

**BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 16, 2024
8:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio, Council President Hernando Rivera and Council members Thomas Lodato, Buddy Deauna, Domingo Almonte, and Marc Pascual

ABSENT: Council member Ora Kornbluth

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Administrator Corey Gallo
Borough Attorney John Schettino
Deputy Borough Clerk Hilda Tavitian

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m. with the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act Statement, "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates for the year are confirmed at the Annual Meeting. The Annual Notice is sent to the Record, Star Ledger, Twin Boro News, and Cablevision, placed on two Municipal Bulletin Boards and is on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk. Notice of this meeting dated Friday, January 12, 2024 was published in the Record and sent to the Star Ledger, Twin Boro News, and Cablevision, placed on two Municipal Bulletin Boards and is on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk."

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilperson Almonte.

AGENDA CHANGES

Motion by Council President Rivera to add Resolution 24-059 To Approve NJDOT Grant – 2023 Roosevelt Avenue Improvement Project, seconded by Councilperson Pascual. All present, voting in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilperson Pascual to approve minutes of the January 2, 2024 Reorganization Meeting. Council President Rivera seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS I

Mayor Amatorio opened the meeting and invited the public for comments on agenda items only, limited to five minutes per speaker.

John Smith, resident, suggested hiring a new Tax Appeal Attorney. He stated businesses are taking advantage of the tax appeal and that cost is being passed on to the residents.

There being no one else who wishes to be heard, Mayor Amatorio closed Verbal Communications I.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Fire Department Presentations

1. Hiring of Brendan McLaughlin to the Rank of Firefighter

Resolution **24-027**/To Hire Brendan McLaughlin to the Rank of Firefighter in the Bergenfield Fire Department.

Motion offered by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Council President Rivera, that Resolution #24-027 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

Oath of Office administered by Councilperson Lodato.

2. Hiring of Christopher Provost to the Rank of Firefighter

Resolution **24-028**/To Hire Christopher Provost to the Rank of Firefighter in the Bergenfield Fire Department.

Motion offered by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, that Resolution #24-028 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

Oath of Office administered by Councilperson Lodato.

Council Comments

Councilperson Lodato congratulated the new firefighters for joining the prestigious fire department making the transition from volunteer firefighter to career firefighter.

Councilperson Deauna congratulated the firefighters and told them they are joining the finest fire fighters, and wished them a safe journey.

Councilperson Almonte wished the firefighters a safe and valued career and commended them for their dedication and positive impact.

Council President Rivera praised the support of the family members of the new firefighters. They are their biggest support. He went on to say Bergenfield is proud of the firefighters and the safety of Bergenfield is in their hands.

Councilperson Pascual congratulated the new members, and stated he will pray for their safe return to their family every night.

Mayor Amatorio congratulated the firefighters for the transition from volunteer to career fire fighters. He wished the new firefighters a long and safe career.

Motion by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Councilperson Almonte for a five-minute recess at 8:20 pm. The meeting was reconvened at 8:25 pm.

Fire Chief Naylis thanked the Mayor and Council for getting rid of the consent decree allowing Bergenfield volunteer firefighters to become career firefighters.

CORRESPONDENCE

a.) Eaches/Bergenfield Garden Club

RE: Request to Reserve Coopers Pond for Meetings in Calendar Year 2024

b.) Sahlberg/Bergenfield Republican Organization

RE: Request to Reserve Coopers Pond for Meetings in Calendar Year 2024

Motion by Councilperson Pascual to accept Correspondence Items A to B. Councilperson Almonte seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

ORDINANCES

None.

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 24-029. All matters listed below are considered by the Governing Body to be routine in nature. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If any discussion is desired by the Governing Body, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

- a. **24-030/**To Approve Bill List
- b. **24-031/**To Approve Raffle Applications – RA 1410 and RA 1411
- c. **24-032/**To Authorize Tax Refund for Tax Court Judgment – 80 New Bridge Road
- d. **24-033/** To Authorize Tax Refund for Tax Court Judgment – 51 East Main Street
- e. **24-034/**To Approve the Person to Person and Place to Place Transfer of an Unsited Pocket Liquor License No. 0203-33-010-004 from Front Street Tavern, Inc. to K1BBQ LLC located at 58 S. Washington Avenue
- f. **24-035/**To Approve Tax Refund – 155 N. Washington Avenue
- g. **24-036/**To Approve Agreement – Borough Attorney – John L. Schettino, Esq.
- h. **24-037/**To Approve Agreement – Borough Engineer – Remington & Vernick Engineers
- i. **24-038/**To Approve Agreement – Special Projects Engineer – T&M Associates
- j. **24-039/**To Approve Agreement – Special Project Engineer – Pennoni Engineering
- k. **24-040/**To Approve Agreement – Bond Counsel – Rogut McCarthy LLC
- l. **24-041/**To Approve Agreement – Labor Counsel – John L. Shahdanian II Esq., Trenk Isable Siddiqi & Shahdanian P.C.
- m. **24-042/**To Approve Agreement – Tax Appeal Counsel – Boggia, Boggia, and Betesh
- n. **24-043/**To Approve Agreement – Borough Auditor – Paul J. Lerch, CPA, RMA, PSA – Lerch, Vinci & Bliss LLP
- o. **24-044/**To Approve Agreement – Risk Manager – GJEM:Otterstedt Insurance Agency
- p. **24-045/**To Approve Agreement – Grant Consultant – Millennium Strategies
- q. **24-046/**To Approve Agreement – Borough Appraiser – Associated Appraisal Group Inc.
- r. **24-047/**To Approve Agreement – Borough Prosecutor – Marc A. Calello, Esq.
- s. **24-048/**To Approve Agreement – Alternate Prosecutor – Linda H. Schwager
- t. **24-049/**To Approve Agreement – Public Defender – Robert C. Metzdorf, Esq.
- u. **24-050/**To Approve Agreement – Alternate Public Defender – Steven Sciancalepore, Esq.
- v. **24-051/**To Approve Agreement – Planner/Engineer for Economic Development – Neglia Engineering Associates
- w. **24-052/**To Approve Agreement – Municipal Advisor Services – Phoenix Advisors LLC

Motion by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Council President Rivera to approve Consent Resolution #24-029.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>

Councilperson Almonte: *aye* Councilperson Pascual: *aye*

B. Resolutions

24-053/To Approve Hire – Full-Time Laborer – Michael Sheakan

Motion offered by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Council President Rivera to approve Resolution 24-053.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

24-054/To Approve Hire – Part-Time Laborer – Omar Kahok

Motion offered by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Deauna to approve Resolution 24-054.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

24-055/To Approve Hire – Part-Time Laborer – Stephen C. Manor II

Motion offered by Council President Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Almonte to approve Resolution 24-055.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

24-056/To Approve Hire – Part-Time Laborer – Brandon C. Haw

Motion offered by Council President Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Lodato to approve Resolution 24-056.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

24-057/To Approve Hire – School Crossing Guard – Luiz Balanza

Motion offered by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Council President Rivera to approve Resolution 24-057.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Kornbluth:	<i>absent</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

Committee/Department Reports

Motion offered by Council President Rivera that the Committee/Department Reports be spread upon the minutes in full and filed. Councilperson Lodato seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS II

Mayor Amatorio opened the meeting to Verbal Communications II and invited the public to comment on any subject, limited to five minutes per speaker.

Sgt. Major Warren Williams, resident, requested a to have a meeting with the grant writer to help him apply for a grant for the VFW. He explained he is currently in the process of applying for a grant to get the VFW hall painted. He stated he met with Congressman Gottheimer's office concerning the impending federal government shut down, and requested the governing body push federal representatives to pass the funding bill. The VFW recently concluded its Patriot's Pens essay contest. One of the local winners went on to win a district level award and will be recognized in February.

Maureen Sullivan, resident, requested clarification on street parking protocol during snow emergency. The Borough website and a robo call went out informing residents. However, cars are still parking during snow, and there is no ticketing going on. Ms. Sullivan gave a personal account of how the police did not enforce a car parked in front of her home which impeded snow removal.

John Smith resident, stated there is no consistent communication from the DPW and police concerning the parking during snow. He suggested raising the ticket cost to stop people from continuing to break the law.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated the role of the grant writer is to find all available grants the borough is eligible for. Mr. Gallo stated he hasn't come across any grants for veterans yet, but if thee any in the future they will apply for it. He stated in the past, the borough has received grant money for roads, the library, recreation and various other needs. Mr. Gallo stated they are working to create the right approach to remove cars and are not interested in ticketing and towing. They want everyone to be in compliance. He stated he will confer with the Chief of Police in terms of enforcement.

There being no one else who wishes to be heard, Mayor Amatorio closed Verbal Communications II.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Mayor and Council thanked everyone for attending and wished all a good night.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **24-058**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A. Attorney-Client Privilege

1. New Municipal Building Construction Contracts
2. PBA Matters

Minutes will be taken of the meeting and released to the public at the time that the matter is resolved. After Closed Executive Session, the Mayor and Council will reconvene in the Executive Chambers to adjourn this public meeting.

On a motion by Councilperson Pascual, second by Council President Rivera, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 8:50 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilperson Lodato, second by Councilperson Pascual, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.



Hilda Tavitian
Deputy Borough Clerk