

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST
WORK SESSION Minutes
October 13, 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

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
Nick Chelius, Borough Attorney

Councilmember Marks made a motion to suspend the regular order of business to present community service awards. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins.

Roll Call:

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

Nays: None

Mayor Bernstein Presented Community Service Awards to the following members of the Community:

Police Bravery Awards for Exemplary Service

Mayor Bernstein recognized three officers of the Demarest Police Department—Chief Frank Visaggio, Lieutenant Joseph Del Greco, and Patrolman Kyle Polo—for extraordinary bravery and life-saving actions during a residential structure fire.

He reported that on August 11, 2026, the three officers responded to an active structure fire at 59 Woodland Road, arriving to find heavy fire emanating from the second floor. With no confirmation as to whether the home was unoccupied, the officers attempted to enter through the front and

garage doors without success. Chief Visaggio, utilizing his martial arts background, kicked in a side door to force entry. Chief Visaggio and Lieutenant Del Greco entered the burning home to search the ground floor while Patrolman Polo retrieved a fire extinguisher to provide suppression support. The officers faced extreme heat, heavy smoke, and falling debris before worsening conditions compelled them to withdraw. The resident was confirmed safe outside the building. All three officers were transported to Englewood Hospital for medical evaluation due to acute smoke exposure and were subsequently released. Mayor Bernstein stated that the officers demonstrated "courage, selflessness and an unwavering commitment to preserving life," placing themselves in harm's way to uphold the solemn promise to protect and serve. Chief Visaggio was absent from the meeting due to a previous commitment; Deputy Talty accepted the certificate of commendation on his behalf alongside Lieutenant Del Greco and Patrolman Polo.

Commendation of Demarest Fire Department Lieutenant Matthew Carey

Lieutenant Matthew Carey, who also serves as a Special Law Enforcement Officer (SLEO Class 1) for the Borough of Demarest, was commended for performing a life-saving intervention while off duty.

Mayor Bernstein reported that while participating as a civilian runner at the Haworth 5K road race in the previous month, Lieutenant Carey witnessed a fellow runner suffer sudden cardiac arrest approximately 100 feet from the finish line. Lieutenant Carey immediately ran to the fallen runner and initiated CPR alongside responding personnel from the Haworth Police Department and Haworth EMS. The runner regained consciousness on scene, was transported to the hospital, and it was reported that he would achieve a full recovery. Mayor Bernstein noted, "Whether you see Matt Carey in his firefighter gear, his police uniform or his running shorts, it's still Matt. And we are very lucky to have Matt serving our community."

Recognition of Department of Public Works Director Jason Gangi

DPW Director Jason Gangi was honored for outstanding dedication, responsiveness, and continuous public service across all municipal operations.

Mayor Bernstein highlighted Gangi's 24/7 responsiveness during severe storms, holidays, and off-hours emergency repair scenarios across the borough's roads, parks, and in response to residents' needs. He added that Jason consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty and pitches in when need even contributing to graphic design of the borough's commemorative historical coin.

Mayor Bernstein noted "Jason, you don't just work for Demarest. You take care of Demarest. And there's a world of difference between working for Demarest and taking care of Demarest."

Commendation of Demarest Free Public Library Director Parinda Desai

Parinda Desai was recognized for exemplary administrative leadership since assuming the role of Library Director in December 2019, serving as only the second director in the institution's history following Edna's three-decade tenure.

Mayor Bernstein noted that Parinda took leadership three months before COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and subsequently implemented home book delivery, public safety protocols. He noted that she has instituted a monthly "Coffee with the Director" engagement forum and completed two community-informed strategic plans. During her tenure, she has directed major facility renovations, including a complete remodel of the first floor and the construction of a dedicated programming room for adult and family activities. She oversees a library with over 2,600 registered cardholders in a borough of nearly 5,000 residents, an annual foot traffic of more than 37,000 individual visits, 51,000 catalog items circulated, 181 families utilized the Museum Pass program for free cultural visits. The library has 379 educational and cultural programs delivered across all demographic groups year-to-date, engaging nearly 6,000 total attendees. A recent survey revealed that 94% of survey respondents reported feeling welcome and supported. Parinda is an active executive contributor to the Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) consortium comprising nearly 80 libraries. Desai has chaired the Advocacy Committee, served on Bylaws and Public Relations/Marketing committees, was elected in January 2026 to a three-year term on the BCCLS Executive Board, and serves on its Personnel Committee.

Recognition of Long-Term Service by Demarest Athletic Association (DAA) Leader Steve Conti

Steve Conti was honored for over four decades of continuous volunteerism, administrative leadership, and youth coaching in Demarest since moving to the borough in 1955.

Mayor Bernstein highlighted Mr. Conti's service to his community noting he is a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War and an alumnus of Northern Valley Regional High School at Demarest and St. Lawrence College. He served as a Demarest Councilman from 2009 to 2011, served on the Board of Education focusing on financial oversight, and assisted in founding the municipal Community Garden. In the DAA Steve has served for over 40 years as a volunteer coach across youth baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball programs; has supervised the financing and construction of the Wakelee Field House, tennis court reconstructions, and renovations for borough soccer and baseball fields. Steve was previously awarded the Bergen County Volunteer of the Year Award and the DAA Lifetime Service Award.

Recognition of Police Equipment Donation by Dr. Gil Altman

Dr. Gil Altman was formally commended for donating a brand-new 2026 Harley-Davidson Police motorcycle to the Demarest Police Department.

Mayor Bernstein invited Deputy Chief Brian Talty to speak about Dr. Altman. Deputy Chief Talty thanked Dr. Altman for his generosity and noted the motorcycle is actively deployed for traffic enforcement and community patrol and operated primarily by Sergeant Krynicki. DC Talty presented Dr. Altman with a plaque and the Mayor presented Dr. Altman with a certificate of appreciation. Sgt. Krynicki then presented Dr. Altman with customized Demarest Police Department scrubs.

Youth Community Service and Memorial Recognitions

9/11 Memorial Service Commendations: Certificates were awarded to youth participants Shreya Iyer (vocal performance) and Richard McConville (bugle performance of Taps) for their contributions to the municipal September 11th Memorial Service.

Mayor Bernstein noted that we often recognize adults in the community but kids are also involved in serving the community. As an example, he reported that an NVD high school student who formed a non-profit entity that raised independent funding to procure two Apple iPad tablets for the Demarest Ambulance Corps. that were presented at Demarest Day. He then invited Shreya and Richard up to be presented for their moving contributions to Demarest's 25th Anniversary September 11th Memorial Service.

Ordinance (Introduction): *(none)*

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

Resolution 178-26 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE BERGEN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Borough Clerk Julie Falkenstern informed the Council that they needed to nominate a member of the Council and an alternate as representatives to BC CDBG Committee.

David Jiang volunteered to be the representative and Councilmember Collins offered to serve as his alternate.

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Carmeli to approve Resolution 178-26 naming Councilmember Jiang as the representative and Councilmember Collins as the alternate.

Roll Call:

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

Nays: None

Resolution 179-26 RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A COORDINATED REGIONAL APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE DEER OVERPOPULATION ISSUE AND REQUESTING THE COUNTY OF BERGEN TO MONITOR THE DEER POPULATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY

A motion was made by Councilmember Reiss and seconded by Councilmember Collins to approve Resolution 179-26.

Roll Call:

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

Nays: None

Resolution No. 186-26 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GAVIN SMITH AS A MEMBER OF THE DEMAREST VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Ms. Falkenstern explained that the Fire Chief had a volunteer he would like to accept as a member of the Fire Department, but the application was completed late in the day so it was a last minute addition to the agenda and that the copy of the full wording of the resolution was in the packets they received this evening.

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve Resolution 186-26.

Roll Call:

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

Nays: None

Work Session Discussion Items:

Engineering Report

Mr. Chelius gave a brief review of the monthly engineering report noting Environmental field crews initiated were continuing their work on the compost site and data, boring logs, and soil sample information are being prepared for formal transmission to the NJDEP.

Mayor Bernstein asked for confirmation that that forthcoming site work constitutes environmental remediation and surface restoration to state standards, rather than structural building construction. Mr. Chelius confirmed that yes construction referred to plantings and remediation and that no buildings were being erected on the site.

Pine Terrace Paving Review

Mr. Chelius then reviewed plans for the paving of the unimproved portion of Pine Terrace noting that there were a few revisions based on feedback from residents that he received from the Borough. He explained that the latest plan that would be reviewed this evening was the least disruptive to the area and follows most closely current conditions. He provided the following detail:

- Standard Width: 24 feet of asphalt cartway pavement, measured strictly from the interior faces of the opposing curbs and 24 feet is the absolute minimum safe engineering standard for an improved two-way municipal street.
- Curb Construction: Installation of mountable Belgian block curbing laid in a pitched, low-profile horizontal orientation, consistent with other newly improved roads in Demarest provides an apron allowing vehicles to gently mount the curb if necessary to bypass opposing traffic on a narrow roadway. Fire engines can position stabilizing outriggers directly over mountable curbs without structural damage. Unlike standard vertical concrete curbs which create an artificial damming barrier that alters natural lawn runoff patterns, mountable block allows surface stormwater to drain naturally.
- Right-of-Way, Topography, and Infrastructure: He confirmed that the entire 24-foot roadway and curbing will be constructed completely within the public right-of-way; no private property is affected.
- Utility Relocations: Construction of the curb will require the relocation of one to two utility poles.
- Roadway Choke Point: Existing narrowing in front of 18 Pine Terrace chokes down to approximately 13 to 14 feet wide for a 75-foot span before widening back out. Plans will eliminate this pinch point, smoothing the section into the standard 24-foot width without destabilizing adjacent private stone walls.
- Tree Canopy and Root Trenching: An inventory will be coordinated with the Borough Administrator, DPW and Borough Arborist. While alignment follows the existing footprint, lateral trenching for curb beds will impact root zones of trees situated immediately at the unpaved edge. Every effort will be made to save all trees, and he will follow any direction for replanting that the Borough provides.
- Drainage Engineering: Full stormwater calculations will be executed once the design finalized, taking into account the low-lying elevation of the Pine Terrace corridor.
- Dead-End Terminus and Cul-de-Sac Existing condition: Pine Terrace currently features an improved, paved eastern section ending in a cul-de-sac turnaround, and an unpaved western dirt section. Decades prior, a vehicular barrier gate was installed between the two segments to prevent through-traffic. The gate is frequently opened by utility, maintenance, and resident vehicles. Initial Plan Revision: Resident-submitted sketches suggested bifurcating the cul-de-sac using large 10-foot by 4-foot modular concrete planters with 6-foot gaps to allow bike and pedestrian traffic while permitting stormwater passage. Alternate resident renderings showed a central landscaped teardrop island dividing turning paths. Mr. Chelius' plan shows a simpler version without sidewalks and bike lanes using planters to create a terminus but allow stormwater and pedestrian and bike traffic but preventing vehicle traffic.

Councilmember Collins then made a motion to open the meeting to the public for questions and comments relating to the paving of the unimproved portion of Pine Terrace. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all on a voice vote.

The following residents offered comments, concerns and/or questions:

Marvin Chudnoff: Supported installing definitive traffic impediments to preserve safety; stressed that the original gate transformed neighborhood desirability; warned against clearing trees unnecessarily; requested careful root inspection by the Borough Arborist. He asked for clarification of the width and was told the 24 feet is the inner roadway, curb to curb. He asked for clarification since one drawing showed sidewalk. Mr. Chelius explained that picture was supplied by a resident and was just a rendering that was used as a guide for the cul de sac shown in his design, no sidewalks are proposed.

Jeffrey Martaian: Opposed any structural modifications, planters, or divisions inside the paved cul-de-sac; advocated leaving the cul-de-sac untouched as a protected environment for neighborhood children and senior pedestrians.

Mayor Bernstein advised that he was not sure there would be, the design was proposed by a resident, and the engineer is just showing the possibility. He added that in his opinion he would not recommend any revision to the current cul de sac on the improved side, but rather all new work would be past that curb where the gate is now on the unimproved side. He believes this is more respectful of the feedback to preserve the character of the street as much as possible.

Mike Alpert: Objected to paving the dirt road, arguing a paved surface will increase vehicle travel speeds. Asserted that maintaining an unbending dead-end on the west side without cul-de-sac access is dangerous and unworkable, forcing delivery trucks, landscapers, and tractors to reverse blindly down a three-quarter-mile stretch.

Robert Hirsch: Mr. Hirsch spoke several times and opposed dividing the paved cul-de-sac. Highlighted that multiple driveways back directly into the cul-de-sac circle; described the cul-de-sac as an essential "safe harbor" where children learn to ride bicycles and families walk strollers without encountering delivery trucks.

Rami Evar: Noted that dividing the circle down the center, which he believes is approximately a 50-foot radius would permit a tractor-trailer or delivery truck on the western side to execute a three-point turn rather than reversing long distances.

Adam Orovsky: Asked for clarification on the proposed width of the improved street. Mr. Chelius confirmed that the proposal was for a 24-foot roadway but not to place the centerline exactly in the center of the right of way but rather follow closer to the current condition of the road in order to minimize impact to improvements that residents have placed within the Borough right of way. He noted that near Mr. Orovsky's home is the narrowest part of the road and that chokepoint is a dangerous condition that will be corrected with the 24-foot roadway.

Rami Evar: Asked for clarification on proposed curb. Mr. Chelius explained that the proposed curb is laid back Belgian block that has been used on most new roads. It allows a car to go over should they need to and allows for better drainage conditions than concrete block.

Mike Alpert: Mr. Alpert expressed that he would rather the road remain unimproved.

A lengthy discussion ensued over the design of the end of the currently unimproved side and whether the cul de sac on the currently improved side would be changed to accommodate a cul de sac on the unimproved side. The consensus of the Governing Body and the direction given to the Borough Engineer was to finalize the plan with the 24 foot roadway that follows most closely to the current conditions and minimizes impacts to residents improvement within the right of way, to make every effort to save as many trees as possible and to change the design of the end of the road to effectively create a barrier that vehicle traffic can not bypass, but allows the flow of pedestrian and bike traffic preserving the character of Pine Terrace and without effecting the cul de sac on the improved side.

Councilmember Collins then made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all on a voice vote.

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. 180-26	Authorizing Seasonal Labor
Resolution No. 181-26	Release of Escrow
Resolution No. 182-26	Authorizing Engineering Services -
Resolution No. 183-26	Authorizing Payment DLS FY2024 Road Improvements
Resolution No. 184-26	Authorizing Grant Submission – SRTS Pedestrian Safety
Resolution No. 185-26	Payment of Bills

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

Roll Call:

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

Approval of Minutes

September 28, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Roll Call:

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

September 28, 2026 Closed Session Minutes

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

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

Tomer Sheleg

Mr. Sheleg lives on Pine Terrace and spoke about the paving. He would like to see the end of the road to remain pedestrian friendly.

Norman Ng

Mr. Ng, on behalf of the Shade Tree Commission, read a statement requesting an ordinance change to require trees to be planted in the right of way during new construction. Mayor Bernstein noted that this information had been provided to the Ordinance Committee and asked Mr. Ng if he had anything additional that had not been provided to the committee. Mr. Ng discussed some of the provisions they would like to see and some sample ordinances they referenced. Councilmember Carmeli advised that they had received the request and have already met to review and will make a recommendation to the Council after drafting a proposal based on the information from the Commission.

Robert Hirsch

Mr. Hirsch wanted to clarify his position on the Pine Terrace paving. He indicated that he is supportive of paving but doesn't support adding a cul de sac or touching the cul de sac on the other side of Pine Terrace. Mayor Bernstein noted that this is the third time he has met with the residents, and they have considered and appreciate all the comments and suggestions. The Engineer has been given direction with the consensus of the Council to provide a final plan that only proposes work on the unimproved side but does not allow vehicle traffic to go from one side to another. The final plan will be posted online and available to the public when complete.

Rohini Khubani

Ms. Khubani expressed concern for pedestrian safety in several places within the Borough. She would like to see crosswalks added to several places. Ms. Falkenstern advised her that crosswalks can only be added to spots that are safe to encourage pedestrians to cross and asked Ms. Khubani to email her suggestions and she would consult with the Borough Engineer and Police Department on whether the spots were appropriate for crosswalks. Ms. Falkenstern also noted that earlier tonight the council approved \$9000 in engineering for pedestrian safety upgrades and a grant application. Through the safe routes to school program for pedestrian safety upgrades.

Noelle Tutunjian

Ms. Tutunjian reported a concern with construction signs at several sites in the Borough that don't conform with the Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Falkenstern advised that they are aware and have already asked the builders to take them down. A discussion of whether they qualify as sign and a zoning violation. Ms. Falkenstern advised Ms. Tutunjian to report any additional sites to the Zoning Officer.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak, Councilmember Collins made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all on a voice vote.

Councilmember Jiang then made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins and approved by all on a voice vote.

The meeting was therefore adjourned at 9:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern, RMC
Borough Clerk