

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JULY 15, 2025
8:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio, Council President Ora Kornbluth, and Council members Thomas Lodato, Buddy Deauna, Domingo Almonte, Hernando Rivera, and Marc Pascual

ABSENT: No one.

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Administrator Corey Gallo
Borough Attorney John Schettino
Borough Clerk Marie Quiñones-Wilson

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:02 p.m. with the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act Statement, "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates for the year are confirmed at the Annual Meeting. The Annual Notice is sent to the Record, Star Ledger, and Cablevision, placed on a Municipal Bulletin Board and is on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk."

The Salute to the Flag was led by Councilperson Deauna.

AGENDA CHANGES

Council President Kornbluth made a motion to add Resolution #25-229 to Hire Crossing Guard Michael Onorato, Resolution #25-230 to Reject Bids for IT Consulting and Management Services, and Resolution #25-231 to Approve Proposal for Redevelopment Plan for 150 South Washington Avenue. Councilperson Deauna seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Council President Kornbluth to approve minutes of the June 17, 2025 Regular Public Meeting and the June 17, 2025 Closed Session Meeting (not to be released). Councilperson Pascual seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Capital Improvements/Borough Engineer Status Report – Remington & Vernick Associates

Borough Administrator Gallo stated Cifelli & Son General Construction Inc is the awarded bidder for the 2025 Road Program and will start the work in the first week in August. D&L Paving will be doing the 2025 DOT funded road New Jersey Avenue project in mid to late August and will finish in October. Both programs are scheduled to end on time. Mr. Gallo explained they are going out to bid again in August for paving the side parking lot and the cell tower lot. D&L Paving was the only bidder, but withdrew their bid because they could not meet the timeline.

B. Area in Need of Redevelopment Study Presentation – Neglia Group

Lyndsay Knight, economic development planner from Neglia Group, stated this is the first step in a two-step process. She explained in the first step, a study of the property is done to determine if it meets the State's criteria to determine if it's an area in need of redevelopment. The next piece is a redevelopment plan, where they determine what is appropriate to build at 150 S. Washington Avenue. Ms. Knight stated there are several ways to designate an area as an area in need of

redevelopment, however it only has to meet one of the criteria. Some of the benefits of redevelopment are that it increases control over the development patterns for the properties within the redevelopment area, allow the borough to enter into a contractual agreement with a private developer to stimulate and revitalize the redevelopment area, allows the borough to apply for grant funding specific to the redevelopment area, revise municipal ordinances and regulations to reflect the intent of the redevelopment plan, and the study recommendations of the Planning Board or Governing Body of the redevelopment study area. She explained that part of the process is to present the plan to the Planning Board to see if it is cohesive with the master plan. The study has been presented to the Planning Board. The board has no comments and referred it back to the Governing Body to adopt and move forward with the redevelopment process.

Ms. Knight stated they are only looking at one piece of property and reviewed existing zoning, history of the property, tax assessor's records, building department records, police, fire information to get an idea of what is happening on the property. It was determined the property meets criteria D, which is areas with buildings or improvements by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use, or any combination of these or other factors, that are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community. In addition, there is wood fencing along the façade of the property that is broken and there is debris all over the grass. This condition is looked at unfavorably. The design of the two buildings and uses not being separated is a faulty arrangement and would not be designed in the same fashion using modern design practices. The two uses share a parking area where various vehicles were parked in a haphazard fashion. The parking area has limited area for vehicles to maneuver safely, with most of the area not being striped. Normally, you would designate commercial vehicles separate from residential or personal vehicles. She explained not having striping creates issues with the flow of traffic. It also meets criteria H, which is the designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation. 150 S. Washington Avenue meets the criteria because it is located in a PA-1 planning area that already has the infrastructure for smart growth planning. Ms. Knight stated the site meets both criteria D and H and can be designated as an area in need of redevelopment without condemnation. There will be some form of a smaller retail space that will be in the redevelopment plan that will be a requirement, so it can be utilized by the school children and the people in the neighborhood. Tonight, they are just designating the area in need of redevelopment. The next step will be that they return with the redevelopment plan which will be presented to the Planning Board for approval. There is a change in grade that needs to be taken into consideration with the middle school, the location of the bus stop, and what the County might have in mind, as it is a county road.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS I

Mayor Amatorio opened the meeting and invited the public for comments on agenda items only, limited to five minutes per speaker.

John Smith, resident, stated Resolution #24-224 doesn't have the cost of the statue and the installation, as well as electrical work for the fountain. He stated the fountain is a waste of taxpayers' dollars and inquired who will maintain it. Mr. Smith stated there already is an area map saying the State has designated certain areas of the borough as a flood zone. He inquired when that was last updated. Mr. Smith stated there currently isn't a handicapped spot. He stated he spoke with the borough attorney about the sports group. He inquired if the group has a food handler's license to use the snack stand because the contract stated they are selling juice, ice, water, and soda.

Barry Doll, resident, stated a fountain would be unique but if it's going to cost over \$100,000, the maintenance, and health issue, isn't a need nor does it add to the value of borough hall. He requested trees be planted as there were beautiful trees taken down. Trees will provide more service to residents and employees than the fountain. Mr. Doll stated the auditor should present the audit

in front of the residents with their recommendations and suggestions. He inquired why the audit was done so late.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated it is not a statue, it is an art design that is steel constructed. He further stated the audits have been stellar for almost 9 years. There have been rare instances when there was a purchase made without a requisition. They follow all purchasing laws and have tightened up. Mr. Gallo stated the borough has been aggressively paying down debt, which is ahead of schedule, paying down the interest. In addition, the one negative thing is inflation to the budget. Healthcare expenses for employees and retirees went up by almost 50% in the last three years. The surplus has helped to offset some of the expenses. The borough is solid from a fiscal perspective. The fountain equipment package plus freight is \$40,000. Shipping is an extra \$1,600. The sculpture is included.

Councilperson Lodato stated they received an estimate of \$135,000-\$150,000. It isn't inclusive because T&M Associates was another \$32,000.

Mr. Gallo stated that is inclusive of everything.

There being no one else who wishes to be heard, Mayor Amatorio closed Verbal Communications I.

CORRESPONDENCE

a.) Naylis/Board of Fire Officers

RE: Personnel Action Letter dated June 30, 2025

Motion by Councilperson Deauna to accept Correspondence. Council President Kornbluth seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

ORDINANCES

A. Adoption of Ordinances

Mayor Amatorio read into the record:

The following ordinances published herewith were first read by title only on June 17, 2025 and posted on the bulletin board of the municipal center.

ORDINANCE 25-2649 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 17 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, ENTITLED “DEPARTMENTS”

ORDINANCE 25-2650 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 25-2642 ENTITLED “AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE SALARY RANGES OF EMPLOYEES NOT SUBJECTED TO UNIONIZED CONTRACTURAL UNITS OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD”

Public Comments on Ordinances 25-2649 and 25-2650.

No one came forward.

Motion by Council President Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Deauna, to pass Ordinance 25-2649 on second and final reading and is hereby adopted and notice of same shall be published according to law.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, second by Councilperson Rivera, to pass Ordinance 25-2650 on second and final reading and is hereby adopted and notice of same shall be published according to law.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 25-206. All matters listed below are considered by the Governing Body to be routine in nature. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If any discussion is desired by the Governing Body, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

- a. **25-207**/To Approve Bill List
- b. **25-208**/To Support the Major Richard Star Act
- c. **25-209**/To Approve Person to Person Liquor License Transfer – KJS Liquors LLC to Tony’s Italian Cuisine LLC
- d. **25-210**/To Approve Request for the Inspection of Special Item of Revenue in 2025 Budget – Motor Vehicles Drunk Driving Enforcement Funds Grant – Chapter 159
- e. **25-211**/To Certify 2024 Annual Audit
- f. **25-212**/To Appoint Municipal Representatives to the Bergen County Community Development Regional Committee
- g. **25-213**/To Approve Facility Rental Agreement with Headfirst Professional Sports Camps, LLC
- h. **25-214**/To Approve Veteran’s Tax Exemption – 35 New York Avenue
- i. **25-215**/To Approve Veteran’s Tax Exemption – 185 E. Clinton Avenue
- j. **25-216**/To Approve Veteran’s Tax Exemption – 109 New York Avenue
- k. **25-217**/To Approve Veteran’s Tax Exemption – 152 Porter Avenue
- l. **25-218**/To Approve the Purchase of Turnout Gear for the Bergenfield Fire Department – New Jersey Fire Equipment Company
- m. **25-219**/To Approve Shared Services Agreement for Special Law Enforcement Office (SLEO) Contract – Bergenfield Board of Education
- n. **25-220**/To Approve Proposal – Metzlers Brook Stream Cleaning and Streambank Stabilization Project
- o. **25-221**/To Authorize the Creating and Implementing a Long-Range Plan to Address Drainage Issues
- p. **25-222**/To Authorize Adjustments to Public Bidding Thresholds Effective July 1, 2025
- q. **25-223**/To Authorize Re-bid – Borough Hall Parking Lot
- r. ~~**25-224**/To Approve Bid – Municipal Building Fountain~~
- s. **25-225**/To Approve Bid – PAL Field Rain Garden

Councilperson Lodato requested that Resolution #25-224 be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Motion by Councilperson Pascual to approve the Consent Resolution as amended. Councilperson Deauna seconded the motion.

On a roll call, the vote on the Consent Resolution was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>

Councilperson Almonte: *aye* Councilperson Pascual: *aye*

25-224/To Approve Bid – Municipal Building Fountain

Motion by Councilperson Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Almonte that Resolution #25-224 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>nay</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>nay</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

B. Resolutions

25-226/To Authorize Grant application – New Jersey Department of Transportation FY2026 Municipal Aid Program for Repairs to Porter Avenue

Motion by Councilperson Rivera, seconded by Council President Kornbluth that Resolution #25-226 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>recuse</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

25-227/To Hire Keyboard Clerk 1 – Sharon Rugel

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Council President Kornbluth that Resolution #25-227 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

25-228/To Hire Part-Time Custodian – Diana Galli

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Rivera that Resolution #25-228 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

25-229/To Hire Crossing Guard – Michael Onorato

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Deauna that Resolution #25-229 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

25-230/To Reject Bids – IT Consulting and Management Services

Motion by Councilperson Deauna, seconded by Councilperson Rivera that Resolution #25-230 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

25-231/To Approve Proposal – Redevelopment Plan for 150 South Washington Avenue

Motion by Councilperson Rivera, seconded by Councilperson Deauna that Resolution #25-231 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>aye</i>	Council President Kornbluth:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Deauna:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Rivera:	<i>aye</i>
Councilperson Almonte:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

Committee/Department Reports

Motion offered by Council President Kornbluth that the Committee/Department Reports be spread upon the minutes in full and filed. Councilperson Lodato seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS II

Mayor Amatorio opened the meeting to Verbal Communications II and invited the public to comment on any subject, limited to five minutes per speaker.

Fred Sahlberg, resident, stated he goes to Coopers Pond to remember 911 and the dedication of the firemen. He stated he went there last month. He brought it to the Council and at least two council members would have voted not to do it. The Council took the gay American flag and hooked it on same flag pole as the American flag. He stated this is not in compliance with flag etiquette and is an insult. It didn't have to be flown. It could have been flown the first and last day of the dedication and there are other flag poles in town that could have been used. Mr. Sahlberg stated that with regards to the work in front of borough hall, there are rumors going around that the subcontractor mixed up the water pipes and then went bankrupt. Also, that there was a new contractor a couple

days ago digging up pipes. The taxpayers have the right to know if there was an issue, what the issue was, and how it was rectified.

Michael Zauderer, resident, thanked the council for all improvements done to the community, particularly to Memorial Park. Wildrose Avenue and Greenwich Drive need to be paved. There are many seniors that live on those streets and have difficulty walking on the street. There's a lot of traffic in the area now. It's time to improve the streets as they come several times during the year to repave the potholes. He stated most of Memorial Park becomes a retaining pond by his house on Wildrose Avenue, with water coming into his house. There has been a lot of change with all of the impervious coverage added to Memorial Park. He reminded the council to improve the water situation in that area.

Yehuda Borg, resident, thanked the council for recently paving Hallberg Avenue. He stated last year the council applied for an open space grant with the County for improvements to Wayne Golon Park. He inquired about the status of the grant.

Barry Doll, resident, inquired about the reduced numbers for Affordable Housing. He thanked the Borough Administrator for an explanation of the audit, and stated it should be done automatically. He inquired about why the property taxes have gone up \$500 on the average home.

Kathy Sahlberg, resident, inquired about when the revaluation assessment will be done.

John Smith, resident, stated the rain garden is a great idea as it was a requirement by the state. He inquired if the Mayor and Council received a letter from the Zoning Board about the R-5 and R-6 zones. It was supposed to be shared by the board engineer. Michael Ravenda, the code enforcer, and everyone agrees it should be 35% for both zones. He inquired when does the noise ordinance start and end in Bergenfield. Mr. Smith asked how many veterans nationwide die in a day. The answer is 22, which is way too many. Fireworks are his biggest fear and inquired why fireworks are going off in the middle of the night. The borough should put out a robo call to let the public know there will be heavy fines for fireworks after 10:00 pm. People deal with their PTSD differently and those who commit suicide are not able to handle this.

Mary Sullivan, resident, stated the council should pass around pictures of the sculpture to ensure it's not offensive. She stated last November she had identified a couple of properties in town that had disabled veterans' exemptions status and were not paying property taxes, but the properties are not owned by Bergenfield residents. It should be for Bergenfield residents only, not out of state residents. She brought it to the attention of the tax department in December. The tax department forwarded the information to the county and are still waiting for the county to make changes. Ms. Sullivan stated one was a foreclosure and another property had the disabled veteran tax status removed, but doesn't know if any property taxes were paid. Ms. Sullivan stated it is an insult to Bergenfield taxpayers for it to take so long to make changes.

There being no one else who wishes to be heard, Mayor Amatorio closed Verbal Communications II.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated when the sports season is over, the parking lot at Memorial Park will be paved, and the drainage will be fixed to hopefully offset some of the water flow. The borough is aware of the situation on Wildrose Avenue and Greenwich Drive. Veolia and PSE&G have to do their work in the area as well. The shade has been ordered for Wayne Golon Park. There is 0 obligation for Affordable Housing for this year. DPW has to understand the etiquette of flags being raised and will make sure all employees are educated, as no one is trying to disrespect the American flag in any way. Mr. Gallo explained EPIC is the general contractor and then there are subcontractors. Carson, one of the subcontractors, was responsible for the groundwork being done but went bankrupt. Now, there is a new company completing the work. The borough requested the drainage for the seepage pits be looked at because the drainage wasn't flowing the way it should have been. It was evaluated and there were some modifications. Carson also damaged the fiber

optic line that runs from Washington Avenue to the building. Mr. Gallo stated that when the pole went on fire, the contractors were also digging pipes to repair the damage. He stated that he demanded the lines be done properly and they are progressing nicely. The base asphalt coating for the street and parking lot in front of borough hall will be done on July 30th, 2025 and the second coat for the DPW and the side will be done on July 31st, 2025. There was an increase in the property taxes due to the increase in the Board of Education budget, as well as taxes and inflation. The borough has experienced a 50% increase in the last three years in medical insurance. This year, the medical plan alone, went up \$1 million. Mr. Gallo stated liability insurance, employee contracts and utilities all increased, as well as the cost of fixing equipment. The Board of Education also lost sizeable monies in federal funding. Mr. Gallo stated he is troubled that Ms. Sullivan didn't bring her concerns to his attention earlier. It is his job and obligation to get the issue resolved. He will look into the matter.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the earliest the revaluation will be done is 2026.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilperson Lodato thanked all for coming and wished everyone a good night.

Councilperson Deauna wished all a good night.

Councilperson Almonte thanked all for coming.

Councilperson Kornbluth thanked all for coming and wished everyone a good night.

Councilperson Rivera stated if they look at the neighboring towns, Bergenfield is doing well with property taxes. He wished all a good night.

Councilperson Pascual gave a shout out to the VFW for hosting a great event this past weekend in recognizing members of the community and inviting the council. He wished all a good night.

Mayor Amatorio thanked all for coming and wished everyone a great evening.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION 25-232/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A. Personnel

1. Building Department Personnel Matters

B. Attorney-Client Privilege

1. PBA Local 309 Contract

Minutes will be taken of the meeting and released to the public at the time that the matter is resolved. After Closed Executive Session, the Mayor and Council will reconvene in the Executive Chambers to adjourn this public meeting.

On a motion by Council President Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Rivera, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 9:17 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Council President Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Almonte, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

Marie Quiñones-Wilson
Borough Clerk