

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

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 26, 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 Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney
Peter Suh, CFO
Frank Visaggio, Deputy Police Chief
Brian Talty, Police Captain
Carl Pavlik, Deputy Fire Chief
Roberta Hoag, EMS Chief

Public Hearing for Grant Application

Resilient Communities Grant for Arboretum Dam

Mayor Bernstein explained that the Borough is seeking funding to make repairs to the Arboretum Dam and asked if anyone from the public has questions or comments on the grant application.

Mike Clark
150 Donnybrook

Mr. Clark asked what would happen if we did not receive the funding. Mayor Bernstein stated that the Borough would have to find other funding or provide for the funds in the Borough budget to ensure that the necessary work on the dam gets completed. Mr. Clark stated he hopes that the funds come through.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak, the public hearing for the grant application was closed.

Resolution 055-24 Resolution to authorize Colliers Engineering and Design to conduct Redevelopment Study

Councilman Jiang explained that the Economic Development Committee would like to authorize the Borough Planner to investigate the commercial properties only downtown to see if they qualify for a Redevelopment Designation that would allow the Borough to engage developers to improve those properties with long term tax incentives. A discussion ensued on the benefits of a PILOT program.

A motion was made by Councilmember Jiang to approve the proposal. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks.

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

Nays: None

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 Councilmember Marks to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Reiss.

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

Nays: None

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Bernstein reported that he has asked Rockland Electric to look at the street lighting at the intersection of Hardenburgh and Piermont Rd./County Rd. to add lights to the current poles because the intersection is not well lit at night.

Council Committee Reports

Finance & Personnel

Council President Slowikowski reported that the new finance software is scheduled to be in place in March. She congratulated Peter Suh on obtaining his MCFO license. She then reported that new members of the Pool Board have been meeting every week to ensure that the pool can open this year. They will hold an in-person registration at Borough Hall on March 14.

Ordinance

Councilmember Fox reported that the committee is continuing their ordinance review, including the large Zoning Ordinance and she hopes to have it for the Council's consideration soon.

DPW & Recreation

Councilmember Marks thanked the DPW for the job they are doing chipping the large number of branches that came down in recent storms. He reported that Neglia Engineering has been engaged to review drainage issues at Wakelee Field. He reported that Recreation is planning their summer concert series set to begin June 26 and continue through August 14 and Demarest Day will be September 21. Lastly he detailed the many programs the library will be offering in March.

Economic Development

Councilmember Jiang reported that he is pleased the council approved the Redevelopment study earlier and looks forward to the results to spur improvements downtown.

Police and OEM

Councilmember Reiss thanked the Police for their communication with him over the past weeks and their handling of issues that have arisen and welcomed Deputy Chief Visaggio and Captain Talty to the meeting to give a Police Department Report later.

Fire and EMS

Councilmember Collins reported thanked the EMS and Fire Chiefs for the productive meeting they had recently to discuss emergency services. He noted that EMS Chief Roberta Hoag and Deputy Chief Pavlik are in attendance to make reports later in the meeting.

Reports of Borough Officials

Borough Administrator

Ms. Falkenstern reported that she recently attended training at the Bergen County Clerk's office addressing changes for the upcoming elections and that the County is looking for Board workers and directed the public to visit the website for more details. She reminded people that they need to curb their dogs as the Borough has recent complaints of messy parks. Lastly, she reminded all residents that the Borough adopted a bamboo ordinance in late 2023 and the Property Maintenance officer will be enforcing this ordinance in the coming weeks.

Borough Attorney

No report

Borough Treasurer

Mr. Suh reported that department heads have all been given budget documents and he will meet with them in the coming weeks to discuss department needs. Additionally, the change over to the new finance software is underway and should be complete in March. As such for the next 3 days no payments can be made as they complete the transfer.

Ambulance

Roberta Hoag, Chief of the EMS

Ms. Hoag reported that the EMS responded to 25 calls in January, had 5 cancelled calls and no missed calls. So far in February there have been 21 calls, and none have been missed. She noted that the Ambulance is always looking for more volunteers.

Police Chief

Frank Visaggio, Deput Police Chief

DC Visaggio reported the following:

The Demarest Police Department logged a total of 926 calls for service and administrative activities since the last council meeting on 01/22/2024:

Some of the calls of service included

5- Fraud Investigations

1 – Theft investigation

2- Home Burglary's- (Evergreen Place on 01/23/24, and Columbus Road 02/25/24)

1-Verbal Dispute

1 Threat investigation

14 MV Crashes

9 - Medical Calls for service

Storm related calls: 14 calls for wires down, 6 parking complaints and 2 disabled MV.

6 -Fire alarm calls

15- Burglary alarm calls

Patrol Officers have conducted the following:

224 motor vehicles stops, resulting in 127 summonses being issued

4 vehicle impounds

1 warrant arrest from a motor vehicle stop

1 CDS (Drug) arrest of a suspect in possession of 124 Nitrous Oxide (NO2) chargers/cartridges. A toxic chemical used to as an inhalant to get high. This motor vehicle stop led to the defendant also being charged with theft for the

previously mentioned Nitrous Oxide from Starbucks. I want to commend both officer Joseph Solan and Ferando Saint-Hilaire and Det. Lt. DelGreco and Det. Hampton on some incredible police work.

Detective Bureau Investigations:

The detective bureau has conducted numerous investigations during the course of this month.

5 Fraud investigations involving Identity theft, banking fraud, theft by deception, a crypto currency scam, and an artificial intelligence fraud investigation case.

One criminal mischief investigation yielded restitution to a resident for damage to their property.

Theft investigation involving a "Zelle" Electronic money transfer yielding restitution to a resident for \$2000.00.

Three (3) Juvenile investigations.

11 total Solicitor's Permits issued

Three (3) back ground investigations were conducted on 3 potential candidates for positions as SLEO I (Special Officer I)

- This March the Police Department will be conducting Pedestrian Safety Enforcement and Education. Click It or Ticket.
- Our Officers along with our SRO (School Resource Officer) Don Cho will be assisting in Driver Education Classes at NVRHS, topics to be covered and reinforced are Probationary Driver rules, DUI enforcement and (SFSTs) Standardized Field Sobriety Test.
- Our Officers will be participating in the READ ACROSS AMERICA Event during the first week of March. A few of our officers will be reading selected books or stories to the Students at County Road school.
- Academy Lane parking, PD has been monitoring parking of students from Academy of Holy Angels. There have been no issues reported by any of our officers thus far.
- I'd like to commend our two new hires (Officers Saint-Hilaire/Nolasco) for completing their FTO training. I'm happy to report both Officers have assimilated to their new roles extremely well and both have become invaluable members of our Police Department.

Finally I want to thank the DPW, the Demarest Fire Department and the Demarest Ambulance Corps for all support and their assistance throughout the month.

Fire

Carl Pavlik, Deputy Fire Chief

DC Pavlik thanked the Police, EMS and DPW for their support during the calls in January and February and reported that the Department conducted a number of training exercises and drill already in 2024.

Approval of Minutes:

February 12, 2024 Work Session Meeting

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Council President Slowikowski to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2024 Council meeting.

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

Nays: None

Councilmember Collins made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Reiss, to open the meeting to the public.

Catherine Carrara
17 Prescott

Ms. Carrara asked the Borough to address her neighbor's bamboo which has caused property damage and electric outages in storms.

Mike Clark
150 Donnybrook

Mr. Clark asked about the church property that the Borough is acquiring. Mayor Bernstein explained that the donation would be used for a senior center. He then asked about the bank property. Mayor Bernstein explained that the area is being studied for the best use along with changes to Borough Hall. He then commented that there is a home on Hardenburgh that is storing what he believes to be unregistered cars. DC Visaggio said they will look at the property. He then expressed concern, echoed by Former Mayor Schooler (12 Lincoln St.) from the audience about speeding in the middle of town along with confusing signage. A discussion ensued on laws around speed limits on County Roads vs. business districts and residential areas. The Police will look at the signage.

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

There being no further business before the council, Councilmember Collins made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Marks. The motion was approved by all, and the meeting was therefore adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern
Acting Borough Clerk