

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2025
8:00 P.M.**

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

ABSENT: Council member 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 8:01 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, 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 Councilperson Deauna.

AGENDA CHANGES

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Council President Kornbluth to approve minutes of the 2025 Reorganization Meeting held on January 2, 2025. Councilperson Deauna 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, stated there is a problem with the wording in Ordinance 25-2637. The ordinance states all new construction should have a garage, but doesn't reference renovations. The ordinance needs to state that all renovations of residential homes need to have a garage that fit a normal size vehicle. It would be beneficial to receive clarification as it would help the Zoning Board of Adjustment and Planning Board going forward.

Barry Doll, resident, commented with regards to the contracts of all the professionals and stated that all the fees are confusing. He inquired what is the total expense of all the contracts. Mr. Doll commented that the Tax Collector's position is the most important position in the borough, and as such, he should be compensated more. Mr. Doll further stated that the Tax Collector should be at the top of the list as he is bringing in more revenue. He expressed that people should be paid their worth. Mr. Doll inquired if the revaluation will be completed this year since Associated Appraisals is being hired. He thanked the governing body for appointing him to the Shade Tree Committee, but expressed his disappointment of the trees being removed in front of Borough Hall.

Mayor Amatorio stated the governing body is always fair with all the employees and the professionals when negotiating their contracts. The borough is mandated by the county to have a revaluation. A company has not been hired, but the borough will proceed with the work this year.

Borough Administrator Gallo explained that the Tax Collector's contract was finalized based on negotiation. As a tenured Tax Collector, his salary was evaluated and compared to the salaries of Tax Collectors in other municipalities in the area. Associated Appraisals is part of the professional services and represents the borough when there is a tax appeal. He commented that he tried to find a professional to move the weeping tree and had allocated \$19,000 towards it, but nothing came through.

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

PRESENTATIONS

A. Bergenfield Elks Lodge #1477 – Presentation of Donation

Exalted Ruler Katarzyna Budiman, Chair of Youth Activities Tom Boyce Jr., and other members of the Bergenfield Elks Lodge #1477 presented a donation to the food pantry from their spotlight grant.

Mayor Amatorio thanked them for their generous donation.

CORRESPONDENCE

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|---|---|
| a.) Wrendelken/Little League Baseball Club of Bergenfield, Inc. | RE: Coin Toss Requests for Several Dates in 2025 to Fund Raise/New Bridge & Washington Ave., Main St. & Washington Ave. S. Prospect & W. Clinton Ave., Clinton Ave. & Washington Ave., Church St. & Washington Ave., Hickory Ave. & Washington Ave./9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. |
| b.) Forcier/Barrier Free Committee | RE: Request to Reserve the Second Floor Conference Room for 2025 Meeting Dates |
| c.) Chavarria/Bergenfield Parent Association | RE: Request to Reserve Memorial Park Pavilion and Field for 5 th Grade BBQ/June 12, 2025/9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Rain Date: June 18, 2025) |
| d.) Alfano/Senior Citizen's Advisory Committee | RE: Request to Reserve Memorial Park Pavilion for Annual Senior BBQ/June 17, 2025/12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. |
| e.) Eaches/Bergenfield Garden Club | RE: Request to Reserve Cooper's Pond for 2025 Meeting Dates |

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

ORDINANCES

A. Introduction of Ordinance

Motion by Councilperson Pascual that the following ordinance be introduced and passed on first reading as amended and setting Tuesday, February 4, 2025 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 Almonte.

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

ORDINANCE 25-2637- AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 186.50.1 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, ENTITLED "GARAGES"

Councilperson Lodato stated Mr. Smith had raised a good point that the dimensions of the garage should be set in the ordinance and recommended that a two-car garage have a minimum 20x20 garage and a one-car garage be a minimum of 10x20.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that the purpose of the ordinance is to close loop holes that currently exist. He stated that people are removing garages or using the space where there isn't room for another garage. If you lose a garage, you have to build a garage. Every house needs to have a garage.

Mr. Smith stated there is no garage size requirement in the existing ordinance.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated if someone submitted plans to the building department and the garage was not big enough to fit a car, it doesn't qualify for a parking space.

Mr. Smith stated that's the problem that has come before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The lawyers have stated there is no size requirement.

Mr. Gallo stated they can introduce the ordinance and then amend it if need be. The minimum width has to be 22 feet. It should be written in the ordinance that the minimum for a one-car garage be 12x20 and 22x20 for a two-car garage.

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

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

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 25-024. 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.

25-025/To Approve Bill List

25-026/To Support Brookside Garden's Bergen County Community Development Grant Application for Elevator Replacement Project

25-027/To Approve Notice of Claim Form

25-028/To Approve Tax Appeal Settlement – 55 Woodbine Street

25-029/To Approve Tax Appeal Settlement – 69 S. Washington Avenue

25-030/To Approve Tax Appeal Settlement – 71 S. Washington Avenue

25-031/To Approve Tax Appeal Settlement – 11 W. Main Street

25-032/To Approve Tax Refund – 65 Thames Boulevard

25-033/To Approve Tax Refund – 142 Baker Avenue

25-034/To Authorize Grant Application from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs for the Installation of Scoreboards at Twin Boro Field

25-035/To Approve Service Agreement for Annual Maintenance for Fixed Network Equipment and Mobile/Portable Equipment and Maintenance for the Police Department – Goosetown Communications

25-036/To Approve Agreement for Mobile Communications Services and Equipment for Department of Public Works – Goosetown Communications

- 25-037**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Attorney – John L. Schettino, Esq.
- 25-038**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Engineer – Remington & Vernick Engineers
- 25-039**/To Approve Agreement – Special Projects Engineer – T&M Associates
- 25-040**/To Approve Agreement – Special Projects Engineer – Pennoni Engineers Inc.
- 25-041**/To Approve Agreement – Bond Counsel – Rogut McCarthy LLC
- 25-042**/To Approve Agreement – Labor Counsel – John L Shahdanian II Esq., Trenk Isabel Siddiqi & Shahdanian P.C.
- 25-043**/To Approve Agreement – Tax Appeal Counsel – Boggia Boggia & Betesh, LLC
- 25-044**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Auditor – Lerch, Vinci, & Bliss, LLP
- 25-045**/To Approve Agreement – Risk Manager – GJEM – Otterstedt Insurance Agency
- 25-046**/To Approve Agreement – Grant Writer and Consultant – Millennium Strategies LLC
- 25-047**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Appraiser – Associated Appraisal Group
- 25-048**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Prosecutor – Marc A. Calello, P.C.
- 25-049**/To Approve Agreement – Borough Public Defender – Robert C. Metzdorf, Metzdorf Law Office
- 25-050**/To Approve Agreement – Planner/Engineer for Economic Development – Neglia Engineering Associates
- 25-051**/To Approve Change Order #1 and Pay Certificate No. 4 Final – 2024 Road Improvement Program Phase 1 – Vektor Corporation
- 25-052**/To Approve Shared Services Agreement – Animal Control Services – Bergen County Department of Health Services
- 25-053**/To Approve Agreement for Housing Rehabilitation Program Administrative Services – Community Grants, Planning and Housing, LLC “CGP&H”
- 25-054**/To Approve an Addendum to the License Agreement with Office Superstore East LLC
- 25-055**/To Approve Affordable Housing Resolution

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

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

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

B. Resolutions

- 25-056**/To Approve Tax Collector Agreement – Juan C. Ortiz

Motion by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #25-056 be approved.

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

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

- 25-057**/To Re-Appoint Emergency Management Coordinator – Ryan Shell

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Council President Kornbluth that Resolution #25-057 be approved.

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

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

25-058/To Approve Part-Time Code Enforcement Employment – Todd Gelayder

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Council President Kornbluth that Resolution #25-058 be approved.

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

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

25-059/To Promote to Full-Time Code Enforcement – Joseph Picheo

Motion by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #25-059 be approved.

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

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

25-060/To Hire Interim Court Administrator – Nadia Cavli

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Deauna that Resolution #25-060 be approved.

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

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

25-061/To Hire Violations Keyboard Clerk I – Aidan Traina

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #25-061 be approved.

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

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

25-062/To Hire Keyboard Clerk II TACO – Jayne Mania

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Lodato that Resolution #25-062 be approved.

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

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

25-063/To Hire Keyboard Clerk I – Angelina Capalbo

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Council President Kornbluth that Resolution #25-063 be approved.

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

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

25-064/To Hire Part-Time Laborer – Luis Mendez

Motion by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Councilperson Deauna that Resolution #25-064 be approved.

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

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Library Ordinance for Unreturned Materials

Allison Ballo, Director of Bergenfield Library, stated they would like to amend section 194-1 in the borough ordinance chapter 194 that addresses the failure to return borrowed items, notice and fees. The Library Board and herself would like to increase the threshold from \$50 to \$500. Ms. Ballo explained that with a \$50 threshold for unreturned items, there is more work involved and it isn't cost effective. She further explained that the process that has to be followed is labor intensive and requires 6-9 months of paperwork, costs are expended in postage in correspondence with the resident, and is bad public relations for the library to take people to court. The Library Board doesn't want to eliminate the ordinance, but just to go after the most egregious circumstances. The \$500 fine would be for at least a dozen Bergenfield Library materials Bergenfield residents have taken out and not returned. The library card is blocked when the fee owed is \$10. The purpose of the amendment is they want the materials to be returned. They could lower the fine to \$250, but \$500 is a round figure.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the ordinance should be expanded to include if someone in the household owes money, then every member of the household should be barred.

B. Veteran's Advisory Committee and VFW Post 6467 Food Mobile Unit to Support Veteran Groups

Borough Administrator Gallo stated that similar to when the DAV was able to sell food, a food truck vendor would like to park in the lot of the VFW Post, pay a fee and contribute a percentage of the proceeds to help the VFW fund raise. If permitted, the vendor will have to obtain all the appropriate permits.

C. Appointment and Nomination to the Recreation Committee

Mayor recommends and nominates Nishant Desai to serve on the Recreation Committee for a one-year term, term expiring December 31, 2025.

MOTION by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Almonte, that the nomination be confirmed. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

Committee/Department Reports

Motion offered by Council President Kornbluth 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.

Ben Cabrera, Chairman of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, thanked the Mayor and Council for introducing the amendment to the ordinance regarding garages. The Zoning Board was in a predicament at the last meeting as there was a lack of clarity with the ordinance. The amended ordinance will assist the Board in making a decision. Mr. Cabrera stated the size of the garage will be an excellent addition.

Barry Doll, resident, requested an explanation for the 137 units required for affordable housing.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated in the new law set for the fourth round the prospective need is 0 and the current need is 137 units. Mr. Schettino explained, in order to challenge that number, the resolution needs to be adopted tonight, posted to the website, sent to DCA, and filed with a declaratory judgement within 48 hours. An affordable housing plan needs to be adopted by June 30th, 2025. The number will be based on the analysis done.

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

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Mayor and Council thanked all for coming and wished all to have a great evening.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION 25-065/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

- A. Attorney-Client Privilege/Contract Negotiations
 - 1. PBA Local 309 Status Update

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 Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Almonte, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 8:44 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilperson Almonte, seconded by Councilperson Kornbluth, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Marie Quiñones-Wilson
Borough Clerk