

**Borough of Garwood Workshop Meeting of  
The Mayor and Council  
WORKSHOP  
MINUTES  
October 10, 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 and Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim, Esq.

Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim – NO REPORT

Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma – NO REPORT

Mayor Todisco's Report:

Forced Merger of K-8 School Districts - Last week, many residents reached out to me to express concern over the Patch news article stating the Garwood Public School District could be the subject of forced consolidation by the State as Senate President Sweeney has included the mandatory consolidation of all non-K-12 districts into neighboring K-12 districts as part of his "Path to Progress" legislation. Governor Murphy has recently allocated \$10 million to study and incentivize shared services and consolidation, but Senate President Sweeney recommended \$2 million of those dollars to be directed towards the merging of non-K-12 school districts. As soon as the news broke, I reached out to our Superintendent as well as the President of the Board of Education. The Board President thanked me for my support and we plan on discussing this further in our next meeting of the joint Council/Planning/BOE committee next week.

I consider myself to be unapologetically pro-Garwood remaining Garwood and retaining its own unique identity. As your Mayor and a product of the Garwood public schools, I believe Garwood should take a stand against forced consolidation sooner rather than later. While I acknowledge this process would presumably be a long one, I believe the State should hear from us at the beginning of the process rather than the end. I wrote Resolution 19-271 that is on the consent agenda tonight. As stated in the resolution I drafted, I am firmly against forced consolidation as outlined in Sweeney's Path to Progress report. Just as I was firmly against his recommended forced consolidation of small towns and Boroughs. Garwood needs to look for what will benefit Garwood and make our own decision on what is best for our residents. I hope the full Council will join me in sending a clear message to our State representatives about where Garwood stands on this issue. I hope the Council will join me to stand up to unreasonable State mandates.

North Avenue Paperboard Site - As we all remember, there was a partial building collapse onto North Avenue on July 3rd of this year. Most importantly, no one was injured and our emergency personnel responded swiftly and professionally. PSE&G was on site quickly, had a large crew restore power within 12 hours of the collapse, and has since been reimbursed for their work. After this incident happened, I pledged to make sure there would be no expenses incurred by the Borough for this incident. While the Borough already pays for emergency personnel and equipment, I directed the Borough Administrator to calculate the total we would seek reimbursement from the property owner based on the FEMA standards, which are relatively generous, as we could not just ask for an arbitrary number. That total was \$8,399.59. Last week, we received the full amount we requested from the property owner. This figure of \$8,399.59 is additional to what was already paid to our Police Department for their time and vehicles at a total of \$3,440. So in grand total, \$11,839.59 was paid to Garwood by the Paperboard property owner. I want to thank our Department heads and especially our Borough Administrator for helping me to make sure Garwood did not incur any expense as a result of this incident.

South Avenue Redevelopment - I received the following update from Russo Development about their project on South Avenue. Site remediation is complete, although there will still be some material being brought off site for disposal to help set the site to its final grade. Building footings have started as well and will be ongoing for a few months. Site work is ongoing as they continue to install on-site utilities, make tie-ins in the street and set the site to grade. Construction of precast components started yesterday and is expected to last 5 weeks. Vertical construction of the building itself will start in a few weeks with the block stairwells. Wood framing and construction of steel will follow thereafter.

Road & Utility Project Updates - Yesterday, our engineer Mike Disko and I met with a representative of the Elizabethtown Gas Company to negotiate the most paving possible of the north side of town streets impacted by their work. As you have probably noticed, in the past, utility companies would do their work and only pave from the centerline of the street over, leaving the other half alone. In an effort to avoid that, we negotiated for the gas company to pave the streets in more dire shape from curb to curb, while the Borough will retain its usual responsibility for paving the other streets. We were also mindful of streets we have in the pipeline to be paved by the Borough already as we've applied for DOT grants on certain streets already. As always, utility companies must pave any street already paved by the Borough within the past five years from curb to curb per our moratorium.

Westfield Ice Rink - As we all know, the Westfield Ice Rink at Gumbert Park was authorized to return for two more seasons by the Westfield Town Council. Some of the concerns the majority of this Council and myself raised have been mitigated. For one, there will be no concession stand permitted at the rink. Also, the hours of operation will not be extended as requested by the rink owner. The hours will remain the same and are written into the agreement, which can be found on the Westfield town website. In my conversations with Westfield's Mayor Brindle, she has assured me the aesthetics of the rink will be improved from last year, in part because the agreement is for the next two years rather than one. I will continue to serve in my capacity as a member of Westfield rink advisory panel. On the panel, I will continue to work to ensure rink operations are closely monitored, concerns are addressed timely, and that Westfield is anticipating and mitigating any potential issues.

Mayor's Wellness Campaign - The next 3K walk will be on Saturday, October 26th at 10am at the Recreation Complex.

FoodStock Challenge - We are well underway with our Foodstock Challenge with Fanwood to see who can collect the most non-perishable food items and other goods, like paper and hygiene products. I want to thank the many residents who have really stepped up with this challenge to encourage widespread participation in our community. It's been great to see my office taken over by bags and bags of food. This food drive is ongoing through Halloween and you may drop off food here at Borough Hall or at the Garwood Library. Let's keep it up! For more information, you can visit [foodstocknj.org](http://foodstocknj.org) for the complete list of acceptable goods and more.

Police Ride Along - One night last week, I did my first ever "ride along" with our Garwood Police Department. I spent a little more than 3 hours seeing a glimpse of what it is like to be on a night shift. Sergeant PJ Lewis was the ranking officer on duty along with PO George Suggs, PO Ed Mironski, and Dispatcher John Drone. I spent most of the time in the car with PO Suggs as we patrolled the streets and responded to calls. There were several motor vehicle stops, including one which required a car to be towed due to it being unregistered, along with a parking ticket being issued and a medical call.

I was impressed to see the volunteer Garwood First Aid Squad respond to the medical call in just a couple of minutes from the time they were dispatched. They are to be commended for the increase in their response rate within the past year!

I pride myself in being very supportive of police and a big fan of Garwood's finest, but I have to say that this ride along gave me an even deeper appreciation because I was able to see their work firsthand over several hours. The importance of dispatchers cannot be overlooked because of how they are the first to receive the calls and how they need to communicate closely with the officers on duty. I learned how our officer's call in each time they post somewhere and the dispatcher needs to know where they are at all times. Also, on a lighter note, I quickly learned how heavy a bullet proof vest is and how bright those emergency lights are!

Thank you to Sgt. Lewis, PO Suggs, PO Mironski, and Dispatcher Drone for showing me what a few hours on their night shift look like! Also, thank you to Chief Wright for arranging this ride along. I'm very proud of Garwood's finest and am honored to support them as Mayor.

#### Comments or matters for discussion from members of Council:

**Councilman Benoit:** Memo distributed to council was a memorandum on Garwood enacting a Public Assembly Ordinance along with a draft of that ordinance for discussion. The second memo was a memorandum about updating various sections of Garwood's Code in regards to fees, fines and violations.

Discussion followed regarding the issuing of permits for public assembly. Laws and License will review the matter with Chief Wright. Fines, and ordinances were discussed. Council decided to amend the code accordingly.

**Councilwoman Blumenstock:** I want to let everyone know the good news about the TREX recycling challenge. I know at a previous meeting I announced that the Green team has hit the 500lb mark in recycling plastic bags and wrapping. That means we are getting a new bench for Garwood. We are in the process of ordering the bench and can't wait to set it up in town. We did find out however, that if a new group in town would like to start another challenge, then we will be eligible for another bench. So the Garwood Lions Club has decided to pick up where the Green team left off and collect their own 500lbs of plastic. Thank you to the Lions for taking up the challenge and everyone can continue to collect their plastic bags and wrapping and deposit them in the same locations at Borough Hall, the Library and at Kings inside the vestibule. And I know our school is continuing to help as well, so we thank them for all their help!

**Councilman Graham:** NO REPORT

**Councilman Ince:** At this time I would like to recognize and remember Louis J. Peragallo who passed away on October 3, 2019, at the age of 92. Many of you may remember Coach Peragallo as the long time Athletic Director at A.L.J. High School in Clark from 1956 when the school opened until his retirement in 1992. During that time he was well known in high school athletic circles for coaching outstanding baseball and soccer teams. However this man was more than a coach. Lou Peragallo was a teacher, mentor, and a man who set a fine example for a generation of young people. His wise council was sought by many students and colleagues alike. He was certainly one of the finest educators and men I have ever known.

I first got to know "Coach" as a student and high school athlete in 1970. Later our friendship would continue as I began my law enforcement career as a Police Officer in Clark. Police officers were often present at Johnson's many athletic contests, as well as other events. Later on when I had entered the FBI, Coach was always there to offer a kind word whenever we saw one another. He even went out of his way to contact me for encouragement when I ran for Union County Sheriff in 2014. I say that because I had an unlisted number which made it somewhat difficult to contact me. Leave it to Coach however who somehow got my number anyway and proceeded to call me and encourage my election efforts. This is an example of the type of man he was.

Louis J. Peragallo will be fondly remembered by all who were lucky enough to have crossed his path. In closing Coach should also be remembered for his love of family and love of country. Lou was a WWII United States Army veteran. He was truly one of the finest of his generation.

**Councilman McCormack:** mentioned the consolidation of schools matter. He stated he supports leaving Garwood with its own identity. He commented on the NJ American Water Company projects. Brief discussion followed.

**Council President Lazarow:** commented on an article in the newspaper relating to closing schools on Election Day.

Board of Chosen Freeholders Liaison Report: NONE

#### 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.

John Pritchard, 410 Spruce Avenue commented on Veteran's Day. He sang a song.

William Bellomo, 501 Willow Avenue commented on Garwood schools consolidation.

Joseph Nicastro, 219 Gallows Hill Road commented on Garwood schools consolidation.

Krystal Zawoysky 208 Myrtle Avenue commented that graffiti is back at the underpass. She recommended children be taught it's a crime to deface public property.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue commented that Muhlenberg Hospital is almost leveled. He commented on PILOT funds. He commented on flooding matters. He commented on the ice rink.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Blumenstock, second by Council President Lazarow to close public comment. All in favor.

Mayor Todisco responded to concerns of the residents.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 8:32 p.m., a motion was made by Councilman Benoit, second by Council President Lazarow to adjourn the workshop session. All agreed.

Respectfully submitted:



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

