

Borough of Garwood
MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
August 11, 2022

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Moment of Silence

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	EXCUSED	Councilwoman Loffredo	P
Councilman Kearney	*P	Councilwoman Salmon	P
<i>*arrived at 7:07 P.M.</i>			
Councilman Lazarow	P	Council President Blumenstock	

Also Present:

Kyle Harris, Borough Administrator
Adam Abramson, Borough Attorney
Victoria Holmes, Esq.
James Wright, Chief of Police
Catherine D. Cameron, Borough Clerk

Report of Borough Attorney NO REPORT

Mr. Abramson introduced Victoria. Holmes, Esq. Ms. Holmes will be representing the Borough at the August 25th Council meeting in Mr. Abramson's absence.

Report of Borough Administrator

Construction Update: Most of the major construction has been completed. Spruce, Hemlock, Hazel and Third have been paved with punch list items, tree planting and some restoration work remaining. The work at Harman has been completed as well. The South Ave curbing work is wrapping up with restoration already taking place. Bond Ordinance 22-10: This is for additional work that needs to be completed in the investigation of a new DPW buildings. Specifically this is for the Geotech Borings on the Willow Ave property as well as the Preliminary Assessment and the Phase II assessment if needed.

Report of Mayor Sara Todisco

Parking - The Parking Committee met this past Monday to discuss other areas for the Council to consider amending the Borough Code. This was distributed to Council by Mr. Harris. We are proposing a no parking zone on the easterly side of Center Street from South Avenue to North Avenue. Currently, this is a one-hour parking area and I've had residents raise safety concerns to me as cars turn right off South Avenue and onto Center Street. Also, we are proposing modifying the ordinance to allow Fire Department member parking on the south side of South Avenue from the Firehouse down to West Street. We are also investigating North Avenue, specifically the bend down by Anchor Place and the northern side of North Avenue from Oak Street heading east as it can be a difficult line of sight for drivers making a left out of Oak Street and onto North Avenue.

Short-term rentals - Concerns over short-term rentals, such as Airbnbs, have recently been brought to my attention by several residents. They raised concerns of this being a public nuisance in residential areas. I asked Mr. Harris to circulate a sample ordinance to the Council, which he sent on Monday. This would not permit rentals of 30 days or less. We could also consider 45 days or less. We are a small, tight knit suburban town where neighbors pride themselves in getting to know one another and look out for one another. We are not a shore or lake town that would be expected to attract tourists. Residents raised concerns to me over the extreme transient nature of short-term rentals, for even as short as one night.

Discussion ensued regarding parking for the Fire Department.

Discussion ensued regarding short term rentals.

Mayor Todisco recommended the matter to the Police Committee for further review prior to introducing an Ordinance.

Comments from the Council:

Councilman Graham NO REPORT

Councilman Kearney

Ordinance 22-12 is on the agenda for introduction tonight. As discussed at our last meeting, this will amend the Borough Code to modernize the language regarding video/audio recording of our meetings and create a requirement for all meetings to be, at a minimum, audio recorded. I'd appreciate full Council support for the introduction of this important transparency measure.

Councilman Lazarow NO REPORT

Councilman Lazarow commented on his attendance to the Active Shooter Drill at Lincoln School.

Councilwoman Loffredo NO REPORT

Councilwoman Salmon NO REPORT

Council President Blumenstock

I want to take a minute to thank Chief Wright, Captain Stoffer and the rest of the Police Department for allowing me as well as the other Councilmembers to view a small portion of one of their active shooter drills this week at Lincoln School. We, as Council members, are tasked with ensuring the departments in our Borough are properly funded and our first responders have the equipment they need to perform their duties and this certainly gave me even further insight into just how important that is. On another level as a parent with kids in this school, it brought up a lot of emotions watching the drills, especially after recent events like Uvalde, but I am just thankful to see how dedicated our officers truly are to ensuring our children's safety. So thank you again to our PD.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council held on July 28, 2022.

<https://garwoodnj.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/07-28-2022-MINUTES.pdf>

Executive Session Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council held on July 28, 2022.

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

COMMUNICATIONS:

1) NEW JERSEY STATE LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

- a) 07/29/2022, SHBP Rate Increases; Hospital Tax Suit Dismissed; Naloxone Distribution
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/177461>
- b) 07/29/2022, RE: SHPB Rate Renewal Report Released
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/177622>
- c) 08/01/2022, RE: 2022 Annual League Conference Registration is Now Open
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/177989>
- d) 08/05/2022, RE: Outdoor Dining Expansion, DEP Grants, Portal Bridge Groundbreaking
<https://www.njlm.org/CivicSend/ViewMessage/Message/178252>

RECEIVED AND FILED.

ORDINANCES:

INTRODUCTION:

Municipal Clerk to read Bond Ordinance No. 22- 10 by title only:

BOND ORDINANCE NO. 22-10

BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING AND THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN PHASE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ("DPW") BUILDING OR THE RENOVATION OF THE EXISTING DPW BUILDING IN, BY AND FOR THE BOROUGH OF GARWOOD, IN THE COUNTY OF UNION, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$40,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS.

https://garwoodnj.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/BOND_ORD._22-10.pdf

A motion was made by Councilwoman Salmon, second by Council President Blumenstock, to introduce Bond Ordinance No. 22-10.

Roll Call:

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

5-AYES, 1-ABSENT Bond Ordinance No. 22-10 was introduced.

Municipal Clerk to read Ordinance No. 22-11 by title only:

ORDINANCE NO. 22-11

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF GARWOOD BY AMENDING CHAPTER 71, ENTITLED "BUSINESS AND OCCUPATIONS", ARTICLE 1 "HAWKERS, PEDDLERS, SOLICITORS, CANAVASSERS, DISTRIBUTORS OF ADVERTISING".

https://garwoodnj.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/22-11-Intro-No_Knock_Registry.pdf

A motion was made by Council President Blumenstock second by Councilman Kearney, to introduce Ordinance No. 22-11.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	ABSENT	Councilwoman Loffredo	AYE
Councilman Kearney	AYE	Councilwoman Salmon	AYE

Councilman Lazarow **AYE** **Council President Blumenstock** **AYE**
5-AYES, 1-ABSENT Ordinance No. 22-11 was introduced.
Municipal Clerk to read Ordinance No. 22-12 by title only:

ORDINANCE NO. 22-12

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BOROUGH CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF GARWOOD BY AMENDING CHAPTER 5, ENTITLED “ADMINISTRATION”, ARTICLE X “MEETINGS OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL”.

https://garwoodnj.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/22-12_-_Establish_Video_Recording_Council_Mtngs.pdf

A motion was made by Councilman Kearney, second by Council President Blumenstock, to introduce Ordinance No. 22-12.

5-AYES, 1-ABSENT Ordinance No. 22-12 was introduced.

Roll Call:

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

COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS AND OTHER REPORTS:

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL: Councilman Lazarow, Chair

The finance committee unanimously supported RESOLUTION NO. 22-129 which is a Resolution Opposing the Proposed Increases to the State Health Benefits Program. Currently, the preliminary rate increase for the 2023 Local Government Employer Group is 22.8%, which includes a 21.6% increase for Active, a 13% increase in Early Retiree, and a 0.7% increase for Medicare Retiree. This resolution is asking the state to do whatever it can to control these costs as these increases are unsustainable, especially for smaller towns, like Garwood. We have advocated to the state before, so I am hoping this will put additional pressure to recognize the financial hardships this increase will bring to our community and to renegotiate with our current state health insurance provider, or to seek bids from other companies willing to provide reasonable rates.

FIRE AND OEM: Councilman Kearney, Chair

Thank you Mayor. The Garwood Fire Department has been updating their reporting system and transitioning to using the “I Am Responding” application. The end result of this will allow for easier filing of reports along with full compliance with the latest National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) standard going forward. With this transition in progress, we still do not have the usual calls and hours of service numbers available to report, however I would like to highlight a few recent incidents.

Beginning with a serious dumpster on Tuesday afternoon where we had a quick response by our firefighters, with a total of 22 members present on scene, allowing for an early and aggressive attack on the fire. This prevented extension to any of the surrounding residences. A thank you is due to all our responders, along with the Cranford and Westfield Fire Departments, who provided standby coverage for our town while all of our personnel were tied up for an hour-and-a-half with the dumpster fire.

In addition to this, our firefighters have been responding to what seems like nearly non-stop calls for service this week. In addition to the dumpster fire, there have been calls for downed power lines on North Avenue, two simultaneous motor vehicle crash responses, a strange odor investigation and multiple fire alarms.

Finally, closing out with good news. I’m pleased to report hose inspections were recently completed and only 10 sections failed this year, versus 25 sections in 2021 and 27 sections in 2020. The increased funding provided in this year’s operating budget allows for replacement of those 10 sections as well as, for the first time in a long time, rotating out some of the 40-year-old hose the Fire Chief discussed with us earlier this

year and replacing it. It may not sound like it, but this represents turning a corner and shows the progress which can be made on long standing equipment issues with continued Council support of the Fire Department moving forward.

FACILITIES, GROUNDS AND SHADE TREES: Councilwoman Loffredo, Chair

Councilwoman Loffredo provided an update regarding the Shade Tree Committee.

STREETS, ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY: Council President Blumenstock, Chair NO REPORT

POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY: Councilman Graham, Chair

Council President Blumenstock read the following report:

Since the last meeting of Mayor and Council on July 28, 2022 the Garwood Police Department has recorded the following activity: Initiated 41 motor vehicle stops; Conducted 32 building/property checks; Initiated 16 community policing posts; Assigned to 15 fixed traffic posts (Radar, Stop Sign, Distracted Driving); Responded to 31 calls for medical assist; Responded to 6 business/residential alarms; Responded to 11 false 911/fire/co alarms; Responded to 4 Fire/Co alarms; Responded to 11 Well Being checks

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: RECREATION, HISTORICAL AND CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEES:

Councilwoman Salmon, Chair

Councilwoman Salmon provided an update regarding the Recreation Committee.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: Councilman Kearney

No report tonight, but a thank you to all my colleagues here tonight for supporting the Ordinance introduction.

LIBRARY, MAYOR'S REPRESENTATIVE: Councilman Lazarow

August 15, 10am to noon - Participants will be packing brown bag sustainable lunches for Bridges Outreach. This family-friendly activity is limited to 15 participants of all ages. Participants will then decorate the brown bags with drawings and inspirational words, and pack them with sustainable lunch items. Bridges Outreach ends homelessness through volunteer-driven outreach and individual case management.

August 17 – Grab and Go Crafts – Pick up Grab and Go Crafts while they last

SCHOOL BOARD LIAISON: Councilman Kearney

No report, the next BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 16th. One note from my parent emails, an announcement was sent out today naming Mrs. Emmons as the Acting Superintendent while the search to fill the position continues. I wish Mrs. Emmons all the best in her new role, and I'm sure I'll have more to report on that for our next meeting.

GARWOOD SENIOR CITIZEN LIAISON: Council President Blumenstock

We had our latest club meeting last Thursday, Aug 4th with lunch and bingo, of course. Our next meeting is on Aug 18th and when we meet again in September we will be having some speakers lined up. There is a classic movie showing tomorrow at the Library at 12 pm. Come and beat the heat in the cool air conditioning and watch Fiddle on the Roof. Our Senior Director Kathleen is also working hard on setting up some extra classes come the fall, possibly some extra crafting classes and maybe a planting class. More on that to come as we finalize details. That's all for my report, Mayor.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY LIAISON: Councilman Kearney NO REPORT

OFFICER'S REPORTS:

Zoning Enforcement Officer's Monthly Report for July, 2022.

https://garwoodnj.govoffice3.com/vertical/Sites/%7B7F1088A0-CEC9-4505-80EE-1DF1BF7DFFBD%7D/uploads/Addendum_July_2022.pdf

A motion was made by Council President Blumenstock, 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.

Bill Nierstedt, 320 Hickory Avenue, commented on short term rentals.

Tom Evelina, 308 North Avenue, commented on fire department expenditures.

Mr. Evelina commented on the resolutions deleted from the July 28th agenda.

Mr. Evelina requested clarification regarding the soil testing as listed in Bond Ordinance # 22-10.

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

Mayor Todisco thanked Mr. Nierstedt for his comments.

Mayor Todisco provided clarification regarding resolutions deleted from the consent agenda.

Mayor Todisco provided clarification regarding the soil testing as listed in Bond Ordinance # 22-10.

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. 22-129

Resolution Opposing the Proposed Increases to the State Health Benefits Program

WHEREAS, the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP), governed by N.J.S.A. 52:14-17.25 et seq., offers medical, prescription drug, and dental coverage to qualified State and participating local government public employees, retirees, and eligible dependents; and

WHEREAS, all SHBP plans are self-funded meaning that the money paid out for benefits comes directly from a SHBP fund supplied by the State, participating local employers, and member premiums; and

WHEREAS, the Division of Pensions and Benefits is responsible for the daily administrative activities of the SHBP, the State Health Benefits Commission is the executive organization responsible for overseeing the SHBP; and

WHEREAS, the State Health Benefits Commission, comprised of state officials and union representatives, annually consider the calendar year premium levels for the Local Government Employer Group of the SHBP based on recommendations found in the Rate Setting Recommendation Analysis of the Local Government Employee Group; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary rate increase for the 2023 Local Government Employer Group is 22.8%, which includes a 21.6% increase for Active, a 13% increase in Early Retiree, and a 0.7% increase for Medicare Retiree; and

WHEREAS, subsequent news accounts have the New Jersey Department of Treasury noting "rates for active members and early retirees would likely be increase between 12-20% across the various plans for the upcoming year"; and

WHEREAS, such proposed exorbitant rate increases will fall upon both the local property taxpayer and local public employees, and

WHEREAS, the proposed premium increase for most active employees will take thousands more out of their paychecks annually and lead to huge costs for local governments that will translate into higher property tax bills for struggling families; and
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the governing body of the Borough of Garwood in the county of Union call upon the State Health Benefit Commission to reconsider the rate increase and strike a rate increase that is appropriate in the current economic conditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the governing body of the Borough of Garwood in the County of Union urge the legislature to adopt legislation expanding the composition of the State Health Benefits Commission to include representatives from both municipal and county government management; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution is forwarded to Assembly Members Munoz and Matsikoudis, Senator Bramnick, Senate President Scutari, Assembly Speaker Coughlin, Governor Murphy, and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

A motion was made by Councilman Lazarow, second by Council President Blumenstock, to adopt Consent Agenda.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	ABSENT	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

Green Team Members

Term:

Tori Leonard	08/11/2022 - 12/31/2024
Edison Lee	08/11/2022 - 12/31/2024
Mallery Mangan	08/11/2022 - 12/31/2024
Laura Steele	08/11/2022 - 12/31/2024

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 Council President Blumenstock, second by Councilman Lazarow, to adopt Payment of Claims Resolution.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	ABSENT	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, August 25, 2022**, at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers.

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

A motion was made by Councilman Kearney, second by Council President Blumenstock, to adjourn.

Time: 7:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Catherine D. Cameron, R.M.C.