

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
MAY 21, 2024
8:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio, Council President Hernando Rivera (arrived at 8:03 pm), and Council members Thomas Lodato, Buddy Deauna, Domingo Almonte, Ora Kornbluth, and Marc Pascual (arrived at 8:03 pm)

ABSENT: No one.

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

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:00 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 a Municipal Bulletin Board and is on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk."

The Salute to the Flag was led by Mayor Amatorio.

AGENDA CHANGES

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth to add Board of Fire Officers personnel action letter dated May 20, 2024 to Correspondence and Resolution 24-174 to Approve the Authorization to Bid the 2024 Road Improvement Program Phase I to Resolutions. Seconded by Councilperson Almonte. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilperson Almonte to approve minutes of the April 16, 2024 Regular Public Meeting (not to be released), May 7, 2024 Work Session Meeting and May 7, 2024 Closed Session Meeting (not to be released). Councilperson Kornbluth 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.

Diana Flagg, resident, inquired when the revaluation will begin and what the governing body's thoughts are. She inquired if this will happen this year.

John Smith, resident, stated it is time to look for a new tax appeal attorney as there will be many more tax appeals after the revaluation.

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

Mayor Amatorio stated the town was mandated by the county to do the revaluation three years ago and has delayed it as much as possible. Mayor Amatorio stated the borough hasn't signed with anyone yet, but is exploring the possibility of starting the revaluation this year.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated the goal is to have the revaluation completed in 2024, effective 2025. The tax adjustments will be made in 2025. Mr. Gallo stated, proportionately, the number of tax appeals aren't wins and losses. The approvals by the governing body are settlements. They have looked at the analysis and the ratio are good. The Mayor and Council decides who the tax appeal attorney will be at the reorganization meeting.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the ratio is in the 70's. Once you fall below 85% in value, the county will require the borough complete a revaluation.

Councilperson Lodato stated the tax appeal attorney is following the orders of the tax assessor.

PRESENTATIONS

None.

CORRESPONDENCE

- | | |
|---|---|
| a.) Vogt/Bergenfield Board of Education | RE: Request to Reserve Memorial Park Pavilion for 5 th Grade Safety Patrol Picnic/Friday, May 31, 2024/9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. |
| b.) Niera/St. Joseph's WIC Program | RE: Request to Reserve the Conference Room for the WIC Program for several dates |
| c.) Naylis/Board of Fire Officers | RE: Personnel Action Letter dated May 20, 2024 |

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

ORDINANCES

A. Adoption of Ordinances

Mayor Amatorio read into the record:

The following ordinances published herewith were first read by title only on May 7, 2024 and posted on the bulletin board of the municipal center.

24-2624 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, COUNTY OF BERGEN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO ESTABLISH CHAPTER 313 TO REQUIRE LEAD PAINT TESTING AS MANDATED BY P.L. 2021, C.182

24-2625 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, COUNTY OF BERGEN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY ADOPTING A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BLOCK 122, LOTS 1-14 - 60-90 WEST CHURCH STREET, 11-43 TYSON PLACE, 22-24 NORTH FRONT STREET, AND 31 NORTH DEMAREST AVENUE

Public Comments on Ordinances 24-2624 and 24-2625.

No one came forward.

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Pascual, to pass Ordinances 24-2624 and 24-2625 on second and final reading and are hereby adopted and notice of same shall be published according to law.

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>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

B. Introduction of Ordinances

Motion by Councilperson Deauna that the following ordinances be introduced and passed on first reading and setting Tuesday, June 18, 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. Seconded by Councilperson Pascual.

Mayor Amatorio read the title of the ordinances into the record:

24-2627 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY PROVIDING FOR A SPECIAL EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$770,000 TO FUND THE PREPARATION AND EXECUTION OF A COMPLETE PROGRAM OF REVALUATION OF REAL PROPERTY IN THE BOROUGH

24-2628 - AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 165 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, ENTITLED “GAMES OF CHANCE”

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>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 24-165. 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. **24-166/**To Approve Bill List
- b. **24-167/**To Request Approval for the Insertion of a Special Item of Revenue in the 2024 Budget – Chapter 159 – National Opioid Abatement Trust Grant
- c. **24-168/**To Request Approval for the Insertion of a Special Item of Revenue in the 2024 Budget – Chapter 159 – Department of Community Affairs Public Services and Capital Improvement Grant
- d. **24-169/**To Request Approval for the Insertion of a Special Item of Revenue in the 2024 Budget – Chapter 159 – AAA Clubs of New Jersey Pedestrian Safety Enforcement Grant
- e. **24-170/**To Authorize the Preparation and Mailing of Estimated Tax Bills
- f. **24-171/**To Approve Addendum for Second One-Year Renewal Contract – Collection of Grass Clippings, Yard Waste, Stumps, Logs, Leaves, and Christmas Trees – Nature’s Choice Corporation
- g. **24-172/**To Award Bid and Approve Contract – 2024 Speed Hump Project – AJM Contractors Inc.

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth to approve the Consent Resolution. Council President Rivera seconded the motion.

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

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

B. Resolutions

24-173/To Hire Part-Time Summer Laborers

Motion by Council President Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #24-173 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>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

24-174/To Authorize Bid for the 2024 Road Improvement Program, Phase I

Motion by Council President Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #24-174 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>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 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.

Fred Sahlberg, resident, stated there are always 15-20 illegal aliens standing around by 7Eleven, on Columbia Avenue, and in the parking areas by Burger King that is not appropriate. Mr. Sahlberg stated a month ago, he witnessed Melissa Ruts, from Police Records, assist a frustrated, old woman with patience and accuracy. Ms. Ruts deserves commendation and a pay raise.

John Smith, resident, stated per previous minutes, it is his understanding that it's cheaper to get ahead of having taxes lowered than fighting the tax appeal in court. He stated the town's tax appeal attorney always gives tax appeals. If they should be paying \$20,000, it is lowered to \$16,000, which isn't a true assessment. Mr. Smith stated if taxes are lowered for some residents, then everyone else pays for it. The assessments are going up. He requested to be given the percentage of the tax appeals and then he'll say they won.

Mayo Amatorio stated there are tax appeals you don't want to drag and grant the appeal rather than prolong the case. They ran the numbers and did an analysis of the past five years.

Diana Flagg, resident, inquired why all the offices are under lock and key. She stated she hopes the company hired to do the revaluation will stick to their guns and not fall under pressure.

Mary Sullivan, resident, inquired if a resident is opposed to the revaluation, do the people who have done revaluation come and support their reasoning for the assessment.

Rosa Callejas, resident, stated she needs help fast. Kids are speeding and it needs to stop before someone gets killed. Parents can't sleep at night as there are people doing drugs in front of their homes. One of them broke into the neighbor's yard. There was a cop parked by the fire department who didn't do anything. There was a trailer last night at 10:30pm in front of their house that was selling cars illegally. She is afraid to go outside. The police department has all the information.

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

Borough Administrator Gallo stated they approved the contract to move forward on installing the speed humps. Speed humps will be put in the W. Clinton Avenue area by July that will prevent anyone from driving fast. The police department needs to be called when she sees the trailer and suspects something fishy or criminal is happening. If the police don't respond to the call, then it's a different issue the police chief would have to address it. If more lighting is needed, they will put in more lighting in the area.

Councilperson Kornbluth inquired if the police have the license plate number and all the information.

Police Chief Rabboh assured that police officers show up every time a phone call is made. He explained the last time they had spoken, the police department sat there in unmarked and marked cars, gave out warnings and summonses. The issues were in the mornings, during school lunch time, and after school. They need to observe the violation. He has received emails with license plate numbers and has forwarded them to the patrol supervisor and patrol officers.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the company that's hired to do the appraisal will also attend the court hearings if there are tax appeals filed due to their assessment for two years. They will represent the borough as an expert.

Mr. Gallo stated traditionally the borough has created a safe area by Columbia Avenue for the day laborers, but that area has spread. They are working diligently to correct the issue.

Mayor Amatorio stated there is no evidence that they are illegal aliens. The municipality is not empowered to check their records.

Mr. Gallo stated he expects every employee to perform in the same manner as Melissa did. For the most part, it happens regularly on a daily basis in various departments. Mr. Gallo stated that's the goal he expects from all the offices.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Mayor and Council thanked all for coming tonight and wished all a good night. Councilperson Pascual stated the Memorial Day ceremonies will start at 10:00am at Cooper's Pond.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **24-175**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A. Personnel

1. Police 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 Council President Rivera, second by Councilperson Lodato, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 8:48 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 Rivera, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Marie Quiñones-Wilson
Borough Clerk