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Montclair First Ward Councilor William Hurlock (left) and Montclair Mayor Robert Jackson at the start of the February 17 Montclair Township Council conference meeting.

The Montclair Township Council had a very light agenda for its February 17 conference meeting, ending in a little over half an hour. Deputy Mayor Robert Russo and Second Ward Councilor Robin Schlager were absent.

Montclair's Sister City Graz, Austria

The council received Juliana Belscak of Montclair's sister city of Graz, Austria, who informed Mayor Robert Jackson and the four councilors in attendance that they were due to send a delegation to Graz after having done so ten years earlier. (Graz sent a delegation to Montclair five years ago.) Belscak noted that each delegation gives a substantial gift to the city being visited, and Graz suggested a swing set with seats for two children as a gift for Graz. Belscak said that both towns could help raise the money to secure the swing set.

The swing set proposal is not "cast in stone," Belscak said, but just an idea. She also said that Graz was open to something else but that time was of the essence. Mayor Jackson said he was available to make the trip, which is expected to be later this year during the Austrian wine harvest.

"And you're also looking for other council people to go, potentially?" Mayor Jackson asked.

"Lawyers?" Township Attorney Ira Karasick said, showing his interest.

Belscak added that Graz wanted to honor someone in Montclair who "has made a big difference," and she asked the council for ideas. She also hoped to see the signs indicating Graz Park, the triangular park along Bloomfield Avenue

at the township's western border, to be spruced up a bit.

New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program

The council also passed, 5-0, resolution authorizing an application for a loan from the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program to build a new 1,000,000-gallon water tank to replace a water tank that had been demolished, and it also passed a resolution authorizing an emergency temporary appropriation of \$175,000 for the capital road paving project and the shade tree planting project in the temporary 2015 budget. Acting Township Manager Timothy Stafford said that both projects were time-sensitive and had to be funded immediately. The original \$100,000 appropriation did not cover those two items.



Juliana Belscak

Food Truck Parking

A first-reading ordinance was also presented to add parking spaces reserved for mobile food vendors as tow-away zones to deal with cars parked in the spaces near the high school that the township auctioned off to vendors at times when the vendors were supposed to be there. Karasick said the issue came up in discussions with the vendors, and Township Clerk Linda Wanat added that there were supposed to be signs indicating the parking restrictions.

Third Ward Councilor Sean Spiller asked about the ability to tow in other areas and if it could be included in the ordinance, something that residents have asked about. Karasick said this was very specific to the mobile-vendor spaces. The only other designated tow-away zones are on-street and off-street handicap spaces and the public lot at Depot Street and Walnut Street and Depot Square where the farmer's market is held.

"We have difficulty just towing someone for illegal parking anywhere," Karasick told Councilor Spiller. He added that if the council would like to correct that, the township could draft an ordinance, but Councilor Spiller said that similar efforts had been made before to expand tow-away zones, and he wanted to see more options regarding how that could be done. Karasick said he could look into the options, and Mayor Jackson suggested looking at other cities and towns like Newark and Hoboken and how they enforce illegal parking.

"They'll hook you in a minute," he said.

The ordinance governing mobile-vendor spaces passed on first reading, 5-0.

Street Safety

Also, Stafford informed resident Sandy Sorkin that Township Engineer Kim Craft would look into the removal of three stop signs at the intersection of Bellevue and North Mountain Avenues, which Sorkin brought up at the regular council meeting a week earlier. Sorkin also asked about the right-hand lane going east on Lorraine Avenue being only for eight turns on Valley Road when the left-hand lane for going straight through the intersection does not go directly across. Stafford said that Craft was looking into that as well.



A bird's-eye view of the eastbound right-turn lane (circled) at the intersection of Lorraine Avenue and Valley Road, the positioning of which was of concern to Montclair resident Sandy Sorkin. Image courtesy of Google.

For his part, Stafford also reported that the township hired Tracy Villaverde as its new personnel director – she starts work on March 9 – and acting animal shelter Nicole Dawson has given him positive reports about the shelter, indicating that progress has been made there. Mayor Jackson also took time out to praise the garbage and recycling collectors – the “infantry,” he called them – for diligently carrying on in the recent snow and cold.