

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST
REGULAR MEETING Minutes
September 28, 2026
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 was published as required by law and is posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website and filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

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

Absent: None

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney
Frank Visaggio, Police Chief
John McLoughlin, Fire Chief
Jason Gangi, DPW Director

Ordinance (Introduction): *(none)*

Ordinance Public Hearing (Adoption): *(none)*

Consent Agenda

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to have any resolution removed from the consent agenda and voted on separately.

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the consent agenda.

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to accept the consent agenda (with any abstentions noted)

Consent Agenda:

Resolution No. 175-26	Code Enforcement 2026 Salary
Resolution No. 176-26	Release of Escrow
Resolution No. 177-26	Payment of Bills

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to approve the Consent Agenda.

Roll Call:

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

Nays: None

Mayor's Report

Mayor Bernstein reported that the borough emerged unharmed from the previous weekend's storm. He expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Works (DPW), Police Department, Fire Department and EMS for their readiness and services during the storm.

Council Committee Reports

Finance & Personnel (Collins)

Councilmember Collins reported that Finance Committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow evening to review the current year's budget and continue the planning process for next year's budget. The CFO has distributed initial worksheets to department heads and has met with department heads to begin discussing the 2027 budget and reviewing the process.

Ordinance (Carmeli)

Councilmember Carmeli noted that while she did not anything to report on ordinances this evening, as the liaison to the Nature Center she wanted to report mention that the Demarest Nature Center has approached the borough with a proposal to pursue a state grant funding for a comprehensive restoration of the pond. The project aims to improve the overall water quality, wildlife habitat and create new educational opportunities for the community. But before the Council is ready to hear them and before, they will discuss the proposal with the Borough Administrator.

DPW & Recreation (Marks)

Councilmember Marks reported that Demarest Day was moved to the rain date of October 10 at 1:00. There will be fireworks at the end of the evening. Additionally, recreation is planning for the Halloween parade that will be earlier in the day because it

is on the day of Halloween so the earlier time will account for kids in the afternoon. The event is at 10:30 at the gazebo including a parade where there will be prizes given for various costume categories.

Mayor Bernstein asked when the tree lighting and Menorah lighting were scheduled and Councilmember Marks reported that the holiday tree lighting ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, December 1 and the Menorah lighting is scheduled for Sunday, December 6th.

Economic Development (Slowikowski)

Council President Slowikowski gave an update on the downtown redevelopment project at 129 Hardenburgh detailing the milestones that have been met. She reported that the committee is scheduled to meet soon to review concept plans in preparation to make a recommendation on a final concept plan to the council in the coming weeks.

Police and OEM (Reiss)

Councilmember Reiss said he had nothing to report as the Chief is in attendance and will give an update on the Department.

Fire and EMS (Jiang)

Councilmember Jiang said he will leave the update on the Fire Department to the Chief who is in attendance and noted that he has not been able to connect with EMS leadership and has not received any reports, but he will keep trying to connect with them.

Reports of Borough Officials

Borough Administrator

Ms. Falkenstern reported that she has some more information to supplement Councilmember Carmeli's report in regard to the Nature Center grant request. She reported that she spoke to Mr. Tillack about what they were looking to do and that she had put him in touch with the Borough's grant consultant because he stated that they were budgeting some money for a grant writer but the Borough should be able to assist with that cost. She reported that there are many open questions that need to be answered and Mr. Tillack was going to follow up after he did some research. She reported that they are talking about a Green Acres grant and that the application is due in February. Ms. Falkenstern advised that one of her biggest concerns is DEP permitting which is costly and time consuming and she is not sure that the Nature Center was aware that the process of that permitting and of even applying for the grant can be expensive and arduous. If the project is likely to go forward, she would anticipate members of the DNC to come to a Council meeting to discuss the grant in the next month or so. Ms. Falkenstern then reported that the Northern Valley Board of Ed is planning to construct a turf field in the back of the high school on Columbus. She has some questions about what kind of review it needs, and she is looking into that, but the plans are available at Borough Hall if anyone would like to review them.

Police Chief

Chief Visaggio reported on the monthly activity of the department which included 1,377 calls for service since the previous council meeting. He added that his officers continue to leave yellow cards at residential properties as a physical reminder for residents to lock their homes. He reported that the department is providing three neighboring municipalities with defensive tactics training sessions to be hosted in October and those departments will be paying \$1,000 each to the Borough for the service. He added that scams and fraud continue to be an issue for residents, particularly seniors, and noted a significant uptick in identity theft, credit card fraud, and general utility/financial scams. He advised that you should not give anyone personal information and that residents should reach out to the Police for assistance when in doubt. He also cautioned residents to watch for porch pirates and winter-related residential thefts as the colder season approaches. The Demarest PD will participate in Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October; officers will wear pink badges and hats. The PBA-sponsored Back to School Bash was reported as a success. And lastly, he congratulated Sgt. Krynicki and his wife Stephanie who are expecting their first child in January.

Fire Chief

Fire Chief McLaughlin reported department activity including an unprecedented 500 calls year-to-date, representing more than 3,300 volunteer man-hours.

Upcoming activities include Demarest Day, fire conventions, and school safety visits scheduled for October 6th and 7th.

The department was awarded a \$42,000 SAFER Grant to fund the Length of Service Award Program. The funds can be spent over a one to five-year period, starting with this year's program (to be paid out next year). The department was awarded AFG Grant for approximately \$17,000 to \$18,000 for training. This was submitted as a three-town joint grant application with Haworth and Closter for a training trailer and training funds totaling \$120,000. The training trailer portion was not approved, but the "Firefighter 2 training" funds were awarded to be shared among the three towns.

Because Demarest serves as the lead agency on the grant, the borough will initially receive the full \$857 bill and then invoice Haworth and Closter for their \$285 shares.

DPW Director

Mr. Gangi reported that his department is preparing for leaf season and winding down on other landscaping tasks. He reported that they are carefully monitoring fields and working to rectify some irrigation issues. He reported that branch pick up is suspended during leaf season but will continue in January.

Approval of Minutes

September 14, 2026 Work Session Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Carmeli to approve the Minutes.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss
Nays: None

July 13, 2026 Work Session Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Marks to approve the Minutes.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss
Nays: None

Meeting Open to the Public

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks to open the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all on a voice vote.

Ray Cywinski

Mr. Cywinski asked for clarification on which pond the Nature Center was proposing work on. Ms. Falkenstern and Mr. Gangi explained the pond near the playground was formerly the skate pond.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak, Councilmember Marks made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Reiss and approved by all on a voice vote. The clerk noted to the public that the Council may take action when returning to open session.

Resolution No. 2026-005 AUTHORIZE THE CONVENING OF A CLOSED SESSION

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 provides for a Public Body to go into a Closed Session during a Public Meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Governing Body of the Borough of Demarest has deemed it necessary to go into closed session to discuss matters which are exempted from the public.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Borough of Demarest that the Governing Body shall go into closed session on September 28, 2026 for the following reasons as outlined in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12:

1. Negotiations

Councilmember Collins made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-005. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all on a voice vote.

The Council returned from closed session at 8:15 pm. Councilmember Carmeli made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Council President Slowikowski and approved by all on a voice vote.

The meeting was therefore adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern, RMC
Borough Clerk