

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST
Municipal Building**

**WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
January 22, 2024
7:30 PM**

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm at the above place.

Mayor Bernstein read the compliance statement and invited all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Absent: Councilmember Jiang

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney
Peter Suh, CFO
Anthony Dimitriadis, Police Chief
Jason Gangi, Public Works Manager
John McLoughlin, Fire Chief / OEM Coordinator
Roberta Hoag, EMS Chief

Mayor's Appointments

Mayor Bernstein announced the following Board/Commission appointments.

Dimitri Gatanas to the Shade Tree Commission filling a vacancy, a full term ending 12/31/28

Fatemah Mamdani

Class IV member of Planning Board, filling unexpired term ending 12/31/2026

Consent Agenda

Mayor Bernstein asked if any member would like to have any resolution removed from the consent agenda and voted on separately. (none)

Mayor Bernstein asked if any member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the consent agenda. (none)

Consent Agenda:

Resolution No. 040-24	Resolution to Appoint Appraisal Systems
Resolution No. 041-24	Resolution to Escrow Release
Resolution No. 042-24	Shade Tree Dedication by Rider
Resolution No. 043-24	Contract for Cleaning Borough Buildings
Resolution No. 044-24	Mutual Aid Plan and Rapid Deployment Force Interlocal Service Agreement
Resolution No. 045-24	Deferred Compensation Plan – Equitable
Resolution No. 046-24	Bills List

A motion was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Fox to approve the consent agenda.

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

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Jiang

Council Committee Reports

Finance & Personnel

Council President Slowikowski welcomed and wished luck to the Borough's newest employee, Michael Greco who started as Deputy Borough Clerk and Land Use Secretary. She reported that the new pool board is meeting each week to discuss the future of the swim club given their financial constraints. The Board is working well together, and she is confident they will put a plan in place to address the future of the swim club soon. She noted that the Club is still fundraising to assist and invited anyone interested in making any type of donation or sponsorship, including large corporate sponsorship, to visit the Club's new website for information.

Ordinance

Councilmember Fox reported that the committee is continuing their ordinance review, and they will have several updated ordinances for the council's consideration soon. The Borough Attorney advised that she has some suggestions on the Vacant Property Ordinance, and she will provide them to the Committee when the review is complete. Lastly, she reported that the committee is continuing its work on the large zoning ordinance revision required by the Master Plan update.

DPW & Recreation

Councilmember Marks reported that he has met with both the DPW Manager and Recreation Commission to get up to speed on his new committee assignment. He recapped the latest recreation events. Additionally, the Recreation Commission is in search of an event planner to assist with Demarest Day planning. Councilmember Marks also reported that Library has concerns about the condition/cleaning of the train station which they often use for their events. A discussion ensued on the rental process and clean up responsibilities. The Borough Administrator is looking at the ordinance, application and policies and will report back.

Economic Development

In Councilmember Jiang's absence the Mayor reported that Councilmember Jiang is anxious to get to work on this committee and will be reaching out to the Borough Planner to discuss option for invigorating the downtown and will report back to the Governing Body on his findings.

Police and OEM

Councilmember Reiss reported that he has met with his committee and has the first of what he hopes will be regular meetings with the Police Chief and Deputy Chief upcoming.

Fire and EMS

Councilmember Collins commended the Fire and EMS services for their preparedness and responses during the January storms.

Reports of Borough Officials

Borough Administrator

Ms. Falkenstern thanked OEM Coordinator John McLoughlin for the pre and post storm meetings he held and expressed that the process should be continued as the meeting was valuable and effective. She thanked the DPW for their road work during the past ice/snow event. She noted that pet licenses are due by the end of February and that she will confirm that the County has enough vaccine for the planned 2/10 Rabies clinic and post on the website in the coming days. She offered a reminder to shovel your sidewalk after a storm to avoid a summons. Lastly reported the dates of Demarest Day and the 5K for 20024.

Borough Attorney

Ms. Rosendahl reported that professionals service contracts are almost complete. Additionally, she asked for feedback for the contract approved tonight for Appraisal Systems. She asked for direction from the Council whether they want to authorize the alternate bid provisions for a five 5-year contract to conduct a percentage of assessments each year. The Council discussed and advised that they would like to limit the scope of the contract to the townwide one-time assessment.

Ambulance

Roberta Hoag, Chief of the EMS

Ms. Hoag reported that the EMS responded to 388 calls in 2023, 219 of which were in town and 169 for mutual aid. There were a total of 8 calls that the Corps was not able to respond to.

Additionally, she reported that the Corps is compiling a list that will be shared with the Borough of all AEDs located in Demarest.

Police Chief

Anthony Dimitriadis, Police Chief

Chief Dimitriadis reported the following:

An officer's 21 Sick days for the month due to injury and Deputy Chief Visaggio's promotion (precluding scheduled manpower), along with two officers contracting COVID resulted in 39 hours of shift coverage for the month. We will seek to recoup the additional 39 hours during the State of Emergency declared from the storm.

Our two newest hires are completing their field training and will be ready to work independently by February 12th

Credit to their professionalism and experience along with their Field Training Officers Hampton's & Krynicki's time and effort having them ready two weeks earlier than anticipated.

I met with the organizers of the 5K Run scheduled for May 19th. I advised them I will schedule regular and Special Officers for the event, but there may be a fee involved for the crossing guards as they are now contracted through a private vendor. They will follow up with Recreation Commissioner Marks regarding possible billing.

Fire

John McLoughlin, Fire Chief

Chief McLoughlin reported that the Department responded to 385 calls. He detailed the Shared Service process with Haworth for response. He also reported that he held an OEM meeting and is happy with the progress of the OEM procedures. The Chief reported that the OEM office would be moved to the DPW building and he will be exploring proper generators for backup power at the DPW as well as upgraded generators for Borough Hall/PD and the Fire House. He will include this information in his 2024 OEM budget request for consideration. He then commented on mutual aid associations and their usefulness for Fire and EMS. A discussion ensued between the Fire Chief and the EMS Chief on whether the current process is enough for proper response from EMS and suggested that the Cresskill department be included in any mutual aid decisions. The EMS Chief said that since Cresskill is not a volunteer department, they are not included in the mutual aid agreement with the other Northern Valley towns, and she does not believe they can be. The Fire Chief disagreed and stated as OEM Coordinator he is concerned about the process and believes it should be reviewed to ensure rapid response and proper coverage for Demarest. Chief McLoughlin also said the Borough should consider billing for ambulance services. The concept involves the Borough accepting payment from the patient's insurance company, but not balance billing the resident. Chief Hoag stated that this type of billing would jeopardize the EMS Volunteer status. The Borough Attorney noted that other Borough's

do this through outside contractors. Mayor Bernstein thanked both Chiefs for their input and noted that further discussion would be necessary on these issues.

Approval of Minutes:

January 8, 2024 Work Session Meeting

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Council President Slowikowski to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2024 Council meeting.

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

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Jiang

Councilmember Fox made a motion, seconded by Council President Slowikowski to open the meeting to the public.

There being no member of the public wishing to speak, the meeting was closed to the public.

Closed Session Resolution 2024-002 – Contract Negotiations

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Collins to adjourn to closed session for contract negotiation update.

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

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Jiang

The Council adjourned to closed session. (note that Councilmember Jiang arrived during the executive session and participated in that portion of the closed meeting)

The Council reconvened in open session at 9:10 and Councilmember Fox made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all.

The meeting was therefore adjourned at 9:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Falkenstern
Acting Borough Clerk

