

**Borough of Garwood  
SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
March 21, 2022**

Time: 7:00 P.M

Salute to the Flag

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Union County Hawk advertised on March 3, 2022. 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:**

<b>Mayor Todisco</b>	<b>P</b>		
<b>Councilman Graham</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilwoman Loffredo</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilman Kearney</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilwoman Salmon</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilman Lazarow</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Council President Blumenstock</b>	<b>P</b>

**Also Present:**

Kyle Harris, Borough Administrator  
Adam Abramson, Esq., Borough Attorney  
Catherine D. Cameron, Borough Clerk  
Sandy Bruns, Borough CMFO  
William Northgrave, Esq., Borough Redevelopment Attorney  
James Wright, Borough Police Chief  
Steve Greet, Chairman, Garwood Planning Board  
Dr. Quigley, Superintendent, Garwood Board of Education  
Marci Krasny, B.A., Garwood Board of Education  
Tracy Roland, President, Garwood Board of Education

Mayor Todisco provided the following report:

I want to thank everyone for joining us tonight both here in person and via Zoom. The sole purpose of this Special Meeting is to discuss the anticipated PILOT funds from the South Avenue redevelopment project, now better known as Vermella, that is now welcoming its first tenants and has been issued Temporary Certificates of Occupancy by the Building Department. These TCOs are what now enable the Borough to receive PILOT funds as spelled out in the 2017 financial agreement between the developer and the Borough. If TCOs continue as expected and in the best case scenario, our CFO has estimated the Borough can expect approximately \$635,000 in 2022. This is after the land taxes, which are split between the municipality, school, county, and library as usual as well as the 5% of the PILOT required to be sent to the county. Clearly, this is a substantial amount of money.

Our redevelopment attorney, Bill Northgrave, is with us tonight to explain the details of our financial agreement, what that means we can expect financially in 2022, and what are the parameters put forth by State redevelopment law. Mr. Northgrave has been with us since Day 1 for this redevelopment area as well as South Avenue 2 on the south side of South Avenue and the Paperboard property on North Avenue.

Before I turn it over to Mr. Northgrave, I want to set out some guidelines for this meeting. I want to emphasize the purpose of this meeting is for the Council and myself to hear resident and taxpayer feedback on how best to use this new revenue source for Garwood. As with anything else, this governing body can only control the

municipal side of the tax bill. We want to hear your priorities whether they be tax relief or municipal department specific. At this time, the Finance Committee and next week the full Council will be discussing and deciding whether or not to hire an additional police officer, which would bring our department to 17 officers after being capped at 16 for the past 20+ years. It is necessary that we are meeting tonight so the Council can further discuss it and make decisions at our Special Budget Meeting next Thursday, March 31st.

As I mentioned at our Council meeting last week, the Board of Education has requested \$150,000 of the PILOT as they are now beginning to have children in the school from Vermella. I had a very positive conversation with the Board of Education President this past weekend and the school is currently working on getting some information back to us. As I've said before, I believe we should be of help to the school and a good relationship between our governing bodies is important.

After Mr. Northgrave gives a short presentation, I will open it up for Council members to ask questions of Mr. Northgrave and then, I will open the meeting up for public comment.

Councilman Lazarow provided the following report:

While we will be going into depth on our budget at the Special Budget Meeting next week, I want to make the public aware that the Finance Committee has tentatively allocated \$450,000 of the PILOT this year to offset the tax impact this year. Many costs were on the rise this year, such as salaries, benefits, our payment to the sewer authority, just to name a few. Even with this \$450,000 anticipated, the tax increase on the average home is just under \$100 right now. We are facing numerous capital items requests from our departments this year as well, which range from oxygen bottles for our Fire Department at almost \$250,000 to water rescue gear to vehicles to radios to speeding/pedestrian signage. Also, as everyone may know by now, the Council hired an architectural firm to analyze our existing DPW building and will be presenting us with options and cost estimates for rehabilitating our existing building or rebuilding it in a different location. We are expecting these in the next few months. I look forward to hearing the public's thoughts tonight, which will be crucial to making budget and capital item decisions for this year as well as for future years.

#### **PILOT PROGRAM PRESENTATION:**

Mr. Northgrave provided a presentation regarding the Borough's PILOT Program.

Discussion regarding the payment to the Board of Education ensued.

#### **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.

Sal Piarulli, 55 Fourth Avenue read a statement regarding shared PILOT funding.

Leona Seufert stated allocation preferences for the Borough's PILOT funding.

Tracey Roland, President, Garwood Board of Education, 400 Third Avenue, thanked the Council for allocating PILOT funds to the Garwood Board of Education.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue, commented on distribution of PILOT revenues and emphasized support for a shared PILOT agreement. Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the PILOT funds as related to the Union County Open Space Trust Fund. Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the impact funding payment option.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Lazarow, to close public comment. All in favor.

Mayor Todisco requested clarification from Ms. Bruns regarding PILOT funds as related to the Union County Open Space Trust Fund.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Northgrave defined and clarified a shared services PILOT program agreement.

Mayor Todisco provided information regarding the shared PILOT program in Cranford.

William Nierstedt, 320 Hickory Avenue, stated he does not support modeling the shared PILOT program in Cranford. Mr. Nierstedt stated allocation preferences for the Borough's PILOT funding.

Mayor Todisco requested Ms. Bruns to provide clarification regarding the Borough's debt pay down as related to capital improvements/bonding.

Ms. Bruns provided clarification regarding the Borough's debt pay down and capital improvements/bonding.

Jill Brown, 507 Myrtle Avenue, requested clarification regarding the traffic and public safety impact that will arise from the new property developments in the Borough. Ms. Brown requested clarification regarding the amount of PILOT funds allocated to the Garwood Board of Education.

Mayor Todisco thanked Ms. Brown for her comments, and stated she highly supports the use of public safety measures in the Borough. Mayor Todisco clarified current safety measures in place. Mayor Todisco stated installing a sidewalk at West Street is a possible solution regarding pedestrian safety at Vermella.

Steve Greet, Garwood Planning Board Chairman, 409 Brookside Place, clarified the sidewalk concern on West Street and stated upcoming stop sign placements.

Councilwoman Salmon requested clarification regarding traffic study rating. Mr. Nierstedt provided clarification.

Chief Wright clarified pedestrian and vehicle traffic concerns specific to sidewalk installations at Vermella.

LeeAnn Pavlick stated concerns regarding traffic and requested clarification regarding how the amount of PILOT funding for the Garwood Board of Education was derived.

Mayor Todisco stated her support of the traffic concerns raised by Ms. Pavlik. Mayor Todisco clarified how the amount of PILOT funding for the Garwood Board of Education was derived.

Kathy Villaggio, 313 Fourth Avenue, stated her support for the Garwood Board of Education PILOT funding. Mrs. Villaggio stated support for allocating PILOT funds to pay down the bond ordinance financed for the Fire Truck.

Discussion ensued.

Pat DiFabio, President, Garwood Senior Citizen Club, 220 Third Avenue, requested clarification regarding the reduction of property taxes through PILOT funds.

Mayor Todisco thanked Mr. DiFabio for his comments.

Ms. Bruns provided clarification regarding the Senior Tax Freeze program available through the NJ Division of Taxation.

Discussion ensued.

Rich McCormack, 101 Fourth Avenue, commented on the PILOT funding distribution. and emphasized tax

Frank Kelly, 306 Willow Avenue, commented on the PILOT funding distribution. and emphasized tax reductions in other towns.

Mayor Todisco thanked Mr. McCormack and Mr. Kelly for their comments, and stated her support for property tax relief.

Mayor Todisco requested clarification regarding the distribution of PILOT funds from Councilman Lazarow.

Councilman Lazarow clarified the tax impact of receiving PILOT funds as related to the 2022 municipal budget.

Ms. Bruns clarified the tax rates as set forth in the 2022 municipal budget.

Discussion ensued.

John Bartolick, 231 Hemlock Avenue, commented on residential tax distribution and offsetting costs related to the redevelopment project.

Mayor Todisco thanked Mr. Bartolick for his comments.

Mayor Todisco requests a motion followed by a second to close public comments.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Lazarow to close public comment. All in favor.

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

Council President Blumenstock clarified the direction of the redevelopment plan and stated her appreciation for feedback provided by the public.

Mayor Todisco thanked Council President Blumenstock and stated her support regarding the significance of the public's feedback.

Discussion ensued regarding PILOT funding distributions and student enrollment projections.

Councilman Lazarow thanked all in attendance. Councilman Lazarow stated his support for property tax relief and PILOT funding for the Garwood Board of Education.

Councilman Kearney thanked all in attendance.

Mayor Todisco thanked all in attendance.


**ADJOURNMENT:**

The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on **THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022**, at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers.

Information for meetings is posted on the Borough website: [https://garwood.org/gb\\_notices](https://garwood.org/gb_notices)

A motion was made by Councilman Lazarow, second by Councilman Graham, to adjourn.  
Time: 9:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

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