

**Borough of Garwood Workshop Meeting of  
The Mayor and Council  
WORKSHOP  
MINUTES  
June 13, 2019**

Start Time: 7:00 p.m.

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Westfield Leader, advertised on January 3, 2019, notification was sent to the Star Ledger and prominently posted on 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).

<b>Mayor Todisco</b>	<b>P</b>		
<b>Councilman Benoit</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilman Ince</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilwoman Blumenstock</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilman McCormack</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilman Graham</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Council President Lazarow</b>	<b>P</b>

Also present Borough Administrator/Municipal Clerk Christina M. Ariemma, Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim, Esq. and Borough Engineer Michael Disko.

Mayor Todisco acknowledged Virginia Marinelli

Borough Engineer Michael Disko – Discussion regarding 2020 DOT application took place. Council President Lazarow commented that the Citizen’s Advisory Committee has established a list of streets. Discussion followed. This matter will be further discussed at the next meeting.

The funding for 2019 DOT was discussed. Ms. Ariemma was directed to prepare a bond ordinance based on estimates received from Engineer Disko.

Mr. Disko mentioned the Spruce Avenue curbing is underway.

The roof work was discussed. All agreed to consider a quote for work to repair the leak in the Administrators office. The steps to the firehouse roof were discussed. All agreed to fund that from the roof bond. Mr. Disko was directed to get another quote. All agreed

Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim – **No Report**

Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma mentioned that Ordinance No. 18-23 adopted last year needs to be amended. It was written for Oak Street and should be New Street. It is a simple correction and she stated she can prepare the correcting ordinance. The Mayor referred the matter to Laws & License Committee to review the hours of the ordinance. Ms. Ariemma was directed to provide the information to Councilman Benoit.

Mayor Todisco’s Report:

PSE&G - I received an email update from our government representative from PSE&G yesterday, which essentially says the option of moving new 69kV power lines along the railroad is still under review. Here is the message directly from the email, “We recently received communication from Conrail highlighting several conditions that need to be evaluated in order to assess the feasibility of siting the facilities along the railroad. These conditions are both technical and commercial. PSE&G will be engaging our engineering, operations and real estate functions to perform a thorough analysis of the conditions identified by Conrail. This analysis will take several weeks to complete before we will be in a position to determine the feasibility of this option.” I will continue to keep everyone updated as I learn more from PSE&G.

North Avenue Redevelopment Update - I spoke with the developer of the North Avenue site commonly known as the Paperboard a couple of days ago and he said the remaining building near the street will be

taken down overnight by the end of this month. Ideally, he is hoping it can be done this upcoming Tuesday night. Our Police Department will continue to use Nixle alerts to get community information out on construction as they have been doing.

Revaluation Update - Realty Appraisal, the firm handling our town wide revaluation, provided me with an update. They have now measured and inspected all residential properties and 45 commercial and exempt properties. Also, they have mailed income and expense requests to all class 4 properties.

Garwood Rocks - I want to thank everyone involved, from our Business & Industry Liaison Carol Kearney to our Police Department to our DPW to our Administrator, for their hard work, effort, and time before and during our 6th annual Garwood Rocks Street Fair and Car Show. Also, I'd like to thank all of the sponsors that help make the event financially possible. Although the weather cut the event short by about an hour, it was a great day with a big turnout with residents and visitors alike enjoying our vibrant community.

Garwood Mayor's Wellness Campaign - The next walk will be on Saturday, June 22nd at 10am at Unami Park.

Joint Council/Planning/BOE Committee - The joint Council/Planning/BOE Committee will be meeting on July 9th as part of our quarterly schedule.

Graduation - All members of the Council are invited to attend the 8th grade graduation at Lincoln School next Wednesday at 7pm. I am very much looking forward to attending and am honored to be a guest speaker that night. I will also be attending the Arthur L. Johnson High School graduation the following night.

Thank you! - Lastly, I'd like to publicly thank resident Bill Kolfenbach for donating his winnings from a 45-day fitness challenge at Internal Kinetics Fitness Company here in Garwood to our Recreation program. Internal Kinetics is located at 155A South Avenue and is owned by Garwood native, Mike DiMaio and his wife, Pam, who is from neighboring Westfield. Also, working among the crew are Garwood residents, Mark DiMaio and Ian Bitran.

Moment of Silence - We haven't met since before Memorial Day and in consideration of the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion during WWII on June 6th, I'd like to ask everyone to remember our fallen soldiers during tonight's moment of silence.

Comments or matters for discussion from members of Council:

**Councilman Benoit** – Commented on political lawn signs.

**Councilwoman Blumenstock** - During the regular meeting tonight, we will be voting on the introduction of the ordinance for the bonding for a ladder truck. I would normally save my comments on this matter for the adoption vote, but should the introduction pass tonight, I will not be present at the adoption vote. I have had a family vacation planned for some time and so will not be at the meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. But this is a significant vote and one I know we all take very seriously and I would be remiss if I did not let both my fellow colleagues and the public know where I stand. This vote represents the culmination of years of this particular request from the Fire Department and is obviously a large purchase for our borough, so it is not a decision that should be made without a great deal of research, discussion and thought. And knowing the character of my fellow councilmembers, I know it won't be.

I will be voting yes for introduction tonight and, should it pass on to adoption, my vote were I present at the meeting would also be a yes. I did not come to this conclusion lightly and to be quite honest, it represents a change in thinking for me from when I began as a councilmember almost three years ago. I remember clearly campaigning door-to-door back in 2016 and being asked my thoughts on purchasing a ladder truck for the fire department. And yes, many of those inquiries came from members of our fire department. And I remember the tough conversations with them as I told them that I wasn't ready to say to yes to that. Those conversations weren't easy but I have to be honest, while I understood many of the obvious "pros", I didn't feel the case had been fully made to warrant further exploration, nor was I satisfied the case had been made that it was financially feasible at that point.

It's been nearly three years since those initial conversations, but in that small amount of time, there is actually much that has changed on both fronts.

I've had the chance to learn more extensively about the Fire Department, its makeup, the calls they respond to, and the buildings they can and can't safely reach. Over the last several months, they presented a thorough case and have invested the time to ensure this Council, our Citizens Advisory Panel and the through town-halls, the residents, had every opportunity to understand their points of view on the benefits, the limitations of mutual aid, and why they feel a borough-owned ladder truck was essential to Garwood's future safety and well-being. With every conversation or new piece of information I was presented, my view on the necessity of the truck further evolved.

On the other side of the coin we have the cost. Clearly the depth of my appreciation for the borough's budget has changed since first elected, but also has the health of our borough's finances. We've managed to maintain and in some cases, even expand, services all while keeping municipal tax increases historically low or in the case of last year not-at-all. Also, and crucially, we have some new large revenue sources coming online soon. As our auditor explained, our first payment for the fire truck could be staged to coincide with the commencement of Vermella-sourced revenue, in order to partially offset the current estimated \$50 / year increase. These factors greatly eased my concern as to the cost and financial feasibility, which I hope has reassured our residents as well.

The majority of the conversations I continue to have are in favor of this purchase. Many have done their own research and attended the town halls or watched them online and most have come to the same conclusion I have: the cost can be properly managed and the safety of our residents is paramount. I want to urge the rest of the council to vote yes to this ordinance tonight and ultimately vote to support its adoption.

**Councilman Graham** – Thanked the Chamber of Commerce for Garwood Rocks. Thanked all of the professionals.

**Councilman Ince** - I noted recently that the Westfield Recreation Commission has voted to recommend the continuation of the "temporary" ice rink at Gumbert Park for another season, 2019 – 2020. The final decision on whether or not this poorly situated rink goes forward lies in the hands of Westfield's Town Council. Rather than rehashing the pros and cons of the Gumbert ice rink which have been well documented and the subject of much discussion, I want to concentrate on the need for a permanent solution. Clearly the Gumbert site is not the answer. Other Westfield sites such as the municipal pool complex or Tamaques Park have not garnered serious consideration, perhaps due to their close proximity to nearby homes.

At our last council meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup> I suggested the former Oak Ridge golf course located in nearby Clark might be considered as a site for a temporary or a permanent ice rink. Note that some years ago a suggestion was made to build a permanent ice rink on this site, for whatever reason it did not go forward at that time. For those not familiar, the Oak Ridge site is owned by Union County and is a significant piece of underused real estate which could easily accommodate an ice rink. I might point out that to my knowledge it receives even less use over the winter season. The Oak Ridge site is not only adequate for a rink but has more than enough room for parking as well. This site is large enough that an ice rink could be situated in such a way as not to cause undue concern to residents in the area.

The supporters of the Gumbert rink need to start thinking outside the box. There is no available real estate in Westfield that I am aware of that is suitable for a permanent ice rink. The Oak Ridge site might be a win / win for Westfield's hockey and skating supporters as well as the County of Union. Whether the Oak Ridge site is feasible would have to be looked at further, but as it is no more than a 10 minute drive from Westfield it certainly might offer better alternative to Gumbert Park.

It is time to be proactive on this issue and not continue to return to a problematic site such as Gumbert Park. Let's leave Gumbert for the basketball players it was intended for.

**Councilman McCormack** - thank you Mayor, what I have to say may take over 3 minutes so I may need to buy some time than one of my fellow council members, First I would like to discuss the Memorial Day parade what a great time it was to be part of something that has such meaning to remember all of those that lost their lives for our Great Country. I thank my fellow council members and you Mayor or for representing Garwood in this Parade. For some laughter I also received a lot of compliments on my slacks that day. Next I would like to thank the celebration committee for doing another outstanding job with the Memorial Day service at the Colombian club/Knights of Columbus building. So moving forward I would like to discuss Garwood rocks What a wonderful day we had nice weather and a large crowd, this year for me it was a little different for this year for the 1st time the Knights of Columbus had a booth and our Grand Knight Michael Collings and myself spent the day sharing what we do at the Knights of Columbus as to all Their charities we support and the benefits that come along with being a member we actually recruited 3 new members so a successful day for the Knights of Columbus, With this being said I would like to give a big thanks to everyone involved with putting Garwood rocks together. I have 2 more important topics so let me begin I would like to say that sitting here as an elected official! I could not be more pleased and proud not just to tell our Mayor but to tell the general public that all of us as council members that you the people elected are working well together! I have received numerous phone calls, e-mails and text messages from my colleagues asking what do you think of this, or what would you do with that! With this being said I feel as a group sitting here tonight it's Important to let the public know the hard work we are doing to give back to his small community in which we all call Home. So now as I move forward with my last comment that I'm so happy and please to read to my fellow council members and to our Mayor and to all the residence, But before I begin I would like to thank the resident that approach me and a fellow council member at Garwood rocks to discuss when I am about to read and I know with his residence approaching us I am doing the right thing so let me begin. I just want to bring something up to the attention of our council and to you to public, We all know that our mayor is a busy young Woman she does a lot for the Borough, But what you may not know is that while she is doing all that work as being in part of many committees and groups in our town she was also attending graduate school to get her masters in educational leadership from the college of New Jersey. So as a father of 3 beautiful young ladies that accomplish more than I can ever imagine I'm happy to announce my congratulations to our Mayor Sara Todisco Because a little over 2 and a 1/2 weeks ago she Sara graduated and I can tell you from my personal aspect this is a Big Deal that while she resumed all her work at the time as a councilwoman and now as Mayor She was able to achieve such a large Accomplishment. I don't know if we ever in Garwood had a Mayor complete a graduate degree while in office And so I councilman Richard McCormack Would like to ask the council not only to congratulate Mayor Sara Todisco with me but support a resolution being prepared for our next council meeting to Honor our Mayor for her outstanding Achievement!!! So I ask my colleagues and you in attendance to stand and give a big round of acknowledgement to our Mayor Sara Todisco.

**Council President Lazarow** - The citizen's advisory council met this past Saturday with me and the mayor to discuss mainly which roads to pave. We presented the map that was so kindly produced by Mr. Disco, our engineer that gave a clear understanding of which roads may need to be urgently paved. As a group we came to a consensus to investigate the following roads with the idea that the most urgent roads needed to be paved on the North side could potentially be covered by the gas company that is doing infrastructure work there. They are: Hazel – Center to Lexington (about 1 and a half blocks), East – Pine to Hazel, Hemlock – East to Westfield Line (dead end), New St – Myrtle to Rankin (Cranford line), Spruce – Center to East, Willow – Center to West, Locust – East to Oak, Spruce – Maple to West. Everyone came back with varying opinions on their priority and we will use the feedback to help us make a final recommendation at our next council meeting.

I have been impressed by the commitment of this group of 9 individuals that has gone above and beyond to help make informed choices in the past with our current vote of the ladder truck. They attended the demonstration of the ladder truck, attended or watched the presentation by Chief Tweedle, and were able

to ask lots of questions before they came to a consensus of support for this equipment. I look forward to hearing more input from the citizen's advisory council to help this council make more informed decisions on these critical local projects and capital expenditures.

Board of Chosen Freeholders Liaison Report: **No Report**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

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

Mr. Pritchard of 410 Spruce Avenue commented on the fire truck matter. He commented on honoring soldiers. He also sang a song.

Carol Kearney thanked everyone involved with Garwood Rocks. Council thanked Ms. Kearney.

Vanessa Schuring, 306 Locust Avenue commented on Garwood Rocks. She thanked the people and the council.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue commented on the ice rink and the historical rock from the baseball league. He commented on the lawn sign matter. He commented on PILOT money for the school. He commented on the county doing curbing on county roads. He commented on intersections.

Ted L'Estrange, 43 Prospect Hill Road, Cuddlebackvill, NY commented on matters in China.

Motion by Councilwoman Blumenstock, seconded by Councilman Benoit to close public comments.

Mayor Todisco responded to Bruce Paterson. She thanked Mr. L'Estrange and Mr. Pritchard.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 8:19 p.m., a motion was made by Councilman Benoit, and seconded by Council President Lazarow to adjourn the workshop session. All agreed.

Respectfully submitted:



**CHRISTINA M. ARIEMMA, Municipal Clerk**  
Borough of Garwood