

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**November 25, 2024**

**7:30 PM**

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time and place of this meeting in the annual schedule of meetings of this Governing Body. Such schedule of meetings is posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website and was published in the Record and Star Ledger and was filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

**Mayor Bernstein invited Assaf Osher, who will sworn in as Deputy Mayor for the Day to lead those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Absent: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator  
Frank Visaggio, Acting Police Chief  
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney  
Peter Suh, CFO  
Jason Gangi, DPW Director  
Deputy Fire Chief Carl Pavlik  
Police Department Members

Councilmember Fox made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all to suspend the regular order of business for ceremonial swearing in of Assaf Osher as Deputy Mayor for the Day, swearing in of Police Officer Luke Cataldo and presentation of Community Service Recognition Awards.

Mayor Bernstein administered the oath of office to Assaf Osher and invited him to sit at the dais and assist with the meeting.

Mayor Bernstein administered the oath of office to Police Officer Luke Cataldo who was joined by his family.

**Community Service Awards Presentation:**

Mayor Bernstein presented certificates of appreciation for recognition of Outstanding Community Service in 2024 to the following Borough employees and volunteers: *(Mayor's Public Comments are attached)*

Dr. Elizabeth Meyers, Demarest Baptist Church  
Dr. Gary Thomas, Demarest Baptist Church  
Joseph Del Greco, Demarest Police Detective  
Brian Hampton, Demarest Police Detective

Councilmember Reiss made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Fox and approved by all to recess the meeting for 5 minutes.

Mayor Bernstein called the meeting back to order and continued with the presentation of community service awards: *(Mayor's Public Comments are attached)*

Roberta Hoag, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Andrew Woods, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Jeff Geisenheimer, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Fred Zigami, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Michael Cecon, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Stephan Tillack, Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps.  
Jason Gangi, DPW Manager & DPW Roadmen

**Ordinance (Introduction):**

**ORDINANCE 1150-24** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND MODIFYING ARTICLE IV PERSONNEL REGULATIONS, §40-23 OF THE DEMAREST BOROUGH CODE

A motion was made by Councilmember Reiss and seconded by Councilmember Fox to introduce on first reading by title Ordinance No. 1150-24 and it published in the Bergen Record with notice of Public Hearing to be held on December 9, 2024.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

**Nays:** None

**Ordinance Public Hearing: (none)**

**Resolution 201-24 Resolution to Accept Donation**

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to approve Resolution 201-24 accepting a donation of planters from Resident Noelle Tutunjian.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

**Nays:** None

Mayor Bernstein thanked Ms. Tutunjian for the donation and resident Patty Rotile for her design assistance.

**Consent Agenda:**

Resolution No. 194-24

Authorizing Budget Transfers

Resolution No. 195-24

Approving Soil Moving – 61 Ross Ave.

Resolution No. 196-24

Authorizing Bids for Unimproved Road Improvements

Resolution No. 197-24	Authorizing Tree Survey
Resolution No. 198-24	Approving Junior/Auxiliary Fire Department Member
Resolution No. 199-24	Hiring Casual Labor – Snow Plowing
Resolution No. 200-24	Payment of Bills
Resolution No. 202-24	Authorizing Reissuance of Certain 2025 Professional RFQ

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to approve the consent agenda.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang  
**Nays:** None

**Minutes for Approval:**

July 22, 2024 Regular Meeting  
October 28, 2024 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to approve the minutes of July 22 and October 28 meetings.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang  
**Abstain:** Councilmember Fox  
**Nays:** None

**Mayor’s Report**

Mayor Bernstein advised that he would like to spearhead a collaboration with NVD to partner students with local seniors to add in technology needs. He proposes reaching out to the high school to see if it is a viable program. The Council expressed a consensus that they agree this would be a great service to the community.

**Council Committee Reports**

**Finance & Personnel (Slowikowski)**

Council President Slowikowski reported that the 2025 budget process is on schedule and meetings with Department Heads, Administration and Finance Department will be held over the next month to work on keeping costs down and budgeting properly for 2025.

**Ordinance (Fox)**

Councilmember Fox reported that the revised Zoning Ordinance should be ready for introduction in early 2025 and the tree removal ordinance is almost ready for introduction.

**DPW & Recreation (Marks)**

Councilmember Marks advised that leaf pickup will continue through 12/9 followed by a return to chipping by the DPW. He further advised that the fields have been winterized and the Borough is close to an agreement on a new contract with the DPW Union. He added his thanks to the DPW for their work during leaf season.

**Economic Development (Jiang)**

Councilmember Jiang was absent. No report.

Police and OEM (Reiss)

Councilmember Reiss reported on a successful Trunk or Treat event held by the PBA. He detailed new training that Officer Cho and Owens received to assist the Department with OPRA and Discovery. He congratulated Officer Dennis Cameron on completing the NYC Marathon in 5 hours and 10 minutes. Lastly, he wished Acting Chief Visaggio a speedy recovery from recent surgery.

Fire and EMS (Collins)

Councilmember Collins was absent. No report.

**Reports of Borough Officials**

Borough Attorney No Report

Borough Treasurer No Report

Ambulance

Police Chief

Acting Chief Visaggio reported on the activity of the Police Department.

Fire Chief

Deputy Chief Pavlik reported on the activity of the Department and advised that the recent Red Flag warning on outdoor fires has been lifted. He thanked the community for their compliance that kept everyone safe during the ban on outdoor fires. He confirmed that the Department would be escorting Santa through town to distribute candy canes on 12/22. He advised that the Department would partner with Haworth to hold their annual installation dinner to save on costs.

**Meeting Open to the Public**

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to open the meeting to the public.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

**Nays:** None

There being no members of the public wishing to speak, the meeting was closed to the public on a motion by Councilmember Fox, seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all.

**Closed Session Resolution 2024-010**

Personnel / Professional Appointments

Contract Negotiations

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Marks to approve Resolution 2024-010 to adjourn to executive session to discuss professional appointments and update contract negotiations. Action may be taken when the meeting returns to open session.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

**Nays:** None

The Council returned to open session.

**Ordinance (Introduction):**

**ORDINANCE 1151-24 AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A JOINT PLANNING BOARD AND AMENDING CHAPTER 27 ENTITLED "LAND USE PROCEDURES" OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF DEMAREST, COUNTY OF BERGEN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

Acting Borough Clerk Falkenstern asked for a motion to introduce on first reading by title Ordinance No. 1151-24 and it published in the Bergen Record with notice of Public Hearing to be held on December 9, 2024

A motion was made by Councilmember Reiss and seconded by Council President Slowikowski.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Absent:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang

**Nays:** None

Councilmember Fox noted that she has concerns about whether or not a joint board is appropriate but voted yes because she feels a public hearing is the appropriate venue for that decision to be made.

There being no more business before the Council, a motion was made by Councilmember Marks, seconded by Councilmember Fox and approved by all to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern  
Acting Borough Clerk

**Demarest Baptist Church**  
**Dr. Elizabeth Meyers**  
**Dr. Gary Thomas**

Dr. Meyers and Thomas, please join me.

I stand before you today with a heart full of gratitude. On behalf of the Borough of Demarest, I want to extend our sincerest thanks to the Demarest Baptist Church, its Trustees and Members for their incredible generosity in donating the Church property on Piermont Road to the Borough. This is no small gift, and we are deeply humbled by your generosity. Others were interested in this property but you saw fit to donate it to Demarest. The Church began its existence in 1875 and continued to offer a place of worship and spiritual guidance to the local community until this year – a span of 149 years. Its longevity and community spirit will endure through the vision of the Church in donating the property to Demarest. I have already started initial conversations to create a senior and youth center at the Church property.

We know that the decision to part with such a valuable asset was not taken lightly, and we are fully aware of the deep commitment you have to our community.

I'd also like to acknowledge the friendship created between me and Dr. Meyers and Dr. Thomas and their hard work in making this gift possible. Your unwavering belief in the Demarest has truly been inspiring and I am grateful for your trust, friendship and generosity.

Once again, thank you for this extraordinary gift.

**Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps**  
**Roberta Hoag**  
**Andrew Woods**  
**Jeff Geisenheimer**

The Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps, or DVAC, operates out of headquarters downtown near the DPW building. The Corps maintains up-to-date equipment to serve the needs of Demarest and surrounding communities.

DVAC has saved lives, taken care of our elderly, our injured, our sick, our frightened residents that think their world has come crashing down, and the Corp does so with care, compassion, and professionalism.

I would like to thank the Demarest Volunteer Ambulance Corps for their dedication, excellence, commitment and the service they provide to our residents 24/7, 365 days a year.

But there are three people to whom I must give special recognition. These three individuals do not seek recognition or thanks. In fact, such recognition makes them uncomfortable. Their service to the Borough is heartfelt, personal and driven by the selfless desire to help people in need of emergency medical service.

I would like to call up Roberta Hoag, Andrew Woods and Jeff Geisenheimer. When the ambulance rolls out of the Ambulance Building and responds to your home, car or wherever your emergency may be, you will see Roberta, Andy and/or Jeff. And trust me, you will be glad to see them and receive their professional care.

They have a response record that is the envy of neighboring towns. And, to the credit of Roberta, Andrew and Jeff, they are the EMTs that make almost all of the runs.

My respect and admiration for them could not be higher. They are the engine that serves to protect you. And despite their excellent call record and service, they are engaging with me to insure that EMS service in Demarest will survive their personal abilities to serve us in the future. When it comes to emergency service, you can never rest on your laurels!

And, not to be remiss, I also recognize that these three are part of a team that responded to over 95% of the calls so far this year. In this regard, I also want to recognize and thank Fred Zigami, Mike Ceccon and new driver Stephen Tillack for riding and driving on multiple duty nights weekly.

For all that you do, I say thank you on behalf of the Mayor and Council and all of the residents of Demarest.

**The DPW**  
**Jason Gangi, DPW Manager**  
**DPW Roadmen James Berlamino, Daniel Ceccon, Joseph DiRese,**  
**Todd Rogers and Keith Mitchell**  
**Buildings & Grounds Owen Fox**

Jason, please join me and bring with your crew and introduce them.

The Public Works Department is an emergency response team. They respond to calls about fallen trees, road emergencies, road closures, snow falls, ice storms, floods and just about every emergency. They are on call 24/7, 365 days a year.

They are also responsible for all of the roads that are owned by the Borough, leaf collection, maintenance of the parks and Borough buildings, storm water management, snow removal, addressing ice conditions, floods, maintaining the 9-11 Memorial, the War Memorial, the flags flown in town and scores of other matters that are too numerous to list. It's only a 2 hour show!

When it snows overnight and you can drive to work in the morning or take your kids to school, it's because they were working all night to clear the roads. When you put leaves out at the curb and go inside for a quick cup of coffee and return to find that the leaves are gone, it's because they do a spectacular job collecting our leaves.

When you take a moment and appreciate the plantings around Borough Hall and other municipal buildings, it's because the DPW was there.

You won't find another DPW crew more dedicated, professional and efficient than ours. I am proud of every member of the DPW and the work that each of you do for our community.

Thank you.

## **Detective Lieutenant Joe Del Greco and Detective Brian Hampton**

I would like to call up Detective Lieutenant Joe Del Greco and Detective Brian Hampton. First, let me acknowledge that your work as Detectives for the Demarest Police Department has been professional and impressive. That is quite the task, as both of you are following in your predecessor's footsteps, Captain Brian Talty, who served as the Department's detective in an exemplary manner. But the two of you have created an exceptional professional standard against which we will judge the performance of our detectives in the future.

I want to share with the public a snapshot of your work involving a recent burglary.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, Demarest officers responded to a reported home burglary. Unknown suspects broke into a residence and stole the keys to a black Range Rover belonging to the homeowner.

After the initial responding Police Officers secured the scene, detectives Greco and Hampton arrived on scene and began their

detective work. They canvassed the area for any video surveillance footage that might have captured the suspects. They successfully obtained footage showing three suspects and tracked the vehicle to a general location in the Bronx, NYC.

Capt. Talty authorized the detectives to travel into New York City to locate and retrieve the vehicle. Clearly, the work of the detectives, and the danger they might encounter, did not end at the borders of our town.

Upon arriving in the Bronx, Lt. Del Greco and Det. Hampton located the Range Rover in a parking garage and confirmed it was indeed our resident's vehicle by the vehicle's VIN number as the owner's plates were removed from the vehicle. While they could have recovered the stolen vehicle and returned to Demarest, the detectives' instincts told them something was unusual about the parking garage and its staff.

As a result, they began inspecting other vehicles within the garage. Their suspicions were confirmed when they discovered several other stolen vehicles, some of which were linked to investigations by the New York State Police and New Jersey State Police. They secured the location until their New York law enforcement counterparts arrived on scene.

Through their extraordinary detective work, Detectives Del Greco and Hampton recovered our resident's stolen vehicle and other stolen vehicles and property having a value in excess \$500,000.00, which has been returned to victims in New Jersey and New York. Our detectives are still working with their counterparts in both States to bring all those involved in the crimes to justice. To borrow a phrase associated with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "they always get their man."

I want to commend both Det. Lt. Joseph Del Greco and Det. Brian Hampton for their incredible police work. This case is only one example of our detectives' professionalism, dedication and determination in service to the Department and our residence.

Please join me in congratulating Detectives Del Greco and Hampton on a job well done and for their continuing and commendable dedication to excellence.