

**Borough of Garwood Workshop Meeting of  
The Mayor and Council  
WORKSHOP  
MINUTES  
November 25, 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 Clerk/Stenographer Kathleen J. Wierzbinski and Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim, Esq. Ms. Ariemma was absent.

Mayor Todisco made a presentation to the Lion's Club celebrating their 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Peggy Briggs accepted on behalf of the club.

Borough Attorney Thomas C. Jardim – NO REPORT

Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma – Excused, NO REPORT

Mayor Todisco's Report:

**Revaluation** - The mandatory revaluation process is ongoing as probably everyone is aware. Informal hearings were held and now Realty Appraisal is in the process of reviewing each of the files in order to determine if they will adjust the new assessment after meeting with the property owner or not. In either case, they will mail a letter to everyone who had a hearing with their conclusion and directions on how to file an appeal. Per State law, the entire process is conducted by this outside firm, Realty Appraisal, and not the Borough.

I understand that since the last revaluation in Garwood was 1985, this was bound to be a real undertaking that will no doubt frustrate and upset some residents. This is why we had Realty Appraisal do a town hall meeting earlier this year to explain the process and answer questions before inspections even began. Since 1985, the value of individual homes has changed drastically. Some people have made improvements, some people have torn down and built anew, and others have left the homes the same; so there's bound to be changes. The overall tax base remains the same as the town collects only what is set in the budgets of the school, county, and municipality. The change is how it's apportioned amongst the homes in town to provide tax fairness. As a general rule, 1/3 goes up, 1/3 stays the same, and 1/3 go down. So please keep this in mind when you are looking over your assessment. As I've said before, the new assessment will take effect in January 2020, but the tax bill will not be affected by it until the Third Quarter of 2020, after the 2020 budgets of the school, county, and municipality are adopted.

**Volunteer Rewards Card** - We are currently reaching out to our local businesses for participation in our second series of the volunteer rewards card. We have already gotten a number of positive responses, from past participants to new ones. If you are interested in signing up your Garwood business to offer our volunteers a 10% discount on purchases or services, please contact me by December 15th.

**Power Line Project** - The day after the last Council meeting, we received word from PSE&G that their proposed 69kV power line project was placed on indefinite hold. This news follows the vocal opposition to the project, particularly as it would run down residential streets, put to PSE&G by many residents along with Mayor Gilblin of Cranford, Mayor Brindle of Westfield, and myself. After months investigating the Conrail option, it was determined to be cost prohibitive. With the substation at the Hartz Mountain site in Cranford now off the table, PSE&G is looking for alternative locations for a new substation to replace the aging one in Clark. They are looking at a number of towns, including Linden and Clark. When I asked, they are not looking for the space in Garwood as they need at least 3 or 4 acres. The three of us Mayors immediately put out a press release with the news on Friday, November 15th. This outcome shows our voices were heard. Mayor Giblin, Mayor Brindle, and I remain committed to working together on this issue or any other that affect our area and our collective interests.

**Mayor's Wellness Campaign** - This past Saturday was the Mayor's Wellness Campaign 3K Walk at the Recreation Complex. Even though it was a bit chilly, we had a good number of people come out from new residents to parents with their children to Council members. I want to thank Laura Billotta for being our guest walker. She was asked to be our guest for her experience running marathons, but luckily, she didn't mind just keeping us to a walk.

**Mayor's Breakfast** - My next breakfast with the Mayor event will be on Sunday, December 1st at the Firehouse with Fire Chief Allan Tweedle as my guest. We will be offering tours of the firehouse, so all residents from young to more senior can check out our fleet. Please feel free to stop in anytime for a bite to eat between 10am and noon. Please bring your questions, concerns, or just stop in to say hello and see the headquarters of our volunteer Fire Department.

Comments or matters for discussion from members of Council:

**Councilman Benoit:** L & L has two issues to bring up for discussion tonight.

1) If a Garwood Ordinance lacks a specific fine/penalty, there is a “catch-all” penalty located in our code. Specifically at Section 1-9(a) the catch-all is a monetary fine of \$1,250.00

- Our borough attorney had emailed us recently to let us know that Westfield raised their maximum fine in the “catch-all” to \$2000 to give the municipal judge more options for a host of various disorderly persons. Also, if the borough charges a disorderly under our municipal code, Garwood keeps all the fine money. But if it’s charged under a state statute, then the state keeps all the money, just an FYI.
- There are other municipalities in the area that have the “catch-all” fine at \$2000: Edison, Westfield, Cranford, and Fanwood, are a few examples.
- L & L discussed it and we see no reason not to do it here in Garwood
- So we are all in favor of amending Section 1-9(a) to raise the maximum fine to \$2000.
- How does everyone else feel

There was brief discussion. It was concluded this could be introduced in early 2020.

2) Parking on Willow

- Last month a resident on the 300 block of Willow had reached out to us to discuss parking. The 300 block of Willow is the block where if you are driving South on Center St., you would make a left onto Willow by Lorenzo’s and then the small municipal lot is on the other corner.
- Right now, the resident only parking is confined to 10am to 2pm. The resident felt that if we could extend the 2-hour restricted parking to 6pm, it could possibly give residents time to get home and get a spot in front of their house
  - L & L discussed it, and we saw no reason not to enact the change
  - Now, that said, I don’t know if it would solve the problem since, more likely than not, there’s probably people parking there and then going to use the local businesses, but as long as they don’t park for more than 2 hours, they’d be fine.
  - We see no harm in increasing it
  - One of the things we discussed was whether or not the times on all the restricted streets should be changed from 10am to 6pm
    - There’d be a minimal cost to the borough...no need for new signs, you can just order a sticker to change the 2 to a 6 on the sign
- We are waiting to hear back from the Chief as to his recommendations, both for Willow and the possibility about borough wide
  - One of the things we discussed was the fact that other towns with a commuter line running through it, have restricted parking times that extend into the evening
- We don’t know what the rationale was to limiting it from 10am to 2pm, but we thought it might be worth having a discussion about it
- Also, for the 300 Willow block, it’s also worth having a discussion as to whether or not the small municipal lot next to RMC studios should be open for resident overnight parking. That’s something that could help alleviate any issues on the 300 block

Mayor Todisco discussed her thoughts on the proposed change of time in the parking ordinance. Lengthy discussion followed. It was concluded to have the parking committee review.

Councilman Benoit spoke about the public assembly ordinance.

Mr. Jardim spoke on the proposed public assembly ordinance stating it clarifies, time, place and manner. There was lengthy discussion concerning the ordinance.

**Councilwoman Blumenstock:** The Lions Club held its annual pancake breakfast yesterday, November 24<sup>th</sup> at the Westwood. It was a great success with many residents coming out despite the gloomy weather. A great many pancakes and sausage patties were eaten along with some very crispy bacon. Thanks to the Lions Club volunteer chefs and all the Lions Club volunteers helping serve as well.

In another Lions Club note, we will be celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Garwood’s club on December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Knights of Columbus. Tickets are \$35 and include beer, wine, dinner and dancing. Come on out and help us celebrate the good work that the Lions Club does and honor all of our members especially those who have passed but generously devoted many years of their life to the Lions Club.

That’s all for my report, Mayor.

**Councilman Graham:** Asked about end of year procedure for the committees that he is liaison for. Mayor Todisco answered.

**Councilman Ince:** NO REPORT

**Councilman McCormack:** Talked about the eighth grade play. He expressed his opinion on hiring a public information officer. He stated he encourages and supports the idea of the Mayor and Council receiving a salary/stipend. He further stated a lot of time and work goes into being a council person and there should be compensation. Other members of council agree. Mayor Todisco mentioned the matter will be reviewed.

**Council President Lazarow:** This past Saturday, I met with the mayor and the citizen’s advisory panel to review road projects as well as the 5 year capital improvement plan. We discussed how a new plan that

would extend to 2024 will be added and that department heads may decide to shift priorities based on what needs become more apparent. The group was happy to see all of the work that our mayor and town engineer, Mike Disko has negotiated with our utility companies to get the most bang for our bucks in repairing and repaving roads and curbs. The group will convene again in early February when budget season for 2020 begins again to give more specific feedback.

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.

John Pritchard, 410 Spruce Avenue spoke about the new ladder truck for the Fire Department. He talked about veterans and sang a song.

Vincent Kearny, 306 Center Street stated he supports the position of a Public Information Officer and stipend for Mayor and Council members.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:58 p.m., a motion was made by Councilwoman Blumenstock, second by Councilman Graham to adjourn the workshop session. All agreed.

Respectfully submitted:



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