

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR AND COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MARCH 7, 2023**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio and Council President Marc Pascual, Council members Thomas A. Lodato, Buddy Deauna, Ora Kornbluth, and Hernando Rivera

ABSENT: Councilmember Marte

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

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:07 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."

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilperson Lodato.

AGENDA CHANGES

Councilperson Kornbluth motioned to add Ordinance 23-2612 to the ordinance section of the agenda. Council President Pascual seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Columbia Bank

Gabriel Arias, Branch Manager of Columbia Bank in Bergenfield, presented a check for a \$1,500 donation to the Volunteer Fire Department.

Borough Administrator Gallo thanked Gabriel and Columbia Bank for the donation. Chief Naylis and the department have been notified, and they are very appreciative of the generous donation.

Mayor Amatorio stated that on behalf of the governing body and the Volunteer Fire Department, he thanked Columbia Bank and appreciates them for their generosity. He knows this is not the first time, as the bank made donations last year when it first opened.

Mr. Gallo stated that a \$1,500 donation was also made to the Bergenfield Public Library.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS/BOROUGH ENGINEER

A. Engineering & Inspection Status Report

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that the bid to repair and replace sidewalks has been awarded and a pre-construction meeting will be held next week to determine how to proceed. All the sidewalks that will be repaired by the borough have been identified. The Department of Public Works went out and looked at all the trees, and determined that some have to be removed and replaced. The contractors will be in the borough all year. The residents can hire the contractor to also replace their own sidewalks for the same price the borough received. Mr. Gallo further stated that the first phase of the Roosevelt and N. Taylor project was submitted to the NJDEP for their approval. The project will be out to bid soon. The road program will be finalized in the next month or two, as some roads need to be repaired, there are two parts hindering this, the cost of asphalt

and cost of diesel. He commented that there are many driving factors. Mr. Gallo further stated that PSE&G also needs to do their repairs, but more meetings need to be held in order to finalize which roads will be replaced and the new roads that need to be repaired. Mr. Gallo stated they want to stay conservative, but new roads will be done.

ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE 23-2612 - AN ORDINANCE ENTITLED "SEEPAGE PITS" OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD

Borough Attorney Schettino stated that the ordinance requires improvements made on properties over 100 sq. ft. to undergo review for seepage pit. Mr. Schettino stated improvements would be for new construction or additions.

Mayor Amatorio inquired if this is a recommendation.

Mr. Schettino stated that it depends on the project and if the existing drainage is sufficient.

Councilperson Kornbluth inquired if a property only has 20% lot coverage, and a resident adds a 10x10 addition, does this mean they have to put in a seepage pit. She commented that the lot coverage should be looked into, not go according to the square footage.

Mr. Schettino stated that the borough should receive a recommendation first from the borough engineer, to determine if the seepage pit should be added based on the square footage or percentage of increased coverage, and what the triggering number should be.

Councilperson Kornbluth commented that it doesn't make sense to base it solely on the square footage.

Mayor Amatorio stated that if it's a small lot, the seepage pit may not be needed.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that the building department is trying to memorialize what is being approved by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Mr. Schettino recommended the ordinance be tabled so that the borough can get a recommendation from the borough engineer on what the triggering number should be.

Council President Pascual made a motion to table the ordinance. Councilperson Kornbluth seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

No discussion.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that the new Public Information Officer (PIO) has been posting information to the Borough website and Facebook. The PIO has also created a borough Instagram page to disseminate information. The Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade will be held on Sunday, March 12th. There will be a mass at 10:00 a.m. at St. Mary's Church in Dumont. A flag raising will follow at 1:00 p.m. at Roy W. Brown Middle School, and then the Parade will start at 2:00 p.m., and

will travel on Washington Avenue starting off at E. Englewood Avenue. Mr. Gallo stated that the new building is moving along. The units for the heating and cooling have come in and the contractors started to button-up. The second-floor construction is being finished up with the electrical wiring as well as the third floor. A meeting will be held next week regarding the cell tower construction. The contractors will break ground sometime in April near the motorcycle shed on our footprint. The DPW is working on the bathrooms at Memorial Field renovating what we already have, understanding the need to expand and improve facilities, and all the work has been done internally. He also stated that the roof at the swim club needed to be replaced. That building will eventually become the bathrooms for the facility. We are starting the prep work to renovate the fieldhouse for the replacement of the two turf fields. The Rent Leveling Board met for the first-time last week as Jaime Luppino is now serving as their new secretary. Stigma free also met this past week, which was their second meeting of the year. The Feeding the Front Lines program recently ended last Wednesday. Mr. Gallo thanked the Council members who helped for their commitment. He commented that the residents and seniors that reside there generally appreciate and express their gratitude as they have been afflicted the most, as inflation was 11.5% nationally in 2022. The fact that we could help out and give a meal to them to help offset some of their responsibilities is great.

MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORT

Councilperson Lodato

stated that the Planning Board met and reviewed one application. 136 School Street – add in the storage space. He stated that one minor variance was granted. West Central Avenue, fire source is under investigation. The Stigma Free Committee met; attendance was not full as officers were not installed. They are looking to plan various programs.

Councilperson Deauna

No report.

Councilperson Kornbluth

stated that the Volunteer Ambulance Corp. (BVAC) has responded to 430 calls year to date, which is a 5% increase from last year. They received 30 CPR and lifesaving awards. The Recreation Department spring sports program are starting soon, and the Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled to be held on April 1st. 10:00 AM- 12:30 PM Rain date April 2nd 12:00 PM- 2:30 PM.

Council President Pascual

welcomed Rent Leveling Board Secretary Jaime Luppino, who will be a great asset to the board. The board has been unable to meet since the beginning of the year. The board is still short two members. The Board of Education will be holding many fundraisers in 2023 and 2024. He stated that in support of the schools, for everyone that pumps gas at the gas station, two cents will go towards project graduation. He hopes to see everyone at the St. Patrick's Day Parade. He also thanked Feed the Front Lines for all the food that was distributed.

Mayor Amatorio

stated that he celebrated Read Across America by reading to students at Hoover School and a day care center. The school even held a parade. Fundraising campaigns supporting the Middle Schools and High School. I also attended a concert at Roy Brown Middle School and the kids were amazing. Bergenfield received an award and was

named a healthy town in 2022. The Mayor's Wellness campaign held last year was very successful and we will try to do it again this year. We recently celebrated the anniversary of Charlie Steinel, and a tree and plaque were planted and placed at Cooper's Pond in his honor. The borough will be receiving \$1.23 million this year announced in the Governor's budget. The Louis Bay 2nd Scholarship contest is currently in place at the High School. It's an essay program about how students feel about government. The committee is comprised of Councilwoman Kornbluth, Borough Clerk Marie Quiñones, and a teacher from the High School. The students are writing their essays for consideration by the committee, to be sent to the State League of Municipalities for vetting.

CORRESPONDENCE

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| a). Gallione/Community Garden | RE: End of Growing Season Report dated February 20, 2023 |
| b). Naylis/Bergenfield Volunteer Fire Department | RE: Personnel Action Letter dated February 24, 2023 |
| c). Hayes/South Presbyterian Church | RE: Request to Reserve Cooper's Pond on Friday, June 23, 2023 and Saturday, June 24, 2023 |

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

John Smith, resident, stated that pertaining to the seepage pit, the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Adjustment always states that the seepage pit is a requirement but it ultimately goes by what the engineer states. He commented that it's only been done twice because it is based on the lot coverage. Mr. Smith distributed a letter from the Veteran's Advisory Committee stating that there are four bills in the State, two for Veterans and two for Seniors, seeking endorsements for tax incentives, at no cost to the borough. He also forwarded the request to the County Commissioners seeking support.

Mary Sullivan, resident, inquired where the St. Patrick's Day Parade will end. She also stated that a copy of Resolution #23-104 should be given to the building department and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Sgt. Major Williams, resident, stated that the information shared regarding the bills has also been shared with District 37 representatives. He stated this bill is vitally important. We are receiving pressure from veterans throughout the state, who have also been in contact with representatives at the Governor's office to push the bill. He expressed that the Borough's endorsement of the bill is very important. He further stated that the USO dance will be this upcoming Friday night, and asked everyone to please come out and support. The next Veteran's Advisory Committee meeting will be held on March 18th and there will be a pinning ceremony on April 22nd. There are currently 35 residents that are registered, but he is sure there will be more.

There being no one else who wished to be heard, Councilperson Kornbluth motioned to close public comments. Council President Pascual seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO BE ACTED UPON:

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 23-098. 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. **23-099**/To Pay Bills
- b. **23-100**/To Authorize Refund of Redemption Monies to Outside Lien Holder for TTL #20-00006
- c. **23-101**/To Approve Tax Appeal Settlement – 155 N. Washington Avenue Unit C000A
- d. **23-102**/To Approve Tax Exemption – 379 S. Prospect Ave
- e. **23-103**/To Approve Resignation – Nicholas Kovacs
- f. **23-104**/To Approve Amendment – Fair Share Housing Center Settlement Agreement

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, to approve the Consent Resolution.

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>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Marte:	<i>absent</i>	Council President Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

B. Resolutions

23-105/To Hire Part-Time Laborer – Gaetano Di Caro

Motion by Council President Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Kornbluth, to approve Resolution #23-105.

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>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Marte:	<i>absent</i>	Council President Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Mayor and Council thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Councilperson Lodato stated that day light savings time will be coming up and reminded everyone to check their smoke detector batteries.

Councilperson Deauna stated that he has been away for the past three weeks out of the country, and he is happy to back in his home town.

Councilperson Kornbluth thanked everyone for coming and wished everyone a Happy Purim.

Council President Pascual reminded everyone to support the VFW upcoming events.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **23-106**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A. Personnel

1. Police Department Personnel Matters
2. Fire Department Personnel 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 Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Lodato, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 8:47 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, second by Council President Pascual, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.



Hilda Tavitian
Deputy Borough Clerk