



TAP into Summit

Your Neighborhood News Online

Summit Council Introduces \$1.9 Million Bond Ordinance for Tier Garage Repairs, Digital Access to Transfer Station; Bike Shelters Proposed for City



Cyndi Steiner, executive director of the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition presents a proposal for Summit bike shelters to the Summit Common Council. *Credits: City of Summit Photo Services*

By BOB FASZCZEWSKI

March 2, 2016 at 10:31 AM

SUMMIT, NJ—The Summit Common Council, at its first March meeting, introduced a \$1.9 million bond ordinance that will fund a number of repairs to the Tier Garage on Springfield Avenue, and provide for equipment allowing for digital access to the Transfer Station.

Among the proposed Tier Garage repairs are a number of items damaged due to water infiltration along concrete sections of the garage and in light fixtures, repair of damaged protective fencing, cable railing with damaged wires, damaged floor treads on stairwells, various repairs to the elevator, and an upgrade from the original lighting in the structure to LED lighting.

Council finance chairwoman Sandra Lizza explained that the introduced ordinance, on which the hearing for, and possible adoption, is scheduled for Tuesday, March 15, only provides the funding mechanism for the projects. The final approval for each of the separate repairs will be approved in further actions by the governing body, Lizza noted.

She also said the procedure has been set in motion so that work on the projects can begin in June, as requested by the city's parking services agency.

Second Ward Councilman Patrick Hurley said, however, that it looked like the governing body was moving “too timidly” on the measures. He wanted to make it clear to the public that the council was in favor of moving forward with the repairs even though it had to follow certain procedures before work can begin.

First Ward Councilman David Naidu, the only governing body member to vote against introduction of the bond ordinance, said he had questions about council action on certain capital items such as the garage repair ordinance.

Naidu, after the meeting, told *TAP Into Summit* that, although he realized repairs to the Tier Garage were necessary, he was afraid that the council was not taking a comprehensive look at all the city’s parking structures, how they would be used for shoppers and / or employees, and how they fit into the entire picture for the central business district.

On another matter, the council referred to its general services committee a proposal by the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition to build bicycle shelters at the site of the current bicycle racks at the Summit train station, and possibly at the entrances to city parking garages.

Coalition executive director Cyndi Steiner explained that her group had erected a shelter at the Bay Street train station in Montclair.

She noted the purpose of the coalition was to provide safe transportation alternatives for those who wished to bicycle or walk around the state, especially around train stations, where waiting lists for parking spaces can range as long as five years.

At the Montclair bicycle depot, she added, bikers are charged \$20 per month, and the facility includes lockers where they can store their helmets and other equipment. She added the coalition handled construction of the depot and provides 24-hour “live” camera surveillance and maintenance of the facility.

The coalition director said, due to fears of vandalism or theft of bicycles in traditional train station parking lots, and weather damage, riders often take dilapidated “station bikes” when they go for trains and that these bikes often were unsafe on roads. A depot would provide storage where riders could keep safer bicycles.

Steiner estimated the cost of similar facilities in Summit at \$60,000, with a total capacity in all the facilities in Summit at about 150 bicycles.

She added the Montclair facility was funded by a combination of support from a local hospital group and a Sustainable New Jersey grant. She also said “branding” was available for advertiser on the Montclair depot and branding and naming rights could be made available on the Summit facilities.

She said funding for the Hilltop City facilities could be obtained through grants or municipal support.

Naidu, who bikes to the Summit train station, said in the spring, summer and fall the station becomes so crowded there is no place to park a bicycle after 8:30 am.

He added whereas a parking spot was used all day and did nothing for the city, the bicycle depot proposal would be cost-effective for the city, and provide an alternative to more parking facilities. He called for investigation by the city of funding methods for the bike depots.

In response to a question from Lizza, Steiner said the coalition would collect rental fees online for the facilities and handle all maintenance.

Steiner estimates that the Montclair bike depot had saved about 1,000 car trips per year into the train station.

The coalition executive director, in response to a question from Councilman-at-Large Richard Sun, said her group was close to signing an agreement for a facility in Bloomfield, and had received requests for presentations from a number of cities, including Elizabeth.

She said depots typically would be located on train platforms or near corners or parking garage entrances.

On the Summit train station platform, she added, there currently are racks for only eight bikes near bicycle lockers.

Council president Michael McTernan said the bike depot concept fit in perfectly with Summit's designation as a Transit Village, and it provided an alternative to help the city deal with its parking challenges.

McTernan then assigned the proposal to the general services committee, chaired by Naidu, to investigate funding and other specifics of the proposal and report back to the council.

On another matter, the governing body authorized renewal, for two years, of an animal control services agreement with Millburn and Livingston at a fee not to exceed \$20,000, and a supplemental agreement with Animal Control Solutions, LLC, at a fee not to exceed \$3,000 to provide services in emergencies.

McTernan noted the \$20,000 fee was \$30,000 less than the township paid a few years ago for similar services.

On another financial matter, McTernan noted Union County had estimated its 2016 budget increase to be about 3.5 percent.

The council president decried the fact that the county increase still was over the state 2 percent cap limit and added that, with property equalization, Summit residents could see the county portions of their tax bills increase 5 or 6 percent this year.

He said these county tax increases made it increasingly difficult for the City and the Board of Education to maintain the services they provide and keep Summit affordable for its residents.

First Ward Councilman Robert Rubino urged city residents to attend all county budget hearings to express their displeasure with the budget increases. He noted the county would hold a meeting on its budget on Monday, March 7 at 5:30 pm at the Galloping Hill Golf Course in Kenilworth.

Lizza, who with Rubino serves on the Board of School Estimate which votes on the school budget, said the Board of Education would hold a workshop meeting -- where the board expects to vote on adoption of tentative school budget -- March 7, at 7 p.m., in the board room at Wilson School.

She added the Board of School Estimate will hold a meeting on the budget on Thursday, March 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the Summit High School Media Center, followed by the school board's monthly workshop meeting.

The Board of Education will hold a special meeting in council chambers at City Hall March 29, at 6:30 p.m., to certify and adopt the final 2016-17 school budget for presentation to the Board of School Estimate followed by a Board of School Estimate meeting to formally vote on whether to approve the school budget.

In addition to Lizza and Rubino, the Board of School Estimate is made up of Mayor Nora Radest, who serves as chairwoman, Board of Education President Katherine Kalin and school board vice president and operations committee chairman David Dietze.

In another action at common council meeting, Jeffrey B. Lehrer of the Warren Township law firm of DiFrancesco, Bateman, Coley, Yospin, Kunzman, Davis and Lehrer was named city solicitor for 2016.

Lehrer replaces Robert Ghelli, who no longer will be serving as Summit solicitor as he has transitioned to a position in private practice, and an internal reorganization does not allow that firm to provide an attorney to serve Summit.

Radest also announced that former Summit resident William C. Campbell, the 2015 Nobel Prize winner for physiology and medicine, will speak at the city's Christ Church on Sunday, March 6 as part of the 9:30 a.m. worship service. There will be a question and answer session following Campbell's talk.

Campbell will share highlights specific to the drug *Ivermectin*, which was developed while he was the head of research at Merck Labs. The drug was used to prevent river blindness that affects millions of people in Africa and Latin America.

Campbell was a long-time resident of Summit and a member at Christ Church for many years before retiring to Massachusetts. He will also be honored at Drew University, where he taught after leaving Merck, on the same weekend.