

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR AND COUNCIL WORK SESSION
APRIL 2, 2024**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio, Council members Thomas A. Lodato, Buddy Deauna, Domingo Almonte, Ora Kornbluth, and Marc Pascual

ABSENT: Council President Hernando Rivera

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Administrator Corey Gallo
Borough Attorney John Schettino
Borough Clerk Marie Quiñones-Wilson

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:03 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 Thursday, March 28, 2024 was sent to the Record, the Star Ledger, Twin Boro News, Cablevision, placed on a Municipal Bulletin Board, posted to the website, and is on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk."

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilperson Lodato.

AGENDA CHANGES

Councilperson Kornbluth made a motion for to add Ordinance 24-2622 – An Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a Cap Bank for Introduction under Ordinances, added Resolution #24-130 to Approve Capital Appropriation Cancellation, #24-131 to Approve Temporary Emergency Appropriation, and #24-132 to Authorize Bid – PAL Field Lighting Improvement Project to the Consent Agenda, and added Resolution #24-133 to Introduce the Municipal Budget for Calendar Year 2024 to Resolutions, and added a Closed Session Meeting to discuss Knickerbocker Country Club v. Bergenfield, Revaluation and Master Plan Proposals, Police Department Personnel Matters, and PBA Local 309 Updates. Councilperson Pascual seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

PRESENTATIONS

None.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS/BOROUGH ENGINEER

A. Engineering & Inspection Status Report

Borough Administrator Gallo reported on behalf of Borough Engineer Robert Klein from Remington & Vernick Engineers that the borough is working on the road program and speed humps project. He stated that the streets that are being considered for speed humps include Lake Street, Glenwood Drive East, James Avenue, Merritt Avenue, Lincoln Avenue, Banta Place between Prospect and Ames, Melrose Avenue towards Lincoln School, W. Clinton Avenue on two locations, one near the bend in the road by the library, and the second is by the high school west of the firehouse, Thames Boulevard, Graphic Boulevard, Murray Hill Terrace, Wildrose Avenue, Vreeland Avenue, New York Avenue once its complete, and Chestnut Street. In addition, the roads that are set to be repaved include E. Church, the remainder of Bergen Avenue, Magnolia Street, Sergent Court, Orchard Street, N. Railroad Avenue, Byrne Place, and have funding for E. Church., New York Avenue, Dalton Place, Bedford, Delford, and N. First Street.

Mayor Amatorio inquired whether 2.6 million have been budgeted for roads.

Mr. Gallo confirmed that is correct, and an additional 370K will be provided from grant funding.

Councilperson Kornbluth inquired whether Laurel was on the list.

Mr. Gallo and Mayor Amatorio explained that the problem with Laurel Court is that PSE&G is currently completing work their work on the road this year. As such, the road work has been pushed to 2025. If not, the road would have been completed this year.

Councilperson Lodato stated that in the past, the utility companies would be responsible to pave half of the roads they conducted work on. He inquired if this is still the case.

Mr. Gallo stated that it varies depending on the number of roads they complete. If its an older road, that would be the case. He stated that in some instances, the borough has received more with the understanding that they are provided police and are kept within their budget.

Mayor Amatorio inquired if there was an explanation of O'Neil and Smith Street.

Mr. Gallo stated that they did return to look at the curb, and determined that the height is correct, but need to complete modifications of the soil.

Mayor Amatorio stated that the issue seems a little more complicated because if you add the soil, then it will seem higher than the sidewalk. He stated that the sidewalk is also in poor condition.

Mr. Gallo stated that residents were given an opportunity to have their sidewalks done. He stated that on road programs like this, they are given an opportunity to improve their aprons and ADA ramps. If a tree needs to be removed, the borough will look into it. But, part of this is the homeowner's responsibility.

Mayor Amatorio stated that residents may not have proceeded because of the condition of the road. He asked if the company can be called to return and offer the same.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated the residents would be responsible to pay for the work, but he'll speak to Bob to see if the contractor is willing to return.

Councilperson Kornbluth stated her street was recently paved, and there has been a lot of utility work, and now there are dips in many areas of the road.

Mr. Gallo stated that he would need to further investigate because the utility is supposed to infared the road to ensure that it is paved properly.

Councilperson Pascual stated that is also the case on Anderson.

ORDINANCES

A. Introduction of Ordinances

Motion by Councilperson Lodato that the following ordinances be introduced and passed on first reading and setting Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 8:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard as the date and time and the Council Chambers of the Bergenfield Borough Hall as the place for a hearing on said ordinance. Second by Councilperson Deauna.

Mayor Amatorio read the title of the ordinance(s) into the record:

ORDINANCE 24-2621- AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE SALARY RANGES OF EMPLOYEES NOT SUBJECTED TO UNIONIZED CONTRACTUAL UNITS OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD

ORDINANCE 24-2622 – AN ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that since the last meeting, we are moved in and functioning in the new building. It's still a work in progress, however, things are moving along. People are becoming more acclimated to their spaces and residents are impressed with the space. The old building is being vacated and training is taking place. The Police Department conducted an active shooter drill, and the Fire Department conducted their own training. Next week, the building will be turned over to the remediation company, and all the measures are in place for the work to start on their end. He stated that the budget will be reviewed later. He further commented that it has been a busy 2023 and even busier 2024, there are many pending projects and grant programs, but all in all, we are moving in the right direction.

MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORT

Councilperson Lodato

stated the Planning Board meeting was suspended this month as there were no applications nor resolutions to be done. The Fire Department is status quo, the Chief has been putting pressure on members to complete all their training requirements. He stated that one firefighter has reached a very significant anniversary, as Fire Fighter Jerry Naylis has reached 50 years of service in the Fire Department. It's a milestone that he has met in the past, and knows he will reach many more in the future as he is a very dedicated Fire Fighter.

Councilperson Deauna

stated that pertaining to the Health Department, a pizzeria was temporarily closed due to an issue with refrigeration. The borough had positive covid and RSV cases, but the matter is now contained.

Councilperson Almonte

no report.

Councilperson Kornbluth

stated that the BVAC has gone on 520 calls, year to date, which is comparable to last year. She attended the last BVAC and received answers to the residents' questions. The Borough Administrator will report further on the matter. In a tour, she learned that there are two ambulances that are currently parked outside the base because there isn't enough space to park all the ambulances indoor.

Mr. Gallo stated that he also spoke with them and learned that in the cold weather, towels are placed on the windows to ensure that windows do not frost and they are able to move quickly. They are considering putting one on the other side of the tracks, but if there is no one on the other side of the tracks, this may require them to travel all the way to the other side, not improving the response time. He stated that in the last four years, the Ambulance Corp. has been able to respond to more calls than Bergen County and local hospitals.

Pertaining to the medications, it was explained that they are not impacted by temperature due to weather. All winter sports are completed. Spring sports practices have been going and games have started. The Easter Egg Hunt, despite being postponed, went very well as over 500 kids participated in the hunt, not including parents and family members. The Mayor's Wellness Campaign will be kicking off on Sunday, April 14, 2024.

Councilperson Pascual

stated the Veterans Advisory Committee held their meeting at the library on March 16th and welcomed new members to the committee, Venus Carpenter and Jean Castillo. The Veterans are hosting a Murder Mystery Night fundraiser on April 20, 2024, tickets are available. If anyone needs any further information, please contact Sergeant Major Williams or John Smith. The boating seminar is cancelled. The committee is preparing for the Memorial Day Parade on May 27th. The entry forms for organizations are available. Interested organizations should speak to AJ Stewart. The Zoning Board of Adjustment passed three resolutions and one variance application was carried to the meeting next month.

Mayor Amatorio

stated the Mayor's Wellness Campaign will start on April 14, 2024 with a Fun Run, which will start at the High School. There will be a lot of activities planned from Monday through Friday offered by many sponsors, which is great because the Borough will not spend any

funds. There will be many classes like Zumba, Yoga, etc. The yoga instructors will visit the Senior Center at Murray Hill and adult day care centers, for the seniors' benefit. Classes will also be offered online, and the borough gym will be available. The schedule will be posted on the borough website and social media soon. Everyone that would like to participate should find an activity based on their schedule and likeness as there are many different programs being offered. Most of the programs will still take place at Conlon Hall, however, by August, the use of Conlon Hall will revert back to the Church. St. John's Church decided to keep Conlon Hall and issued a 120-day notice. It will be a difficult situation to hold recreational activities going forward.

CORRESPONDENCE

a.) Selby/Commander of Northern DAV

RE: Request for Road Closure/Veterans Plaza between W. Church Street and W. Main Street/ Sunday, May 19, 2024/6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (Rain Date: May 26, 2024)

b.) Herrera/Franklin School Parent Association

RE: Request to Reserve Memorial Park Pavilion for 5th Grade Picnic/Thursday, June 6, 2024/8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m./ (Rain Date: June 12, 2024)

Motion by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, and all members present voting in favor, to accept Correspondence Items A and B. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sergeant Major Williams, stated the boating course has been cancelled and will be rescheduled later in the year. Also, Councilperson Pascual held a fundraiser at the gasoline station and donated \$1,100 to the VFW. He thanked the administrator for taking care of the veteran's tax exemption. Sergeant Major Williams stated that he attended a meeting regarding veterans' suicide awareness, and he will start to pick that up, to make more veterans' aware of their supportive services. He suggested that the information be offered to the community. He stated that the middle school student that won the essay contest was recognized by the district last week and will be recognized by the state. Sergeant Major stated that he will start to distribute the applications much sooner.

Barry Doll, resident, inquired how the location of the speed humps are selected. Mr. Doll also inquired when the revaluation will be done and what it encompasses. He inquired if the town pays for any fees for the storage of the ambulances. He didn't see anything budgeted for capital improvements, inquired about miscellaneous revenue decreasing by \$4 million, and what the outstanding debt balance was for last year, and if it included the borrowing debt of the borough hall.

John Smith, resident, stated the county has speeding cameras on the roads, and inquired whether they can be used to give out tickets for speeding. He inquired if that is unconstitutional to have them in town.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated it can't be done because it is unconstitutional, but will confirm with the County.

Mary Sullivan, resident, complimented Mr. Gallo for building a wonderful new borough hall.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that with regards to the speed humps, some of the locations are based on requests from the residents as they observe them, and the same is reviewed by the Police Department. The Traffic Division and DPW also help with determining problematic streets, especially the locations where most accidents occur. We then prepare a list of all the roads we received complaints and the areas we know have issues. The speed humps have been very effective in slowing traffic down.

Rich Cahill, Borough CFO, stated that last year the borough budgeted for 4.4 million dollars, and was able to take advantage of the American Rescue funding. This year, the budget for the capital improvement fund will be included in the temporary capital budget as part of the bond ordinance, which will be introduced at the next meeting. The advertisement Mr. Doll looked at compares last year's budget against the final budget. Throughout the course of the year, there are amendments to the budget due to the grants received, which was 3.2 million last year. The outstanding debt includes principal and interest, and the debt issued for the new municipal building. He stated that with regards to the new building, the borough received the bond ordinance and has stayed within the budget.

Mr. Gallo stated cost of the entire building is \$15.6 million, including \$600,000 in contingencies. He stated that the borough appropriated up to 16.1 million. The next step, Phase II, is the demolition, which is a separate contract. The final phase is the outside footprint, that includes the parking lot, lighting, and curbs. The total overall number is \$18 million, and the borough will be in line with that number. Mr. Gallo commented that the governing body made the right decision, as the cost would have been significantly higher today.

Mayor Amatorio stated that with regards to the revaluation, the County has pushed this off for the borough for the past two years. The borough has now received a letter stating that it has to be done because the town's ratio is low.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated that if the collection is less than 85%, the County Tax Board orders revaluations. In order to not incur the costs in the previous budget years, the borough requested extensions. The County Board granted the extensions with the understanding that it will be done. It is not optional; it has to be done. The benefit to have this done is that everyone will be assessed at 100% to their true value, paying their fair taxes. For example, if someone has a home that was valued at \$600,000, but is now valued at 1 million, they will have to pay their fair share. Homes that are paying more than their value, will ultimately benefit from the revaluation.

The inspections would be done in 2024, for the 2025 tax bill.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO BE ACTED UPON:

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 24-125. 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. **24-126/**To Approve Bill List
- b. **24-127/**To Approve Raffle Application – RA 1418
- c. **24-128/**To Approve Veterans Tax Exemption – 45 Momar Drive

- d. **24-129**/To Approve Proposal – 2024 Speed Humps Project – Remington & Vernick Engineers
- e. **24-130**/To Approve Capital Appropriation Cancellation
- f. **24-131**/To Approve Temporary Emergency Appropriation
- g. **24-132**/To Authorize Bid – PAL Field Lighting Improvement Project

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Almonte, to approve the Consent Resolution 24-125.

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

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

B. Resolutions

24-133/To Introduce the Municipal Budget for Calendar Year 2024 and Advertise the Public Hearing to be held on May 7, 2024

Motion by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, that Resolution #24-133 be approved.

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

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

24-134/To Approve Hire – Keyboard Clerk I – Cenia Vega

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Almonte, that Resolution #24-134 be approved.

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

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

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilperson Lodato thanked all for coming to the meeting.

Councilperson Deauna thanked all for coming and wished everyone a good night.

Councilperson Kornbluth thanked all for coming and thanked Mr. Gallo for his hard work with the construction of the new municipal building.

Councilperson Pascual recognized Liam Garcia for being the democracy essay winner. He thanked all for coming.

Mayor Amatorio officially welcomed the community to the new Borough Hall and thanked Mr. Gallo for his hard work and always being available when called upon.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **24-135**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A. Attorney-Client Privilege

1. Knickerbocker Country Club v. Bergenfield
2. Revaluation and Master Plan Proposals
3. Police Department Personnel Matters
4. PBA Local 309 Updates

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 Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Lodato, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 8:51 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Lodato, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Marie Quinones
Borough Clerk