehra had to go through to play basketball on the team and indicated if the Township Council passes the resolution declaring April as "Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month" then maybe the 110 children that attend Sunday School at the Temple and who go to public schools in the county and municipality will grow up with a better life and not experience some of the prejudices and discriminatory remarks that he and Mr. Seehra had to bear because of their Sikh heritage and urged the Council to give careful consideration with the passage of the resolution as it would be a great movement and gesture on their end and well worth even if only one child grows up without being discriminated against due to their ethnicity.

Mr. (Papa) Arora of Arora and Associates PC greeted the Council and stated he is not present to speak about the Sikh heritage but to speak on a matter that bothered him for many, many years with regards to the Black Bridge that was designed and built by his company and he spent much time on which is a Historical Bridge that represents how the transportation was started during George Washington's time until today and 15 years ago when it was built there were only six (6) people that showed up for the grand opening of bridge which he walked across with his first granddaughter and pointed out the Bridge that can be used for biking or walking is a great asset that is not being used enough as it links to the Lawrence Trails as Mr. Larson spoke of earlier and the D& R Canal and proceeded to elaborate on the bridge being very expensive to construct, the under usage and history surrounding the deep black appearance of the bridge.

Mayor Bobbitt thanked everyone for their comments. Mr. Nerwinski further thanked everyone for their remarks and presentation and formally introduced himself as the Municipal Manager and extended an invitation for anybody to call him if they feel the municipality can assist them in any way.

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#### Review and Revisions of Agenda

There was no review or revision of the agenda.

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Adoption of Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Lewis, seconded by Mr. Kownacki, the Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 6, 2018 were approved on the following roll call vote:

Same was carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Councilmembers Kownacki, Lewis, Maffei, Power and Mayor Bobbitt.  
 Nays: None  
 Absent: None.

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**ADOPTION OF THE 2018 MUNICIPAL BUDGET**

**Authorizing the 2018 Budget to be Read by Title Only**

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:4-8 provides that the budget be read by title only at the time of the public hearing if a resolution is passed by not less than a majority of the full governing body, providing that at least one week prior to the date of hearing a complete copy of the approved budget as advertised has been posted in the Municipal Building and copies have been made available by the Clerk to persons requiring them; and

WHEREAS, these two conditions have been met;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, that the budget shall be read by title only.

Resolution No. 143-18 approved on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Lewis	X					X	
Dr. Maffei	X						
Mr. Powers	X						X
Mayor Bobbitt	X						

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**Adoption of the 2018 Municipal Budget**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, that the attached document be and is hereby the Adoption of the 2018 Municipal Budget.



Resolution No. 144-18 approved on the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL       | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|---------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Kownacki  | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Ms. Lewis     | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Dr. Maffei    | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mr. Powers    | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Mayor Bobbitt | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

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Awarding or Rejecting of Bids

Mayor Bobbitt asked for comments from the public. There being none, Mayor Bobbitt asked for comments from Council.

On a motion by Mr. Powers, seconded by Mr. Kownacki, Resolution (9-A), Authorizing Awarding of Bid #18-003 for Lawn Services, was presented for adoption.

Resolution No. 145-18

WHEREAS, on April 3, 2018, proposals were received for Bid 18-03 Lawn Services; and

WHEREAS, three proposal were received and reviewed by the Municipal Manager/QPA and the Director of Public Works and On-Site Landscape Management was low bidder, met all requirements and is being awarded the bid: and

WHEREAS, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:30-14, a Certificate of Availability of Funds has been provided and the account to be charged is 8-01-28-375-255 (Park Maintenance – Miscellaneous Contractual Services) for \$24,379 for a period of April 23, 2018 through October 26, 2018; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, that the Township is hereby authorized to award the bid for Lawn Services to On-Site Landscape Management, P.O. Box 294, Millstone, New Jersey 08535 for the period of April 23, 2018 through October 26, 2018.

Same was carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Councilmembers Kownacki, Lewis, Maffei, Powers and Mayor Bobbitt.  
 Absent: None.

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Introduction of Ordinances

Mayor Bobbitt read by title, an ordinance entitled, "BOND ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE IN THE COUNTY OF MERCER, NEW JERSEY, APPROPRIATING \$2,002,000, INCLUDING ANY TRANSPORTATION TRUST GRANT FUNDING TO BE USED TO OFFSET BONDS OR NOTES, AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,852,000 BONDS OR NOTES TO FINANCE PART OF THE COST THEREOF"

Mr. Nerwinski advised that the Bond Ordinance provides funding and authorizes the issuance of bonds or notes for partial financing for the various road improvements.

The Ordinance was introduced and approved on the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL       | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|---------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Kownacki  | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Ms. Lewis     | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Dr. Maffei    | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mr. Powers    | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Mayor Bobbitt | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

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Mayor Bobbitt read by title, an ordinance entitled, "ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING \$850,000 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND FOR VARIOUS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, IN THE COUNTY OF MERCER, NEW JERSEY"

Mr. Nerwinski advised that the Bond Ordinance appropriates funds from the Capital Improvement Fund for various projects including purchase of various computer/office equipment, EMS related equipment, HVAC repairs/replacement to the municipal building and improvements to the park and recreation facilities.

The Ordinance was introduced and approved on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Lewis	X						X
Dr. Maffei	X						
Mr. Powers	X					X	
Mayor Bobbitt	X						

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Adoption of Ordinances

There was no adoption of ordinances.

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**Manager's Report –**

Mr. Nerwinski reported that the light bulbs in the Municipal Building are being systematically changed to be more sustainable and the program they are engaging in is designed after 3 years to save the Township \$52,000 a year in terms of being more efficient. They are also taking more steps and working on concepts with regards to solar energy which he will discuss at a future meeting.

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**Attorney's Report –**

There was no Attorney's report.

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**Clerk's Report –**

Ms. Norcia reported that she has the Financial Statements from Heritage Village located on Route 1 which is rather lengthy so she did not make copies; but, if anyone is interested she will be more than happy to mail them a copy. Also, she placed the Annual Financial Disclosures Forms at each of their stations and April 30 is the deadline.

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**Unfinished Business –**

There was no unfinished business.

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**New Business –**

There was no unfinished business.

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**Public Participation (3-minute limitation per speaker) –**

There was no public participation.

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Resolutions

Resolution Nos.146-18 (18-A.1) through 154-18 (18-H.4) were approved by the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Lewis	X					X	
Dr. Maffei	X						
Mr. Powers	X						X
Mayor Bobbitt	X						

Cited Resolutions are spread in their entirety in the Resolution Books of the Township of Lawrence.

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**Council Initiatives/Liaison Reports –**

Councilwoman Lewis stated that the Trails, Open Space and Stewardship Advisory Committee is looking at more potential properties to continue the trails in Lawrence Township which they will be presenting to the Council for potential property purchase. The Recreation Committee is starting to have discussion as to a Needs Assessment to update the recreational fields. Also, there will be a Lawrence Day at the Trenton Thunder this summer so be on the lookout.

Councilman Powers reported that the Human Relations Committee got snowed out so the “Welcoming Ordinance” that they were going to recommend to Council will be considered at their May meeting. Also, Diversity Day is May 6 at Lawrence High School in the cafeteria from 12:00 - 4 p.m.

Mayor Bobbitt reported that on the Growth and Redevelopment Committee one of the chairs is doing a Conceptual Study at the Lawrence Shopping Center and he did advise him that there is other work going on by the owners; but he is speaking with other groups regarding a grand scheme for the redevelopment of the Shopping Center but nothing is set in stone, they are just working through it if someone happens to hear something.

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**Written Communications –**

There was no written communication.

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There being no further business to come before this Council, the meeting adjourned at 7.25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Kathleen S. Norcia, Municipal Clerk

Attest:

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Christopher Bobbitt, Mayor