



Borough of Middlesex
Mayor and Council Special Meeting
~ Minutes ~

1200 Mountain Ave
Middlesex, NJ

Linda Chismar
732 356-7400 x238
www.middlesexboro-nj.gov

Monday, May 22, 2023

7:00 PM

Municipal Building

MAYOR'S STATEMENT

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 ET SEQ., NOTICE OF THE TIME AND PLACE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN BY WAY OF AN ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE TO THE STAR LEDGER, COURIER NEWS AND HOME NEWS, AND POSTED AT BOROUGH HALL.

SALUTE TO FLAG

ROLL CALL

Council President Michael Conahan
Councilman Jeremiah Carnes
Councilman Robert Dessino
Councilman Jack Mikolajczyk
Councilman Douglas Rex

Councilman Martin Quinn -- **Absent**

Also Present:

John Madden Mayor
Michael LaPlace Administrator

Others Absent:

Christopher Corsini Borough Attorney

Attorney Matthew Flynn filled in for Borough Attorney Chris Corsini

ROLL CALL - BOARD OF HEALTH

Board of Health Secretary Carmen Modica called the roll call for the Board of Health. Attending the meeting included President Steve Ember, Vice President Bob Sherr and members Tom Harrity,

PRESENTATIONS

1. Discussion with DEP/EPA Regarding Creighton Lake

Mayor Madden stated that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the issues at Creighton Lake that are a result of the August 1st 2021 & August 2nd 2021 water main break and what resolutions can be found.

Mayor Madden read an introduction provided by the Historical research of our Library staff.

"Creighton Lake is a reservoir located at Victor Crowell Park. It has been a cultural feature of Middlesex

County since it was first established in the 1930's as a part of the President Roosevelt Work Progress Administration. The Lake is an integral part of our town's landscape, serving as both a historic and scenic venue for community wide events. The Lake has been used as a place of recreation and relaxation for many years, most commonly as a spot for ice skating during the wintertime, and fishing during the Spring. Creighton Lake previously hosted the Annual Middlesex Police Fishing Derby for children in Elementary and Middle school, and a location for the New Jersey Free Fishing Days. On any given day, residents can be found strolling the perimeter of the Lake, taking photographs of the wildlife, using the walking paths exercising, and overall enjoying its picturesque serenity."

Administrator La Place introduced Victor Poretti and Robert Schuster from the Department of Environmental Protection.

Mayor Madden stated the purpose of this meeting is to:

1. Raise awareness of the significant water quality impairment and the ecological damage of the Creighton Lake within the Water Management Area 9 (a neglected historic body of water).
 - ☐ Read a notice from N.J. American water dated January 13, 2023
 - ☐ Since the water main break the municipality has urged the N.J. American water company to pay for the damages caused by the main break.
 - ☐ DEP concluded that there was a high level of bacteria.
 - ☐ No Fishing signs have had to be installed around the Lake due to the dangerous levels of E. Coli.
2. Participate in DEP programs such as the N.J. Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan, Bureau of Freshwater & Biological Monitoring (Lake Monitoring) and the N.J. Hazard Mitigation Plan regarding assessment, implementation, monitoring and restoration of the Lake's water quality for future protection.
 - ☐ Water testing was done from May 11, 2021 to January 1, 2023, which included 20 site visits with 42 samples taken. Most samples resulted in very high levels of E. Coli.
 - ☐ Additional testing downstream from the waterfall was done in 2011 and 2014.
 - ☐ After discussion with Water company, it was stated that they would be willing to pay for all damages.

Mayor Madden described the scope of damage and cascading effects of the main break.

A short presentation was done by Leonard Vidal, Supervisor of the Department of Public Works, on the N.J. American Water main break and storm Ida effect on the Lake which included the following:

- ☐ SSO on 8/2/2021 a manhole on Cedar Avenue overflowed. There was a Water Main break by Birch Run Piscataway. A manhole in the Ambrose Brook which Piscataway Township owns. Debris in the Brook removed the manhole's lid. This caused Piscataway's trunk line to surge with water from the Brook and the water main break. The volume of sewage spilled is unknown.
- ☐ Photograph of water main break on Possumtown Road, the sewer main next to Ambrose Brook after water main break, Piscataway line from Spraytek after water main break with apparent discoloration, and Creighton Lake impact from Piscataway Sewer which resulted in the aerators being shut off.
- ☐ Linear feet from water main break to Ambrose Brook is 1,822 ft.
- ☐ There was a discussion on where the Macadam went (80 tons of debris was removed), on where the E. Coli came from and on a manhole in the Brook, which is supposedly cemented shut.
- ☐ Water levels of Creighton Lake as of May 2023, are significantly shallower than before the incident.
- ☐ Discussion on options for resolution of the Lake.

- o Dredging/Hydro-Raking
- o Surface Water Quality Standards
- o Water Quality Management Planning Program

A short presentation was made by Victor Poretti, Director of the Division of Water Monitoring, Standards & Pesticide Control from the DEP on Bacteria Monitoring at Ambrose Brook & Creighton Lake: This NJDEP Ambrose Brook Data Summary reflected that Historic E. Coli data was available for Ambrose Brook in 2011 and 5 in 2014. This data included:

- o 2011 data:
 - ☐ Data shows a link to rainfall.
 - ☐ Dry periods showed lower levels of E. Coli, with the highest results measured after multiple days of rain.
- o 2014 data:
 - ☐ Levels more consistent, with lower E. Coli levels
 - ☐ Due to a larger number of small wet weather events throughout the sampling period with less extended dry periods.
- ☐ Conclusion from sampling so far:
 - o Area downstream from Lake Creighton has exhibited high levels of E. Coli in 2011 and 2014
 - o E. Coli levels are linked to precipitation.
 - o Ambrose Brook impacted by bacteria for a while.
 - o Additional monitoring will further characterize conditions.
- ☐ 03/30/2023 Creighton Lake Data

Short presentation by Victor Poretti, Director of the Division of Water Monitoring, Standards & Pesticide Control from the DEP on EPA Raritan Pathogen Trackdown Project.

- Modeling Study of Perth Amboy Combined Sewer Overflows identified Additional Pathogen Sources in Lower Raritan upstream of Perth Amboy.
- Project Goal is to identify sources of unknown human pathogen sources in the Lower Raritan and subsequently work with area partners to investigate and remediate identified sources.
- Project started in 2011.
- 2022 Sampling Locations included sites near Lake Creighton.
- Initial Sampling under Dry and Intense Wet Weather.
- Additional sampling under Dry and Intense Wet Weather in "Hotspot" will be done in 2023, none were done in 2022.
- 2022 & 2023 Sampling Locations near Lake Creighton and results.

Mayor Madden questioned why no testing was done after 2014, and if the DEP reviewed the County sponsored water tests that have been taken. Also discussed was the sewer overflow issue, the manhole capping, testing of dissolved oxygen, monitoring of flora and fauna, correlation of water depth and high or harmful bacteria, location of upstream testing, and 2011 data results coinciding with Hurricane Irene.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mayor Madden opened the Public Portion of the Meeting.

Kevin Redzinski, 441 Fairview Avenue, stated that he saw Piscataway DPW vehicles by the burm. He believes that the debris was dumped there by Piscataway in order to access the manhole that is under water. Mr. Redzinski suggested that the cameras on Cedar be looked at to confirm. He also expressed concerns that

the lid is not secured properly.

Don Klein, 401 Melrose, stated that the Lake is extremely shallow, which is not allowing the channels to be properly flushed out. Mr. Klein suggested that the Borough look into solutions with the Army Corps and offered his contact with the entity.

Matt Adams, 1013 Beechwood Avenue, strongly urged the Council to investigate hiring an experienced Environmental Attorney, stating that it would be money well spent.

Tom Thornton, 11 Green Avenue, stated that 20 years ago when they last dredged the Lake, the silt that was removed was placed in the woods by his residence. The odor from the dumping was foul. Mr. Thornton expressed his concern that no one is being held accountable for the issues at the lake.

Frank Ryan, 303 Maple Street, stated that the initial plan to dredge was never finalized, and that if the Borough plans to dredge again, he strongly urges the Council to properly plan it out and make sure adequate funds are available to complete the project.

Pat Stell, 408 Howard, asked if an independent Engineer will be involved in the sewer issues. She also expressed concerns that the fountains in the Lake were on when there are high levels of dangerous bacteria. She asked if the fountains can be turned off or new ones purchased.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Madden made the following Final Remarks:

We have heard much discussion tonight regarding our plight concerning the significant environmental damage of the Lake, especially within the last two years.

1. The large amount of aggregate and debris from the August 1, 2021 main break, including 11,000 fish kill within 3 days and no financial repercussions.
2. The damage to the island and shoreline of the lake.
3. Consistently high e. coli readings of the County Health Department sponsored water tests.
4. The DEP water tests from 2011 and 2014 and why we were dropped off the radar regarding monitoring and protection.
5. First time flooding for surrounding homes around the Lake due to significant loss of Lake depth.
6. Our main goal is restoration and protection with monitoring.

We have spent a lot of money investing in 3 aerators and 1 bubbler system. These recent events have dictated that the Borough find the funds that were not budgeted to provide this small measure of protection for our historical Lake.

Recently I watched a program in which DEP Commissioner Shawn Latorette made an emotional statement seeking answers to the beached whales. I found it very moving. With the same fervent plea along with 14,500 voices of our small community, I ask that our government environmental groups stand up to the beacon of leadership you have espoused in your mission statements to ensure Lake Creighton may again enjoy the vitality and natural beauty for generations to come.

The next Regular Meeting will be May 23, 2023

Respectfully yours,

Linda Chismar, RMC
Borough Clerk