

# MAYOR AND COUNCIL

## BOROUGH OF DEMAREST

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 25, 2022 7:30 PM

Mayor Iannuzzi opened the meeting at 7:30 pm with the following announcement: The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time and place of this regular meeting in the annual schedule and notice of regular meetings of this Governing Body. Such annual schedule and notice of regular meetings is posted at Borough Hall, was mailed to the Record and Star Ledger and was filed with the Borough Clerk of Demarest on November 22, 2021.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call

Mr. Carroll-present	Mr. Connelly-present
Mrs. Fox-present	Mrs. LaPira-present
Mrs. Hamilton-present	Mrs. Slowikowski-present
Mayor Iannuzzi-present	

3. Mr. Carroll moved to adopt the agenda, second Mrs. Fox.

Mr. Carroll-yes	Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes	Mrs. LaPira-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes	Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

4. Presentation to Mr. DePietro from the Fire Department: Chief McLoughlin presented Mr. DePietro with a plaque for his "hot lips" TRUMPET playing and his service to the country. Mr. DePietro spoke about his love for the Borough and how much he will miss everyone when he and his wife move away.
5. PUBLIC HEARING: Municipal Park Improvement Grant Craig Zimmerman introduced Jeanine Swift who made the presentation about the development and redevelopment of Municipal Park land for passive or active recreation.
6. PUBLIC HEARING: Historic Preservation Grant. Jeanine Swift also made this presentation. The two grants have the same deadline. Mrs. Slowikowski asked for an explanation of the type of fence proposed for around the cemetery, which will be the recipient of this grant. Mr. Connelly asked about the security lighting and how it would affect the residents nearby. Mr. Zimmerman explained the

style of the fence and stated that the LED lighting would be shielded. Mrs. Fox explained that the first project had to do with the property that was purchased with an open space grant and had to be used for open space.

Mr. Carroll moved to open the meeting to the public, second Mrs. Fox. All in favor. Carried.

Len Vadala asked about the bocce courts and told that it was considered but was not going to happen.

Brian Bernstein (Van Horn Street) asked whether the property could be sold and the money used for open space and whether the Council has considered this. He said perhaps it would be better to use the funds from a sale to better use. Mr. Carroll stated that he has been involved in Open Space for many years, Mr. Bernstein asked whether it had been considered and was told no. He also asked whether the costs listed included soft costs, Jeanine Swift and Craig Zimmerman explained the budgeting process for a grant project. Mr. Bernstein asked whether the security lighting budget included drawing power to the cemetery and was told yes. He asked whether there was other lighting needed and was told probably not.

Marvin Chudnoff asked whether there was any idea how much it would cost to bring electricity to the cemetery site and was told by the engineer that it was probably about \$7500. Mr. Chudnoff stated that he felt the stones should stay as they are and not be cleaned up, and he felt that the lighting was unnecessary as he has not seen lighting at other cemeteries. Discussion of the cost of the project and the 50% that comes from the Borough.

Marianne Clarke, the Borough historian, stated that she is in favor of the Borough applying for the grant. She is not in favor of a chain fence, but Mr. Zimmerman explained that it is not a chain fence.

Lynn Paulison (Lois Avenue) asked what the implications would be if nothing was done with the property on Serpentine. She asked whether it was worth doing anything. She was told that it was not mandatory to do anything.

Mr. Carroll moved to close the meeting to the public, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Carried.

Mr. Carroll stated that there was no guarantee that the Borough would get any money or all that was requested.

No vote was required for the above hearings.

7. Mr. Carroll moved to introduce ORDINANCE NO. 1100-22; CALENDAR YEAR 2022 ORDINANCE NOT EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET

APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK, second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes                      Mr. Connelly-yes  
Mrs. Fox-yes                         Mrs. LaPira-yes  
Mrs. Hamilton-yes                 Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

8. Mr. Carroll moved to introduce ORDINANCE NO. 1101-22: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 84 OF THE DEMAREST BOROUGH CODE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION FEES, second.

Mr. Carroll-yes                      Mr. Connelly-yes  
Mrs. Fox-yes                         Mrs. LaPira-yes  
Mrs. Hamilton-yes                 Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

9. Mr. Carroll introduced ORDINANCE NO. 1102-22: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE USE OF REAL PROPERTY KNOWN AS LOT 15 BLOCK 23 ON THE TAX MAP OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS 129 HARDENBURGH AVENUE FOR BOROUGH OFFICES, second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes                      Mr. Connelly-yes  
Mrs. Fox-yes                         Mrs. LaPira-yes  
Mrs. Hamilton-yes                 Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

10. **The Borough Clerk read the following: Review of Consent Agenda Items:**  
All items with an asterisk are considered to be non-controversial by the Council and will be approved by one motion. There may be further discussion prior to the vote upon request of a member of the public or a Council member. Also, any item may be removed for further discussion or for roll call vote in which case the item will be removed and considered in its normal sequence as part of the general order of business.

**Resolutions**

11. Resolution approving authorizing claims in the amount of \$4,324,172.49\*  
12. Resolution authorizing the borough to apply for a county trust fund and historic preservation program grant \*

13. Resolution authorizing Demarest to apply for county trust fund park improvement grant\*
14. Resolution approving hiring a licensed tree expert as a consultant\*
15. Resolution authorizing release of escrow monies\*
16. Resolution accepting the dedication of the plaque and sign in memory of Nancy Woods\*
17. Resolution approving boot drive/coin toss for the fire department\*
18. Motion approving Jewish Federation raffle #RA-22-70\*
  
19. Request to remove items from Consent Agenda None
20. Discussion on items removed from Consent Agenda None

Mr. Carroll moved to open the meeting to the Public, second Mrs. Fox. All in favor. Carried.

Mr. Chudnoff asked how much the arborist would cost. He was told that it was at the request of the Shade Tree Commission and that less than \$5,000 was in the budget.

Mr. Bernstein asked whether there was currently a temporary budget. The Council stated that they were not sure whether there was. Mr. Bernstein asked whether they were authorized to pay bills if there was no temporary budget. Mrs. Fox called the CFO and was told that there is a temporary budget in place that covers this cost. Mr. Bernstein stated that he had made an OPRA request and was waiting for the budget. He also asked whether the CFO had been told not to come to the public meetings. He was told that the CFO was not told not to come.

Mr. Bernstein pointed out that 129 Hardenburgh was specifically purchased with affordable housing funds. Mr. Paster stated that the property was being reimbursed by a million dollars from the townhouses. Mr. Paster said that they did not have to go back to the affordable housing board to explain the change in direction. Mr. Bernstein asked if the money for the affordable housing was being returned to the general fund. Mr. Paster stated that it was a property swap and it was being repurposed. Mr. Bernstein asked about the proposed use of the bank building and whether the loss of that building as a possible ratable was considered. Mayor Iannuzzi stated that it had already been taken off the ratable possibilities because the Borough had to build affordable housing. There is no solid budget at this time.

Mr. Chudnoff stated that he believed that a strategic mistake was going to happen. He wished that someone had figured out a way to repurpose that building. Discussion.

Debra Longest (19 Brookway) asked whether the budget had come back from the Auditor. Mrs. Fox said that it had been introduced an hour ago. Ms. Longest asked whether the bank had been considered as senior housing. The Mayor and Council members explained that they had to build affordable housing.

Mr. Bernstein asked whether the bank had been acquired in such a way that it could only be used for a public purpose. Discussion. Mr. Bernstein said he believed that it was troubling for the residents when there was no budget. Mrs. Fox said that she had round numbers in her head. Mr. Paster stated that the bank purchased with eminent domain could only be used for public use. Discussion of changed plans and the history of the purchased properties.

Mrs. Hamilton moved to close the meeting to the Public on Consent Agenda items only, second Mr. Connelly. All in favor. Carried.

Mr. Carroll moved to approve Consent Agenda items 11-18, second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes	Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes	Mrs. LaPira-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes	Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

### **New Business**

Mr. Carroll moved to approve the minutes of special meeting of March 14, 2022 (JC, BC, DF, MH), second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes	Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Fox-abstain	Mrs. Hamilton-yes

Carried.

Mr. Carroll moved to approve the minutes of Mayor and Council meeting of March 28, 2022 (JC, DF, MH, AS, BC, RL), second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes	Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Fox-abstain	Mrs. LaPira-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes	Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

Mrs. Fox moved to approve the resolution approving the introduction of the 2022 Budget, second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes	Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes	Mrs. LaPira-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes	Mrs. Slowikowski-yes

Carried.

**Mayor's Report** Last Saturday the Nature Center held their birdhouse and bird feeder building event. The Shade Tree Commission held their Arbor Day tree event. Demarest has been named a Tree City. Opening Day is this Saturday.

### **Council Committee Reports**

Police, Fire, and Public Events: Mr. Carroll presented Mr. Foley's report. The radar trailer was set up on 4/19. Officer Luna has resigned and is moving on. The former PBA president, Officer Schmidig, is stepping down. The Memorial Day parade will take place this year. The theme will be honoring the veterans. He commended the Fire Chief for a great installation dinner.

Ambulance and Recreation: Mrs. LaPira reported that four individuals completed their EMR training for the ambulance. The Demarest Summer Rec program registration opens tomorrow.

Management, Administrative & Communication Committee: Mr. Connelly did not have a report.

Finance & Insurance Committee: Mrs. Fox stated that most of the month had been spent in lengthy budget meetings and that the increase had been caused by employees making purchases without authorization. The Mayor commended Mrs. Slowikowski on how quickly she came to understand public finance.

DPW, Public Buildings, Public Utilities & Recycling Committee: Mrs. Hamilton said that the DPW had been going out to take down trees that needed to come down. There are now about 120 stumps. The DPW is now removing them. The DPW will then soil and seed. The DPW has been cutting and splitting the wood and making it available to anyone who needs it.

Real Estate & Ordinance Committee: Mrs. Slowikowski reported that the Construction Department created a great spreadsheet to propose the fees in relation to other towns. She also stated that the Swim Club is looking for volunteers. The Mayor suggested putting this on the Website and the signboard. The Mayor commended the Ordinance Committee.

### **Reports of Borough Officials**

Borough Administrator: The Borough Phone system had been hacked. Attempted repairs are underway. The Administrator is working with Dart to resolve any risks to the computer system, as recommended by JIF. Also, the Borough achieved the Platinum level from JIF. He helped the Recreation Commission create the email address to [recreation@demarestnj.gov](mailto:recreation@demarestnj.gov). He is also recommending that their phone be upgraded from

a flip phone to a borough cellphone. The DPW superintendent vehicle was totaled in an accident. The DPW committee will discuss its replacement. There has been response for the part- and full-time administrative position. The position will be readvertised. The drainage issue on Drury Lane has been remedied and may help Brookside. There is a quote for the remediation of the Cresskill Brook, and FEMA would reimburse 90%.

Borough Attorney: no report

Borough Engineer: Among updates were the following: The Davies Arboretum dam evaluation is hoped to be soon. On the DPW compost site, he will look at it the next month, discuss with the Borough attorney, and work to bring it within compliance. Re Lenox Avenue: the design is ready. They are waiting for funding to be approved before going to bid. He gave an update of the other streets being repaired. Donnybrook drainage: The project has started; the surveyors have begun. Once done, the project will go to design. There was one Zoning Board application, which was carried. Tax maps: He has been working on them; they are not yet ready. The Assessor would like to have them by October. Mr. Zimmerman believes they can be done before then. The Pine Terrace at Emily Court drainage proposal is expected to be presented in May.

Borough Treasurer: not present

Police Chief: not present

Fire Chief: The Department will be leading the DAA parade on Saturday. A spam text went out about the Department selling t-shirts. He warned people not to fall for it. All of the department is undergoing training. Several are undergoing water rescue training. New hydrants are being put in where needed throughout town. This will bring a reduction in homeowner fire insurance.

Mr. Carroll reported that the Committee met and interviewed officers. The two existing sergeants, Visaggio and Dimitriadis, to Lieutenants, pending the Council's approval. The attorney will have resolutions ready next month.

Ambulance: president not present

Mr. Carroll moved to Open to the Public, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Carried.

Mayor Schooler asked how many officers there are in the PD. Discussion.

Demitri Fantanis (Woodland Road) asked for the next steps on Woodland Road. The Administrator described the radar enforcement underway and said that the traffic light will be adjusted to favor Hardenburgh. Trees were cut down for better visibility. The State and County have been reached out to. The data will be reviewed and a solution sought. Discussion about if there is any improvement. Perhaps communication with the parents of the High School students would help.

Marianne Clarke: The historian asked for a follow up on what she asked about last fall. She asked about the \$10,000 that was supposed to be held until certain things were purchased and is now gone. The second item was a huge bell that is missing. She said that she has not gotten any answers. The Administrator stated that the \$10,000 was earmarked for the Historical Society and was transferred at the end of the year when it was not used. She explained that the money was to be used for specific things and was not supposed to be used for anything else. He said that this year money (perhaps \$9,000) has been allocated to the Historical Society in the budget proposal. He also has asked many people about the bell and no one has seen it. The Mayor asked if the money could be in a trust account rather than a budget. She was told it was not a simple process.

Brian Bernstein asked about the compost site and asked whether there was a contract for another facility because it cannot be used. The Mayor suggested that what was done last year will be done again. Mr. Carroll stated that quotes have been requested. There are a number of issues at the DPW compost site. Mr. Bernstein asked what it cost the borough to send leaves elsewhere last year. Mrs. Fox will ask the CFO tomorrow morning. Discussion of the amount of the fine assessed for the compost site from DEP. The attorney stated the total financial exposure. Mr. Bernstein asked the Borough attorney to complete the OPRA requests he had submitted. He said that he had received nothing but nastiness. The attorney said that Mr. Bernstein was nitpicking. Mr. Bernstein suggested that the attorney's comments were not appropriate and asked the Mayor to add civility to the agenda.

Mrs. LaPira invited Mr. Bernstein to email the Council ahead of meetings with specific requests for information

Stacy Fantanis (Woodland Road) asked how the development off the condos on Duane/Brenner will affect schools and class sizes. The Mayor offered to follow up with the Superintendent. Discussion. Ms. Fantandis thanked the DPW and Fire and Police Departments for their services.

Mr. Carroll moved to close to the public, second Mrs. Fox. All in favor. Carried.

Mr. Carroll moved to adjourn, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Carried. Meeting adjourned at 10:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Susan Crosman, RMC