

Borough of Garwood
MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
January 27, 2022

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Moment of Silence:

Mayor Todisco dedicated the moment of silence to Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Salute to the Flag

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Union County Hawk advertised on December 2, 2021. Notification was sent to the Star Ledger, and is posted on the Municipal website, the Municipal public bulletin board, and filed in the office of the Municipal Clerk informing the public of the time and place according to the Provisions of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975).

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Todisco	P		
Councilman Graham	P	Councilwoman Loffredo	P
Councilman Kearney	P	Councilwoman Salmon	P
Councilman Lazarow	P	Council President Blumenstock	P

Also Present:

Kyle Harris, Borough Administrator
Adam Abramson, Borough Attorney
Catherine D. Cameron, Borough Clerk
Jennifer Sherman, Borough Tax Assessor
Mike Disko, Borough Engineer (LATE)
James Wright, Police Chief

Report of Borough Attorney NO REPORT

Report of Borough Administrator NO REPORT

PRESENTATIONS:

Mayor Todisco announced the first order of business is department overview presentations from the Borough Tax Assessor and the Borough Engineer.

Jennifer Sherman, Borough Tax Assessor, provided the following report:

Borough of Garwood Tax Assessor

E-mail Taxassessor@garwood.org Phone 908-789-0710

Monday Evenings, Saturday Inspections Available by Appointment

All Assessor's responsibilities are governed by Statute.

The Assessor and Staff are under the direction of the NJ Division of Taxation and report directly to the Union County Board of Taxation.

Job Description:

Responsible for the valuation, appraisal, and assessment of all real property.

Maintain all necessary records for the assessment program (MODIV)Field Work to review existing and new properties

Administrative work in the office

Main Duties:

Discover and list all properties within Garwood

*File Tax List

Determine Property Value based on Market Sales

Maintain Sales Ratio

Maintain Deduction and Exempt Properties Defend Tax Appeals

Communicate with the public and other Garwood professionals

Gather, Review and Research Sales and Construction Permits

*Monthly Reports from Cranford Building Dept. Process Deeds and Investigate Sales of Ownership

*Union County Recorded Deeds

Routine Correspondence with public and other Garwood professionals

Mail and List Initial and Further Statements for Exempt Properties

List and Mail Added Assessments - Properties that finish work during the Tax Year Factors considered when assessing properties:

Market Value # of Bedrooms # of Bathrooms

Condition Square Feet Location

Property owners seeking reductions in their assessment may file a Tax Appeal on or before April 1st of each tax year to the Union County Board of Taxation

Council President Blumenstock requested clarification regarding the re-evaluation process.

Ms. Sherman provided clarification and stated tax assessment cards will be mailed the week of January 30th.

Councilman Graham requested clarification regarding the success/failure rate of tax appeals filed.

Ms. Sherman provided clarification, stating market value plays a factor in the determination of each appeal filed.

Mayor Todisco requested clarification regarding the tax appeal process.

Ms. Sherman provided clarification regarding the tax appeal filing process.

Mayor Todisco requested Ms. Sherman confirm her availability to residents who require assistance with the tax appeal process.

Ms. Sherman confirmed her availability.

Mayor Todisco dismissed Ms. Sherman from the Council meeting following her presentation at 7:10 P.M.

Mike Disko, Borough Engineer, provided the following report:

ENGINEERING TOPICS TO DISCUSS

MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING SERVICES:

- SUBMIT GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR NJDOT AND UNION COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS. IN 2021, APPLICATIONS WERE SUBMITTED TO NJDOT FOR RESURFACING OF VARIOUS STREETS – GRANT AWARDED \$330,000; AND TO UNION COUNTY FOR RESURFACING OF LOCUST AVENUE – GRANT AWARDED \$40,000.
- INTERACT WITH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AND ADMINISTRATOR TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS SUCH AS ROADS, STORM SEWERS AND SANITARY SEWERS.
- PROVIDE REQUIRED PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SERVICES FOR PUBLIC WORKS IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS. IN NEW JERSEY, ALL PUBLIC WORKS IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS MUST BE DESIGNED BY A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL (TYPICALLY, A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER OR LICENSED ARCHITECT)
- ASSIST THE PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR, WITH PROCESSING AND INSPECTING ROAD OPENING

- PERMITS.INTERACT WITH UTILITY COMPANIES REGARDING MAJOR PROJECTS.
- PROVIDE CONSULTATION TO RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS REGARDING DRAINAGE AND GRADING ISSUES.
 - ASSIST MUNICIPALITY/BUILDING DEPARTMENT WITH SEWER CONNECTIONS AND INSPECTIONS.ASSIST STAFF WITH SEWER BILLINGS.
 - RESPOND TO ADMINISTRATOR AND COUNCIL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION, INSPECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. ATTEND PERIODIC COUNCIL MEETINGS TO PROVIDE UPDATES. PROVIDE SUPPORT TO ELECTED OFFICIALS. INTERACT WITH ADMINISTRATOR, CLERK, POLICE, PUBLIC WORKS,ZONING AND OTHER DEPARTMENT HEADS.
 - REVIEW RAHWAY VALLEY SEWERAGE AUTHORITY MINUTES AND DATA. SERVE AS LICENSED WASTEWATER OPERATOR.
 - FILE ANNUAL MUNICIPAL STORMWATER PERMIT TO THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.
 - ASSIST POLICE DEPARTMENT WITH TRAFFIC ENGINEERING ISSUES.

Mayor Todisco commended Mr. Disko for his project management and community relations during each project.

Councilman Graham requested clarification regarding newly paved sidewalks that required re-opening due to projects assigned subsequent to the sidewalk repair.

Mr. Disko provided clarification stating project planning has improved through assistance with the ordinance moratorium in place regarding said matter.

Mayor Todisco thanked Councilman Graham for requesting clarification on road opening projects.

Councilwoman Blumenstock requested clarification regarding the curb projects planned through the UC infrastructure grant.

Mr. Disko clarified the Union County 2022 South Avenue repaving project.

Mr. Disko clarified the Borough's intent for curbing and stated the bid for the project would be submitted prior to the repaving project, provided the UC infrastructure grant is awarded to the Borough.

Councilwoman Blumenstock requested clarification regarding curb inventory.

Mr. Disko provided clarification.

Councilman Graham requested clarification regarding the curb project and its impact on Vermella.

Mayor Todisco referred to a site plan meeting which confirmed that Vermella is responsible for any impacts resulting from the curb project.

Mr. Disko stated the north side curbs are completed.

Mayor Todisco dismissed Mr. Disko from the Council meeting following his presentation at 7:37 P.M.

Report of Mayor Sara Todisco

First, I would like to begin by wishing all of our volunteer groups the very best for this upcoming year. I know many have met by now to kick off the year. I had the pleasure of attending the Recreation meeting last night and I'm excited for what is in store this year for the children of Garwood. I know the Celebrations Committee is also eager to get started with planning the wonderful traditional events as well as bringing new ones.

I know Council President Blumenstock will speak about it later, but I just wanted to express my thanks to the volunteers who planned the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service activities and of course, everyone who participated in one or all of them. It was really moving to see people coming to bring sandwiches and to see little kids proud to drop off their drawings for seniors and cards for veterans. Although it was cold, it was my honor to stand out there for 2 hours with Council President Blumenstock, Michelle Tortorici, and Rob Schilare.

Last week, I had a really nice conversation with the new Board of Education President Tracey Roland. Her and I have known each other a while, both being past presidents and current members of the Education Foundation of Garwood. I extended my support and we both look forward to working together.

On the COVID-19 pandemic front, Garwood has seen an increase of 66 positive cases in the first half of January. Our Health Officer has echoed much of what we've heard in the news about the trends heading downward in comparison to the previous month. As you may know, the federal government announced last week that every household can order up to four rapid tests by visiting www.covidtests.gov.

Lastly, we held an informational meeting today with representatives of Union County Dispatch--Public Safety Director Andrew Moran, Police Chief Chris Debbie, and Chief Public Safety Telecommunicator Garreth Williams. Police Chief Wright, Administrator Harris, Councilman Kearney, Councilman Lazarow and myself attended. As mentioned at our previous meeting this meeting was strictly fact finding. Garwood in the past two decades has discussed a potential consolidation twice. I know at least once before I got on Council and that conversation was with at least one other town. About 8 or 9 year ago, it was discussed between another town as well as Union County. The decision will come down to operations and finances. It's very important to realize that when we are talking about operations, we are talking about public safety. Whatever decision eventually is made needs to be decided first for public safety and second from a financial perspective. In today's meeting, we discussed the dispatch process and technology at the Union County Regional Dispatch Center, possible new equipment like radios that Garwood could receive from the LEAP grants that we helped the County apply for the past two years. We found out the County did receive the full amount of the LEAP grant at \$150,000 they applied for and have used that to help purchase necessary equipment for towns joining their Dispatch Center. They expect to hear the results of the current \$250,000 LEAP application in the next month or so. At this point, I cannot stress how preliminary all of this is as we need to provide them our call volume and any necessary data for them to be able to give us a quote for annual cost. We also need to have a solid understanding of our costs, direct and indirect, before we can move to the next stage. To add even more, we need to have a clear vision for what our operation at the window would look like in Garwood's future. In my personal opinion, I would not like to see our window unmanned, especially during business hours. As you can see, there are many moving parts. For this reason, I am going to stay closely involved along with Councilmen Lazarow and Kearney. When the time comes, the full Council will be provided with all of the findings. Also, we've been invited to tour the Dispatch Center and I want all the members of Council to be able to participate in that. (We can go 3 at a time in order to comply with the OPMA.) I will continue to give updates for the benefit of the full Council and public about this extremely important topic.

Mayor Todisco stated, in closing, when all information has been gathered regarding the UC Dispatch Program, a Town Hall meeting will be coordinated for residents' input. Mayor Todisco stated that the dispatch program would have a ten year contract.

Comments from the Council:

Councilman Graham NO REPORT

Councilman Graham congratulated Councilwoman Loffredo and Councilwoman Salmon on their election to the Borough Council.

Councilman Kearney NO REPORT

Councilman Lazarow NO REPORT

Councilwoman Loffredo NO REPORT

Councilwoman Loffredo stated she will be providing an extensive Buildings and Grounds report.

Councilwoman Loffredo stated the ten year dispatch contract warrants a Town Hall meeting.

Councilwoman Salmon NO REPORT

Council President Blumenstock

The 4th Annual MLK Day of Service was a great success! Though we had to do another year of drop-off activities, Garwood really came through. With over 800 sandwiches for the homeless, hundreds of cards and pictures for veterans, active military, and seniors, and so many boxes stuffed full of winter coats and winter clothes that will go to those in need, I'd say we definitely felt the spirit of the day. Thank you to Mayor Todisco, Rob Schilare and Michele Tortorici who were amazing teammates for the day. And of course, a big thank you to everyone who participated.

The Green Team met last night January 26 to re-organize and discuss next year's activities. We are looking forward to participating in many of the Borough's events this year such as Garwood Rocks and continuing other yearly projects such as spring planting and our Christmas holiday adopt-a-pots. We will also continue to maintain the rain garden at the Rec Complex which has been a great addition to the park. The Green Team also discussed our application for a non-matching \$2000 grant through Sustainable Jersey, which we are eligible for through our bronze certified status. We are looking to focus on our local business through this grant particularly supporting our local restaurants following the New Jersey plastic ban which goes into effect in May of this year. We are looking to meet with these businesses following the ban's start date to gather feedback, assess any difficulties and provide support. We will also be looking to help spread the word to Garwood about the dangers of plastic with a documentary night. This plastic bag ban is a step forward for NJ but it will not be without its challenges. The Green Team is ready to help our local businesses with those challenges and work with them to facilitate a smooth transition as they are obviously an integral part to our Borough.

Councilwoman Blumenstock stated as a recipient of Bronze certification from Sustainable Jersey, the Green Team qualifies for filing an application with the Sustainable Jersey Small Grants Program, which focuses on local business sustainability.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the Reorganization Meeting of the Mayor and Council held on January 6, 2022.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council held on January 13, 2022.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Council President Blumenstock, to accept minutes as presented. All in favor.

COMMUNICATIONS:

1) NEW JERSEY STATE LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES –

- a) 01/12/2022, State of the State, Public Health Emergency Extended, Opioid Settlements
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/161766>
- b) 01/14/2022, End of Session Legislation, State of the State, SLFRF Webinar
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/161936>
- c) 01/21/2022, Opioid Settlement Deadline, Gov. Signs Legislation, Ready to Rebuild
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/162319>

2) GARWOOD PLANNING BOARD

- a) 01/12/2022, RE: Year-end report for 2021.
- b) 01/12/2022, RE: Minutes for December 8, 2021.

https://garwood.org/vertical/sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/12_8_21_PB_minutes.pdf

ALL RECEIVED AND FILED

COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OTHER REPORTS:

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL: Councilman Lazarow, Chair

The finance committee met on three consecutive days with most of our departments for several hours to hear about their budget plans for 2022. We also were provided with 5 year capital purchase plans for some of our larger departments such as police, DPW and fire. The finance committee will be meeting next Wednesday to review all of the proposals as well as to determine how our projected revenues will help minimize potential tax increases.

FIRE AND OEM: Councilman Kearney, Chair

Beginning tonight with the December Fire Department Activity Report:

There were 17 calls for service in Garwood for a total of 205 firefighter hours along with 4 mutual aid responses for a total of 31 firefighter hours. Additional activity as follows: Training at the Vermella site, including orientation and walkthroughs with 20 total firefighters for 40 hours, the monthly meeting held on 12/1 with 34 firefighters for 68 hours. Two extra duty details were also completed, a work detail to prepare for the Santa Ride on 12/4, 4 firefighters for 6 hours, and the Santa Ride on 12/16 with 16 firefighters for 160 hours.

Moving on to the month of January, I met with the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief early last week and received a tour and briefing on the entire Department, the fire apparatus and its operations. We discussed current and future equipment needs, with Chief Scalzadonna stressing a need for the replacement of various types of equipment, ranging from hoses and turnout gear to vehicles, on a more regular schedule.

One thing which really impressed me on my tour was the number of items in the building which were handcrafted or purchased by our volunteer firefighters, on their own dime and above their actual duties. Some items were aides constructed for the training of new recruits; others were purchased like the recently mounted televisions which will display response times from a new application when firefighters are en route to a call for service. I'll have a full report on this application for our next meeting.

I continue to be impressed by the spirit of volunteerism in our small Borough and look forward to attending my first monthly Fire Department meeting in early February along with the large training exercise currently in the planning stages with the management at Vermella.

FACILITIES, GROUNDS AND SHADE TREES: Councilwoman Loffredo, Chair

Good evening mayor and council – For Facilities and Grounds, just a few updates tonight however it will follow with a detailed update on the committee’s report for the dpw building.

We received feedback about lighting at the Recreation Center. Mr. Harris, our Borough Admin, has reached out to the Foreman of the DPW to discuss and correct a lightbulb replacement issue. That being said, Mr. Harris and I are going to walk the grounds tonight after this meeting to review the situation in the evening hours and come up with economical solutions that we are acting upon as soon as possible. Recreation Classes and Programs have started and it’s not safe to have such dim lighting at night. After our review tonight, we will go out for bids and we will include these quotes in our finance and budget conversations this spring.

Secondly, a janitorial bid went out this week and has been advertised in local newspapers – the star ledger and union hawk. The bid is for general regular cleaning and disinfecting of borough hall, the fire dept, the rec center, police station and dpw building. This would be covered thru the operating budget – replacing the shared service agreement with the board of education.

We have more quotes due in shortly for the security cameras at Hartman Park and the Recreation Center and will hopefully have an update on that soon. We also received first quotes regarding the replacement doors I mentioned two weeks ago for Borough Hall and the fire department as well as the window repairs and caulking. Again, more quotes incoming. We will use the preliminary quotes for conversations during finance and budget meetings this Spring.

Finally, The Shade Tree Advisory, is meeting on February 2nd to discuss applying for, receiving and a plan to distribute tree seedlings to the residents for free during in April. More information on this to come after our meeting. At that meeting, we will also align on the goals for the Shade Tree Advisory.

Good evening. Tonight, I want to discuss the outcome of the meeting of the special committee that consists of Councilman Marc Lazarow, myself, and Council President Jennifer Blumenstock. Our meeting was on January 20th and we also included Borough Administrator Kyle Harris, DPW Superintendent Clint Dickson and Borough Engineer Michael Disko.

I want to start out by thanking Council President Blumenstock for calling attention to the need for a referendum 2 weeks ago. Numerous times in the past, residents have asked for referendum on the ballot for any capital projects that exceeded 1.0 M and referendum hasn’t happened. As discussed, 2 weeks ago, we cannot press forward past phase one without complete support from our public. I will be discussing all the phases and monetary obligations in a few minutes. One of the many reasons that we decided to move forward with the Architectural Firm DMR is because of their public outreach program and ways to include the public in all phases of the development. A public town hall is included in the fees of Phase 1 with them. Transparency is a top priority of this current bipartisan council. Referendum would be on the November Ballot so we need to ensure this would align with the Architect’s timeline and if so, we need to make sure this is prioritized.

In the spirit of complete transparency, I want to explain to the public the issues within the current dpw building. Currently:

The building is in a flood plain.

There is a roof leak. While it has been looked at numerous times, the leak continues to occur. When it leaks, there is a risk for mold exposure.

The building was built in a time when trucks were smaller – the door frames are 10 feet and the current trucks have 10-foot-wide plows.

Lolly columns which are the metal poles that hold up beams are in the way of most work and hard to maneuver around

Vehicle lifts cannot fit in the existing space

The building is heat but lacks adequate ventilation or ac for the summer

Cracks in foundation though the building inspector found that this was not an immediate issue

That being said - Last week, we met with 3 architectural firms via zoom where they provided us with a short presentation and a period of question and answer. The majority of our questions most focused on Budget and Timeline control.

The first firm -which Council President Blumenstock referred to in the last council meeting, was able to give us preliminary estimated quotations of 1.5 M – 3.0 M dollars for either a complete renovation of the existing building, A new building at the current site or a new larger building at a new site. After the firm visited our current site to prepare for their presentation, they quickly dismissed any option other then moving to a new site. For that reason and the high price, they were not selected.

However –

DMR, the architectural firm, we collectively decided to proceed thru phase one with, was laser focused on budget and timeline control. They repeated multiple times how they proactively identify budget or time line issues and quickly provide solutions or changes to complete the project on time and on or below budget. Ballpark quotations were significantly lower than the other firms. They have done similar DPW or Municipal projects in nearby Somerset County, Woodbridge and Montgomery, NJ.

DMR will complete a thorough examination of the properties in Phase 1 and at that point we will decide if it would be a renovation of the existing building, a new building at the existing location or a new building at a new location. They have not ruled out any of the options as the other firm did.

In addition, the initial phase one monetary amount of \$ 41,000K will be paid thru an existing bond ordinance. The public town hall is also included in this fee. Phase 1 Includes: Complete Evaluation of Existing Building including structural analysis, Topographic Survey, Feasibility of the 3 building options and cost estimates, Schematic Design Development, code analysis, written report and public presentation.

At that moment if the public decides we do not need or want to proceed, it has not affected our bottom line.

Should we decide to move forward at that point, we will move on to Phase 2. Phase 2 is further Schematic Design/Design Development/Construction Documents/Bidding/Construction Administration and Reimbursable Expenses. NJ DEP Flood Hazard Area Permits for phase 1 evaluation/Geotech Boring/Reports and Preliminary Assessment is the first step in Phase 2 which will help us decide between the 3 options of buildings and what the cost would be to the borough.

Phase 2 Architectural Fees would be:

Option 1 – Renovation of a 4000 Sq Ft Existing Building - \$119,900 Aprox 120 K

Option 2 – New 4000 Sqft Building in Same Site – (temporary relocation of DPW during this time) - \$119,900 Aprox 120K

Option 3 – New 8000 Sqft Building and Site Work at a new site – Aprox \$208,000

Whether we go with renovating the existing building, building a new building at the existing location, or building a new building at a new location, the phase 2 fees plus the actual construction will have to be bonded for.

The Committee is recommending that the council award the contract to dmr at the February 10th council meeting. We will present this resolution at the February 10th meeting of council and mayor.

We plan to have DMR here on February 10th to join us at the council meeting. I would urge residents that have any questions, or wish to be heard to come to the next council meeting. Please also feel free to reach out to the Committee directly by phone or email if you have any questions. This is a large financial commitment for our borough and we will need your input. We look forward to the public town hall in the weeks to come.

Thank you, that's all I have tonight.

Councilwoman Salmon requested clarification regarding the reason referenda has not been warranted on previous redevelopment projects and fire truck.

Councilwoman Blumenstock provided clarification.

Mayor Todisco stated that safety factors are considered in projects previously bonded. Mayor Todisco stated the DPW project is not a safety compromised situation, and she looks forward to the public's input.

Councilwoman Blumenstock stated discussing a referendum is warranted.

Councilwoman Salmon agreed discussing a referendum is warranted.

Mr. Harris provided the timeframe for submitting an item of referendum to the Union County Board of Elections for placement on the November ballot.

Councilman Graham stated he supported the purchase of the fire truck without a referendum.

Councilman Graham summarized the deficiencies in the DPW building and compared it to previous deficiencies in the Fire Department which were safety related.

Councilman Graham agreed discussing a referendum is warranted.

Mayor Todisco thanked Councilman Graham for his comments.

Mayor Todisco asked Councilman Kearney if he is in support of placing DMR on the next Council meeting agenda.

Councilman Kearney stated his support.

STREETS, ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY: Council President Blumenstock, Chair

In addition to regular garbage pickup, the DPW performed a number of building improvement tasks in the past few weeks, including installing new drop ceiling tiles in the Administrators office, performing flooring repairs in the Police Department bathroom and repairing the outdoor lighting at the Sports Complex. They completed the annual residential Christmas tree pickup program, disposing of the trees at the Fanwood Recycling Center, and also performed tree removal at 312 Walnut Street and 346 Myrtle Street utilizing Fanwood's bucket truck.

There were also number of mechanic operations performed in-house:

new plow cutting edges were installed on numerous plows within the fleet, a new diesel transfer tank in the Department's pickup truck was installed and wired, the heating system in the 1992 7 yard dump truck/plow was repaired, and a leak on the hydraulic valve body on the 2014 garbage truck was repaired. In addition, the control handles for the compaction body on the 2014 garbage truck were repaired, a new window control unit was installed in a police vehicle and repairs to the Department's snow blowers were performed, including fabrication of a part that is not available due to the pandemic. As you can see, a number of repairs are performed in house at our DPW, and I'm happy to report that a new initiative the Department will be undertaking is the creation of an electronic vehicle inventory including individual vehicle information, routine maintenance and repair history. I want to commend the Department for this, as it will be of great use to the Finance committees on Councils moving forward. It will help with decisions on equipment purchases, and also allow us to gauge costs in terms of in-house vs. off-premises repairs, which is always helpful with planning purposes.

In terms of snow removal, Public Works employees worked a total of 22 man hours of overtime during the winter snow event on January 16th performing street and sidewalk de-icing before and after the event and

snow removal on all Borough owned sidewalks. And of course, it looks like they will be busy again this weekend, so thank you to the department in advance for getting Garwood through what I hope won't be too big a storm. Fingers crossed.

POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY: Councilman Graham, Chair

The End of the Year Motor vehicle collision Report for 2021 is complete.

- Total of 163 MVCs in 2021
- 1 less than the previous year
- 69 fewer than the 10 year average (232)
- 20 involved injuries
- 4 involved pedestrians
- 2 involved bicyclists

Stay informed during weather emergencies by signing up for email and or text messages via Nixle.com

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: RECREATION, HISTORICAL AND CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEES:

Councilwoman Salmon, Chair

Recreation:

The past 2 weeks in recreation have been busy. Last night was the first meeting of the entire committee and there are many plans coming for Garwood Recreation. There is still time to sign up for Family skate night at the Westfield ice rink this Saturday January 29 from 5:50-7:20! So far 78 residents have signed up and it looks like it will be a great night for Garwood. Sign up sheets are available online or here at boro hall. The revision of Garwood's turf rental rates are in full swing and should be finalized by our February 10th meeting. I hope to have councils support for this long over due update. Ralph Bernardo and I did have a successful meeting along with 2 recreation committee members with Lincoln School in hopes to secure access to the gym. I look forward to the use of the school for recreation programs in the Spring. Most of our recreation committee meeting was focused on upcoming new spring programs as well as recreations summer camp. There are a lot of ideas to improve and already amazing camp and I look forward to seeing the new activities for our children this summer. Please be on the look out Summer Rec will be publishing an amazon wish list for any resident looking to make donations directly to the summer recreation program. This will enable them to do so by sending supplies directly to Ralph and Heather Linken. I think this is a great idea and gives our community a chance to support our summer program. Wish list will be available as the summer season approaches.

Mayor Todisco requested discussing an amendment to the turf fee ordinance at the February 10th Council meeting.

Mr. Harris stated he will establish the Amazon wish list account.

Councilman Graham stated the criteria for an increased fee structure should emphasize affordability.

Councilwoman Salmon clarified the fee increases being proposed.

Celebrations:

Celebrations held their first meeting of 2022 on January 19th and reviewed their yearly line up of events. They welcomed 2 new members Jennifer Battiloro & Krystine Zuena to the committee. They have an amazing schedule of events in 2022 filled with many activities for all residents. The first event will be The Easter Bunny Brunch so please look out for ticket sales.

Historical

The historical committee met on Monday January 24th for their first meeting of the year. They reviewed their budget requests and plans for 2022. Some ideas are in the works for bringing back Garwood History Rocks at Garwood Rocks which was always a fun event for the borough. The committee is also working with the PIO to enhance the historical portion of the Garwood Website so stay tuned for updates there.

Also, in the spirit of community engagement, I would like to take a moment to thank Mayor Todisco, Kyle Harris and Chief Wright for helping me plan an amazing day here at Borough Hall with 2 of our towns Girl Scout troops. They will receive a tour of Borough Hall and our police department as they earn their Good Neighbor Badge as well as their Democracy Badge.

That's all for my report, Thank you Mayor

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: Councilman Kearney

Leading off with the Borough's social media, I'd like to give some background for context and for everyone who hasn't heard previous reports: Discussion began in our first Communications Committee meeting with Borough Administrator Harris in July of last year and continued off and on into December. Mr. Harris brought up streamlining the pages to the Committee during a larger discussion about general improvement of communications in the Borough. Mr. Harris wanted the buy-in of the Mayor and Council, despite having the authority under the Borough's Social Media Policy to act without us. I'm not saying this to point a finger, to be clear I am responsible for the Communications Committee, and I reported on this. Frankly, none of us in the discussion last year thought the merging of pages would be a controversial proposal.

We reported on this in December after looking at the types of pages other towns in the area have and what content they share. Mr. Harris also spoke to other town administrators. Meanwhile, I fielded complaints all through 2021 from residents who felt that information does not get out where they can see it. That's in part because Facebook has changed the way our news feeds work, much to the detriment of all, the bottom line is so-called "organic", or non-paid/boosted posts from a page just aren't seen as often. The only cure for this is to have a large base of followers or to pay for post boosts, both of those are impossible with the Borough having so many pages and so many page administrators. Page administrators must be approved by Facebook to boost posts.

While I was under the impression that all current pages comply with the Borough's social media policy, it's been pointed out to me this is not true if there are pages the Borough Administrator doesn't have rights to, or pages that do not clearly post the Borough's policy.

The Communications Committee met with the co-chairs of the Celebrations Committee regarding this topic yesterday after they expressed concerns. This was a productive conversation, and we will continue discussion in committee with Mr. Harris about Celebrations and a few other pages. Currently, the Mayor's Wellness page (which I founded and ran) and the MLK Day of Service page have been archived and removed, other pages will be the topic of a follow up committee discussion before any further action is taken and I'll have more to report at our next meeting.

With all this in mind, I look forward to further discussion on this issue to ensure we get it right and meet the goal of improving communications.

Onto the next topic: The committee continued discussion regarding adopting a website/smartphone application for the Borough. Mr. Harris has met with numerous vendors for presentations. The current leader is a site named "GovPilot", and they provide a cloud-based system which includes a smartphone app for residents, integration with our website and the ability to bring every constituent service we can think of, from calls for service to licenses, fees, and applications all into one system for intake, follow up and oversight. There is another presentation scheduled for the Borough Clerk and front office staff next week, so I hope to have more to report on this at our next meeting. I'd hope to have this type of system online by the summer at the latest.

Also, based on committee discussion, while what I just reported on is pending, Mr. Harris will be checking to see if there's any way for the Borough to leverage our existing Microsoft Office based suite to set up a prototype shared calendar for town events. We will follow up on this in our next committee meeting.

Mayor Todisco stated the Communications Committee meeting held on January 26th discussed visibility on social media feeds. Mayor Todisco stated discussions regarding this matter will continue.

LIBRARY, MAYOR'S REPRESENTATIVE: Councilman Lazarow

JANUARY EVENTS

January 31 at 7:00 pm – LUCC Speaker Series – Join us for the Libraries of Union County Virtual Speaker Series, featuring Union County's own Naima Ricks and Cecilia Ricks authors of "The Empowerment ABCs". Register at [LUCC Speaker Series](#) to receive a link for the program.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

February 1 through the February 28 – Tiny Art Show of Things We Love -Pick up a 4 x 6 canvas, while they last. You can also use your own 4 x 6 canvas to paint or draw something you love. Return the artwork to the Library for February's Tiny Art Show. All creations will be returned to the artists the first week of March.

February 1 through February 28 – Shoe Drive - The Library in collaboration with MoreSteps, continues its shoe drive, The library is seeking donations of new or lightly worn shoes to benefit the Ozanam Family Shelter in Edison. Please write the shoe size on a paper, place it inside the shoes, put the shoes in a sealed bag, and drop them in the box located in the Library parking lot.

February 3 .10, 17, 24, 20 at 10:00 am – YoBoo - YoBOO is a unique take on fitness for children (ages 2-8). It combines the aerobic fun of Bootcamp with the powerful breathing techniques of Yoga. Registration required. Limit 10.

February 8, at 3 pm - Virtual Kid's Craft Pick up supplies for a Holiday inspired craft and then watch the craft tutorial on the Library's Facebook page at 3 pm. The video will be available for viewing thereafter. Registration is required for craft kits and is limited to 15 participants. Sign up on the Library website's events calendar or by phone.

The Library will be closed February 21 for President's Day.

SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON: Councilman Kearney

The Garwood Board of Education met on Tuesday, January 18th. I apologize for reporting the wrong date in my last report, when I erroneously said it was January 19th. The Board heard two presentations, the first a preliminary report on the 2020/2021 audit by Suplee, Clooney and Company and the second an assessment of the Start Strong program by Mrs. Parkhill. The Board also took action approving the use of the school gym for the Clark Soccer Club (which has a number of Garwood children enrolled) and Garwood Recreation Basketball for practices between the months of January and March.

GARWOOD SENIOR CITIZEN LIAISON: Council President Blumenstock

Come February, Garwood's senior classes and activities will resume as scheduled. Please contact Borough Hall for a calendar or with any questions. The Senior Club is also planning to meet as scheduled in February, with the next meeting on February 3rd.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY LIAISON: Councilman Kearney

No official report from the Board tonight, but we will be welcoming a new small business to Garwood with our first grand opening of 2022 scheduled on Saturday, February 5th at 10:45am. Join Mayor Todisco, Business & Industry Liaison Carol Kearney and the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce in welcoming Fire Point Yoga and Juice, located at 250 North Avenue, to Garwood!

Our next Board meeting is on Monday, January 31st, so I expect to have more details to share on the launch event planned for early March.

UC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD, MAYOR'S REPRESENTATIVE: Councilman Graham

NO REPORT

The UC TAB met on January 19, 2022 for their reorganization meeting.

PLANNING BOARD LIAISON: Councilwoman Salmon NO REPORT

The planning board was scheduled to meet Wednesday January 23, which was canceled. The next meeting of the planning board is scheduled for February 23rd.

OFFICER'S REPORTS:

CFO/Treasurer: 4th Qtr. Report for 2021.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Kearney, to accept Officer's reports. All in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Is there anyone in the audience who wishes to address the Mayor and Council please step to the microphone, and state your full name and address. Please limit your comments to five minutes.

John Pritchard, 410 Spruce Street, commended public safety officers and sang a song regarding veterans.

Colleen Hay, 516 Fourth Avenue read the following statement:

Good afternoon. As some of you know, I have a strong opinion regarding the consolidation as the opposition. The Celebrations page is a happy, event minded page in which we have good engagement and solid followers. As volunteers, we have the most up to date information and the ability to communicate it in a timely manner to our followers. We also have the ability to answer specific questions in a timely fashion when they arise through instant messaging. Most people that I personally know enjoy the fact that they can separate events and fun happenings without feeling the need to follow the government as they enjoy keeping them separated. The Celebrations Committee page has grown over the past year to 692 followers and growing. Our Public Information Officer is an admin on the Celebrations page and chose not to share the info on the Borough page. Not sure what his responsibilities are, but it would seem to me that if he is an admin and is privy to the information, it should have been shared.

I took the time to visit some of the local pages to track their followers and engagement. Here is the list as follows:

Garwood Celebrations: 692 followers

Garwood Recreation: 506 followers

Garwood Government: 726 followers

Garwood Residents Connect: 1.300+ followers

Furthermore, I just reviewed the 20 most recent posts from all 4 of these pages and here is the engagement that I found:

Celebrations Committee had 167 combinations with likes/loves amongst comments and questions.

Recreations Committee had 87 combo likes/loves with many posts limiting who can comment???

Garwood Residents Connect had 218 likes/loves with the most engagement in comments/ etc.

Garwood Borough had 7 likes and 3 laughs with limits on who can comment, which means that no one can

ask questions or comment. Not very inviting or engaging.

Why would Celebrations want to merge with a page that has little engagement and is not very inviting?

Mo Crawford, 415 Willow Avenue stated her support for individual social media pages and stated her support for not merging with one Borough social media page.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue, commented on the referendum/special election process.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the janitorial services bid.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the establishment of the Community Engagement standing committee.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the merge of social media pages.

Mr. Paterson stated support for a Borough social media page for the Historical Committee.

Jennyfer Guerrero, 409 Myrtle Avenue, participated via ZOOM. Ms. Guerrero stated she is not in support of merging social media pages. Ms. Guerrero stated the Celebrations Committee does not require merging the Celebration Committee social media page for the purpose of engagement.

A motion was made by Council President Blumenstock, second by Councilman Graham, to close public comment.

All in favor.

Mayor Todisco thanked Mr. Prichard for his comments.

Mayor Todisco thanked Ms. Hay for her comments.

Mayor Todisco clarified the social media page merge, and stated it would include the Green Team.

Mayor Todisco clarified the establishment of the Standing Committees stating they emphasize government rules and regulations.

Mayor Todisco commended the Celebrations Committee.

Mayor Todisco agreed the referendum process will not be rushed.

Mayor Todisco requested clarification from Mr. Harris regarding the janitorial shared service agreement with the Board of Education.

Mr. Harris provided clarification stating cost was the justification for the janitorial services bid.

Mayor Todisco stated her support for the janitorial services bid and stated going out to bid was recommended by the Board of Education.

Mayor Todisco stated she supports a Historical Committee page on the Borough website.

Mayor Todisco requested clarification from Mr. Harris regarding the Facebook page consolidation.

Mr. Harris provided clarification.

Mayor Todisco clarified the establishment of the Community Engagement Committee was established by the Borough By-Laws.

Councilwoman Salmon stated her support of the Community Engagement Committee.
Mr. Harris clarified the necessity for the Community Engagement Committee.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

CONSENT AGENDA

(Adoption upon Roll Call)

Consent agenda items are considered to be routine and will be enacted with a single motion; any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of funds; any item requiring discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda; all Consent Agenda items will be reflected in the full minutes.

RESOLUTION NO. 22-040

WHEREAS, in accordance with N.J.S.A 40:14B-66 municipal authorities shall cause an annual audit of its accounts to be made, and for this purpose it shall employ a registered municipal accountant of New Jersey or a certified public accountant of New Jersey to conduct an annual audit and provide other required accounting services and therefore the Mayor and Council have determined that there exists a need for professional auditing and consultant services to provide Auditing/Consultant services of a specialized nature to the Borough; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Clerk of the Borough of Garwood posted in accordance with law and received proposals on November 23, 2021, under a fair and open process in accordance with P.L. 2004, c.19, as amended by P.L. 2005, c.51; and

WHEREAS, the said Governing Body has determined that such services are professional services as defined in the Local Public Contracts Law of the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the Local Public Contracts Law requires that a notice stating the nature, duration, services and amount of each contract awarded as a professional services contract be printed once in the official newspaper of the municipality;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Borough of Garwood:

1. That the Mayor and Borough Clerk be and are hereby authorized and directed to execute an agreement with Suplee, Clooney & Company, 308 East Broad Street, Westfield, NJ 07090, for the provision of professional auditing and consulting services for the Borough of Garwood; and
2. That said Contractor shall receive fees not to exceed \$41,100.00 for 2021 Statutory Audit; \$8,000.00 for 2021 Annual Financial Statement; 2021 Annual Debt Statement; and Assistance with the 2022 Annual Municipal Budget preparation, including preparation of the budget document and budget amendments, and attendance at any budget meetings or public hearings; \$425.00 per preparation of Supplement Debt Statements; \$1,100.00 for review of the Borough's Deferred Compensation Plan, and telephone consultation as needed at no charge, which are included in proposal dated November 16, 2021; and
3. That the contract term is January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022; and
4. That the Borough Clerk be and is hereby authorized and directed to maintain this resolution and the professional services contract on file and available for public inspection in the Office of the Borough Clerk; and
5. That the Borough Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to publish a copy of this notice as required by law.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Kearney, to adopt Consent Agenda.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	AYE	Councilwoman Loffredo	AYE
Councilman Kearney	AYE	Councilwoman Salmon	AYE
Councilman Lazarow	AYE	Council President Blumenstock	AYE

RESOLUTIONS DELETED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA:

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor's Appointments:

Greg Kilmer	Recreation Committee	1/27/22 -12/31/22
Li Faustino	Board of Health	1/27/22 -12/31/22

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS:

BE IT RESOLVED that the following claims as approved be and the same are hereby ordered paid when properly signed and verified; and the payment of payrolls as listed is hereby confirmed and ratified.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Kearney, to adopt Payment of Claims Resolution.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	AYE	Councilwoman Loffredo	AYE
Councilman Kearney	AYE	Councilwoman Salmon	AYE
Councilman Lazarow	AYE	Council President Blumenstock	AYE


ADJOURNMENT:

The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022**, at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers.

Information for meetings is posted on the Borough website: https://garwood.org/gb_notices

At 9:03 P.M. a motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Council President Blumenstock, to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted:


Catherine D. Cameron, R.M.C.
Borough Clerk