

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 16, 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: All present.

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

Mayor Amatorio called the meeting to order at 8:01 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 Mayor Amatorio.

There was a moment of silence for the victims of political violence and 9/11 victims that lost their lives 24 years ago.

AGENDA CHANGES

Council President Ora Kornbluth requested that Resolutions #25-275 and 25-276 be removed from the agenda, Resolution #25-275 to Join the Bergen Medical Employee Benefits Fund be added to Resolutions, Ordinance #25-2652 – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 186 of the Code of the Borough of Bergenfield entitled "Land Development" be added for Introduction, and a letter from Fire Chief Ryan Zadrozna regarding Fire Prevention Day be added to Correspondence. Councilperson Pascual motioned to approve the changes. Councilperson Deauna seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Council President Ora Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Deauna, to approve the minutes the August 19, 2025 Regular Public Meeting, the August 19, 2025 Closed Session Meeting Minutes (not to be released), September 2, 2025 Work Session Meeting, and the September 2, 2025 Closed Session Meeting (not to be released). All present voting in favor, none opposed.

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 he would like to speak about Resolution #25-271. He did a search for all veterans and disabled veterans in Bergenfield. Mr. Smith questioned how the Borough Assessor verifies that someone is a 100% disabled veteran, whether the veteran is dead or alive, or lives in Bergenfield in order to receive the tax refund. He stated that the refund could've been requested by

the wife or ex-wife and the veterans may no longer live in Bergenfield. He requested clarification on how the Tax Office confirms this information.

Mayor Amatorio stated that in order to receive the refund, veterans need to be verified by the State as 100% disabled.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the resolution can be approved subject to verification that the veteran qualifies and resides in the home. The tax assessor has to verify the veteran is a resident of Bergenfield.

Council President Ora Kornbluth inquired whether every other person that has applied is verified. She commented that perhaps everyone should be checked.

Mayor Amatorio stated the Council has two options; approve the resolution subject to verification, and the other is to table the resolution and approve it once it is verified.

Council President Ora Kornbluth inquired why this veteran is owed a refund.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated there was probably in the Veteran receiving verification from the State. As such, the borough probably recently received the notice, which lagged behind the date of taxes paid.

Barry Doll, resident, stated that same question regarding refunds to Veterans came up a few meetings ago and nothing has been done. He inquired what is considered Correspondence. Mr. Doll referenced a letter he sent the Mayor and Council regarding an appeal process that can be put in place by the governing body for decisions made by the Zoning and Planning Boards, instead of residents having to appeal the decision to the Superior Court. Mr. Doll also inquired about the salary increases on the agenda.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated that written communication is correspondence. He stated that when a letter is written to the Mayor and Council, the Mayor can decide to place on correspondence for acceptance. As for the appeal process, he previously explained that the statute only allows the appeal process for use variances that are approved by the Zoning Board. If there is an ordinance in place, then the approval of a use variance can be appealed to the governing body.

Mayor Amatorio explained Mr. Doll provided a written email requesting that the governing body consider the appeal process.

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

PRESENTATIONS

The Headfirst Companies – Yankees Baseball Camp Donation

Mr. Gallo stated the New York Yankees hosted a camp in town this past summer. They provided a donation of \$5,000.00 to the Borough. The governing body shared the donation with the various departments, which was: \$1,000.00 with the Bergenfield Recreation Department, \$1,000.00 to Bergenfield Little League, \$1,000.00 to Bergenfield Softball Organization, \$1,000.00 to the Babe Ruth BBL, and \$1,000.00 to the PAL.

CORRESPONDENCE

a.) Chief Zadrozna/Bergenfield Fire Dept.

RE: Fire Prevention Day/Coopers Pond
between N. Demarest & Franklin St./Sunday,
October 12, 2025

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

ORDINANCES

A. Adoption of Ordinance

Mayor Amatorio read into the record:

The following ordinance published herewith was first read by title only on August 19, 2025 and posted on the bulletin board of the municipal center. A public hearing on Ordinance 25-2651 was held on September 2, 2025.

ORDINANCE 25-2651- AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 239 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, ENTITLED "RENTAL PROPERTY"

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, second by Councilperson Rivera to pass Ordinance 25-2651 on second and final reading and are 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>

B. Introduction of Ordinance

Mayor Amatorio read the title of the ordinance into the record:

ORDINANCE 25-2652- AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 186 OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD, ENTITLED "LAND DEVELOPMENT"

Motion by Councilperson Rivera that the following ordinance be introduced and passed on first reading and setting Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at 8:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard as the date and time and the Council Chambers of the Bergenfield Borough Hall as the place for a hearing on said ordinance. Councilperson Deauna seconded the motion.

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 25-265. 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. **25-266**/To Approve Bill List
- b. **25-267**/To Support the Arc of Bergen and Passaic Counties' Grant Application
- c. **25-268**/To Approve Retirement Pay – David Tortora

- d. **25-269**/To Authorize Request for Proposals (RFP) for Professional Services for Reevaluation Services
- e. ~~**25-270**/To Approve Tax Settlement – Verizon, New Jersey, Inc.~~
- f. ~~**25-271**/To Approve Veteran Tax Exemption – 14 Phelps Avenue~~
- g. **25-272**/To Cancel Improvement Assessment – 157 Second Street
- h. **25-273**/To Approve Contract Agreement for Work done at 131 N. Prospect - C. R. Restoration

Councilperson Lodato requested that Resolution #25-270 be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Council President Kornbluth requested that Resolution #25-271 be removed from the Consent Agenda as well.

Motion by Council President Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Pascual, that Resolution #25-270 be approved. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

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

Councilperson Lodato:	<i>abstain</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 Council President Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Almonte, that Resolution #25-271 be tabled. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, second by Councilperson Deauna to approve the Consent Resolution as amended.

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:	<i>aye</i>	Councilperson Pascual:	<i>aye</i>

B. Resolutions

25-274/To Approve Salary Increase – Construction Official – Michael Ravenda

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Rivera that Resolution #25-274 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>

25-275/To Join the Bergen Medical Employee Benefits Fund

Motion by Council President Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Pascual that Resolution #25-275 be approved.

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

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

Councilperson Rivera: *aye*
Councilperson Pascual: *aye*

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 Pascual seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS II

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

Mohammad, resident, stated he wanted to bring the issue of the parking situation on East Johnson Avenue and North Taylor Street to the Council's attention. There was a case presented before the Zoning Board last week about the expansion project of the mosque on of 52 East Johnson Avenue, on the corner of E. Johnson Avenue and North Taylor Street. He stated representatives from the fire department, EMS, the police department, and neighbors were all in agreement of the major issue with the parking situation due to the street being narrow. He explained emergency vehicles can't pass through and is very hazardous. The police department suggested alternate street parking or one side parking.

Yehuda Borg, resident, stated last week there was a demonstration on New Bridge Road and Sussex Road in front of an individual's home. It was the first demonstration since the ordinance was passed. He asked if the protesters had a permit, if the police department was aware the protesters didn't have a permit, were the protesters redirected to another location, and how could the borough better handle the situation in the future.

John Smith, resident, stated that the parking issue is not only on East Johnson Ave, it is also on North Taylor Street. The police department, fire department, BVAC, and EMS representatives testified that vehicles can't go through those roads when cars are parked on both sides of the street. He stated the council needs to do something to ease the problem. He commented that he sent the council pictures of the parking situation. Mr. Smith stated he also received the email Mr. Doll sent the council. He explained that the information was provided by Old Tappan, which has a joint land use Board, not the Zoning Board. He feels this ordinance would not apply to Bergenfield. The borough attorney should look into what Mr. Doll is suggesting.

Fred Salhberg, resident, stated that some people have complaints about sending emails to the Borough Administrator and the Council and never receive an answer. Mr. Salhberg complimented and congratulated the Mayor and Council for lowering the flag as the President ordered.

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

Borough Administrator Gallo stated the Police Department Traffic Division has to review the ordinance and make a recommendation to the governing body to amend the ordinance to have alternate side street parking on streets.

Mayor Amatorio stated there is a plan to review all the streets in Bergenfield with the collaboration of the fire department, police department, BVAC, DPW, and EMS. Mayor Amatorio stated the police department completed a study of the neighborhood based on the proposed project on Johnson Avenue. The Council hasn't received the final study yet, but will act based on the police department's recommendation.

Mr. Gallo stated the protest was a pop up. The Police Chief received a call from Teaneck advising of the protest. The police department went to the area to oversee and protect the residents. The protesters were compliant and listened to all police department requests. They remained on the sidewalk and it wasn't disruptive. It lasted about 40 minutes and then subsided. The Borough did the best to handle the situation, considering it was a pop up.

Council President Kornbluth inquired whether protestors are allowed to be within 50 feet of any house. Council President Kornbluth stated it was a last-minute protest and the organizers weren't required to have a permit. She inquired if there is a way for the police to gather information from the protesters and give them a last-minute permit. She inquired if the police have to issue a violation, who would they give it to.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated the police officers have every right to ask who is in charge of the protest. He stated that there was no violation this time. The Police Department could ask for information if they need to issue a violation.

Mayor Amatorio stated this is a learning experience for all of us. The Police Department did their best to keep the protest contained.

Council President Kornbluth stated there is misinformation about the protest, that the Borough and Police Department didn't do anything about the protest. She stated the police were dispatched immediately.

Borough Administrator Gallo stated the Police Chief received a call from Teaneck and the police department dispatched police immediately. The Pop up is a teaching moment for the Borough to improve on.

Mayor Amatorio stated that he responds to his email to the best of his abilities to make sure that residents' concerns are addressed.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilperson Lodato stated that an appeal that could be brought before the governing body is only for approved use variances. The type of variances Mr. Doll is referring to need to be appealed to the Superior Court. He thanked all for coming.

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

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

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

Councilperson Rivera invited the public to the building's inauguration on Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. He wished everyone a good night.

Councilperson Pascual invited the public to the last summer concert on September 20, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. at Cooper's Pond. He wished all a good night.

Mayor Amatorio stated there are several activities scheduled at the library, including yoga.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **25-276**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

- A. Attorney-Client Privilege
New Municipal Building 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 8:59 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 Pascual, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Marie Quiñones-Wilson
Borough Clerk