

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
MAYOR & COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026
8:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Arvin Amatorio, Council President Domingo Almonte and Council members Thomas Lodato (*arrived at 8:24 p.m.*), Buddy Deauna, Ora Kornbluth, Hernando Rivera, and Marc Pascual

ABSENT: Borough Administrator Corey Gallo

ALSO PRESENT: 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 Almonte.

Mayor Amatorio asked for a moment of silence in memory of those missing in action, commemoration to be celebrated this coming Friday.

AGENDA CHANGES

Councilwoman Kornbluth motioned to add amend Resolution #26-248 to Hire Part Time Violations Clerk and Resolution #26-249 to enter into Closed Session to discuss re-evaluation services. Councilperson Deauna seconded the motion. All present voting in favor, none opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Councilperson Pascual to approve minutes of the August 18, 2026 Regular Public Meeting Minutes, August 18, 2026 Closed Session Minutes (not to be released), the September 1, 2026 Work Session Meeting Minutes, and the September 1, 2026 Closed Session Minutes (not to be released). Council President Almonte seconded the motion. 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, inquired whether the board and committee meeting minutes are part of the agenda.

Mayor Amatorio stated that the minutes are not part of the agenda itself, but they are distributed and kept on file.

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

PRESENTATIONS

A. Bergenfield Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6467 – Police Officer of the Year Award

John Smith, resident and member of the Veterans’ Advisory Committee, stated that they were unable to award the Police Officer of the Year award at the annual awards ceremony held by the Bergenfield VFW Post 6467. Mr. Smith invited Police Officer Kevin Helder to honor him with this award and read his biography into the record. Police Officer Kevin Helder was presented the Police Officer of the Year Award for his service to the Borough of Bergenfield.

The governing body congratulated Police Officer Kevin Helder on his award.

Police Officer Kevin Helder thanked the VFW for the award and the Mayor and Councilmembers for their support.

B. Borough Hall Construction Video

Public Information Officer AJ Stewart presented the video of the construction of the new building. The video will be displayed throughout borough hall and website.
CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence.

ORDINANCES

A. Introduction of Ordinance

Motion by Councilperson Lodato that the following ordinances be introduced and passed on first reading and setting October 6, 2026 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. Seconded by Councilperson Deauna.

Mayor Amatorio read the title of the ordinance(s) into the record:

ORDINANCE 26-2680 - AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE SALARY RANGES OF EMPLOYEES NOT SUBJECTED TO UNIONIZED CONTRACTUAL UNITS OF THE BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD

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

Councilperson Lodato:	aye	Councilperson Kornbluth:	aye
Councilperson Deauna:	aye	Councilperson Rivera:	aye
Council President Almonte:	aye	Councilperson Pascual:	aye

A. CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT RESOLUTION 26-241. 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) **26-242/**To Approve Bill List
- b) **26-243/**To Approve Tax Refund to Exempt Veteran – 42 Elm Street
- c) **26-244/**To Authorize Refund for 2026 Added & Omitted Assessment – 10 Sylvamdur Avenue
- d) **26-245/**To Approve Road Paving Agreement – Lead Service Line Replacement Project – Veolia Water New Jersey, Inc.

e) **26-246/To Approve Purchase – Fire Hose Nozzles – First Battalion Fire Fighting Equipment LLC**

Motion by Councilperson Pascual to approve the Consent Resolution. Councilperson Rivera seconded the motion.

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

Councilperson Lodato:	aye	Councilperson Kornbluth:	aye
Councilperson Deauna:	aye	Councilperson Rivera:	aye
Council President Almonte:	aye	Councilperson Pascual:	aye

B. Resolutions

26-247/To Hire School Crossing Guard – Belinda A. Howard

Motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Council President Almonte, that Resolution #26-247 be approved.

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

Councilperson Lodato:	aye	Councilperson Kornbluth:	aye
Councilperson Deauna:	aye	Councilperson Rivera:	aye
Council President Almonte:	aye	Councilperson Pascual:	aye

26-248/To Amend Resolution Hiring Part-time Violations Clerk – Julie Amico

Motion by Councilperson Pascual, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, that Resolution #26-248 be approved.

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

Councilperson Lodato:	aye	Councilperson Kornbluth:	aye
Councilperson Deauna:	aye	Councilperson Rivera:	aye
Council President Almonte:	aye	Councilperson Pascual:	aye

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

Committee/Department Reports

Motion offered by Council President Almonte 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.

Edie Ryerson, resident, stated concerns about severely overgrown vegetation in the brook area near the apartments and 25 North Street. She reported standing water, mosquitoes, and poor maintenance, and asked Borough officials to personally inspect the area because she believes its condition is worse than other parts of town.

Fred Sahlberg, resident, stated that he regularly walks near the brook and described the area as looking like a "jungle." He encouraged officials to visit the site, particularly the area north of Merritt Street, to see the conditions firsthand. The resident also stated that there is a 40-foot van parked in the area with people living on the street.

Kathy Sahlberg, resident, also raised the concern about the RV/van apparently being used as an overnight residence on a public street. She said the vehicle repeatedly returns to the area and asked whether this type of overnight parking is permitted. The governing body said the matter will be investigated, and Councilwoman Kornbluth requested the specific location and vehicle information be provided to the Police Department.

Michelle Marciano, resident, spoke about the repeated flooding on Wilbur Road. She said her family experienced two severe flooding incidents shortly after moving into their new home and described significant water accumulation during heavy rainfall from July through late August. She reported that water has flowed from the street onto residents' properties, that the problem has existed for many years, and that some residents have even lost vehicles. She requested a significant, comprehensive, long-term drainage solution so families can live safely in the area.

Desiree Paton, resident, raised concerns about recurring flooding and asked the Mayor and Council to identify effective solutions. She also expressed concern about deteriorated and vacant retail storefronts along Washington Avenue, stating that they contribute to a run-down appearance. She encouraged greater coordination among the Borough Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board, DPW, Police Department, and school system, and offered to volunteer time for research. She also spoke about vacant businesses on Washington Avenue and stated the town looks broken down. Ms. Paton inquired whether the governing body will consider streaming the Council meetings.

John Smith, resident, raised concerns about the Metzler Brook retention basin, stating that years ago, Mayor Bohan had previously received State funding for the project, but that the work was never completed. Mr. Smith encouraged residents to bring concerns directly to the appropriate boards and expressed concern about residents relying on social media rather than attending the council meetings. He also encouraged residents to attend Board of Education meetings because of the portion of funding allocated to the school system is 66% of your taxes. Mr. Smith stated that he does not agree with the streaming of the council meetings. He also inquired that if an application is submitted to the zoning board, and an ordinance that may impact the application is proposed, is the application governed by the existing or the new proposed ordinance.

Bruno Delaconchana, resident, discussed concerns about Bergenfield's development and affordable housing, noting the difficulty of keeping up with expenses and expressing concern about the overall appearance of the town. He asked how the Mayor and Council are communicating with residents and what direction the Borough is taking towards affordability and incentives for young people.

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

Borough Attorney Schettino explained that DEP jurisdiction can extend beyond the actual waterway, sometimes covering areas many feet beyond the brook. Therefore, even when vegetation is overgrown, the Borough may still need DEP approval before removing it. Mr. Schettino stated that even dead trees resulting from storms may require DEP approval before they can be removed when they fall within regulated areas. He added that DEP regulates work in wetlands because of potential impacts on wildlife and the environment. The Borough Attorney stated that the Borough is going through the appropriate process and that obtaining DEP approval can be slow and thorough.

Mayor Amatorio indicated that he would follow up with the Borough Administrator regarding the status of the approvals and whether the Borough can begin the process for removing the overgrowth. He also noted that some municipalities have performed work without DEP approval. However, doing so can result in significant fines if DEP discovers the unauthorized work. Residents may also have differing opinions about the removal of natural vegetation, which can lead to complaints or reports to DEP. Mayor Amatorio expressed that he understands the concerns and is attempting to hire qualified professionals to clean the brooks. Contractors must have the appropriate certifications and DEP authorization to perform work within regulated areas. He stated that the Borough is aware of the problem and will continue working to mitigate it. Mayor Amatorio proceeded to address the issue of the RV moving around town. He stated that the Police Department had been informed and is monitoring the situation. He further explained that in an active investigation, the Borough could not disclose additional information publicly. Mayor Amatorio assured the resident that the appropriate parties had been notified. Mayor Amatorio stated that the flooding issue on Wilbur has been discussed by the Council. The Borough has identified the street as part of its future plans. The Borough has consulted with its engineers because the situation is complicated and may involve more than the surface infrastructure. He added that there may be underlying issues involving drainage, soil, topography, or other conditions that need to be evaluated. But, paving Wilbur is already part of the Borough's plan for road improvements next year. He expressed sympathy for the resident and the surrounding neighborhood and acknowledged their concerns regarding the conditions on Wilbur. Mayor Amatorio referenced the rain garden project in Bergenfield as another example of the Borough's efforts to address stormwater and flooding through multiple approaches. He acknowledged that government approvals can take a significant amount of time, but stated that the Borough is working on the problem on several fronts. Mayor Amatorio spoke about the geese issue. The Mayor explained that the Borough cannot simply handle or remove the geese itself. The Borough is working with the County and professionals who specialize in animal control. He indicated that the Borough has already spent money addressing the issue and is continuing to work with the appropriate authorities. This is not something we're neglecting. There have been emails and communications sent to us, and we have been providing this to the County Animal Control. Mayor Amatorio stated that he understands the concern of one of the building's appearance on the Avenue in town. He stated that they have been communicating with the owner of the property, to the point that we were talking about passing an ordinance penalizing them, or charging them additional taxes, if it's legal, just for them to alleviate the problem.

Councilperson Pascual added that the brook issue extends beyond Bergenfield because neighboring areas are also affected.

Councilperson Kornbluth stated the Council sees the building of those apartments as being for the next generation. The building of the apartments will bring affordable housing units which can be helpful. There currently is a housing shortage in Bergen County and this will allow people to stay in Bergenfield, as well as help alleviate the tax burden on other residents.

Borough Attorney Schettino stated that the other action that the government body is taking to improve areas of the town that are getting run down is they have designated them as areas in need of redevelopment. He said that is an incentive to attempt, to attract a developer to come into the community and maybe acquire property, such as the one that was mentioned, so that they can redevelop it. He added that in terms of the property owner and the store windows, unless they're doing something that is a violation of a sign ordinance, because you're only allowed to put certain things in your windows. If they have paper blocking the window, you can't say you can't have paper blocking the window. Mr. Schettino added that is controlled by municipal ordinance, but maintaining a downtown is the most difficult thing for towns such as Bergenfield to continue to maintain. In fact, if you travel throughout Bergen County, you'll see how difficult it is. The Borough Attorney also stated that streaming is not the cure-all to public participation. It doesn't guarantee that people will participate. He also answered Mr. Smith's question, explaining that when a person applies to the Zoning Board, it's called the Time of Decision Rule. This means that the application,

once submitted, is controlled by the ordinances that are in effect at the time. He further explained that if an ordinance is adopted today, and someone submitted the application that the Board started the hearing on, that ordinance does not impact the application.

Mayor Amatorio emphasized that boards are created because they have different roles. He stated that they cannot overstep on the performance of the roles and duties of the Zoning Board, the Planning Board, as well as the Council.

Borough Attorney Schettino explained that for all the boards to meet together, you'd have to have an open public meeting. You have to have notices, the logistics, and having all the boards there at the same time would probably be extremely difficult. I don't want to say it is impossible, because nothing is impossible, but it would be extremely difficult to organize. He also added that in terms of discussions, they take place with the Zoning Board when the governing body does a master plan review, when they do a redevelopment ordinance, or any land-use ordinance. He further added that any land-use ordinance requires communication between the governing body and the Planning Board by statute. The communication is set in place. The Board of Health is independent and autonomous. They make their own rules. When the Mayor and Council have a concern, they forward it to the Board of Health. They can't order them to do anything. They're an independent board. The same is true with the Library Board. It's an independent board, with its own budget. They create their own budget, and again, if the Mayor and Council have a concern, they can notify them. That's the way government works in the State of New Jersey.

Councilperson Rivera stated that the direction of the town in reference of education, the council is technically handcuffed. He encouraged the resident to attend to the Board of Education meetings. Councilperson Rivera also stated that for every \$100 paid in taxes, almost \$58 goes to them. The Borough only receives around \$35, and with that \$35, we have to fund the Police Department and the other Departments, and with the rest of the money, we do Family Fun Day, summer concerts, etc. As you can see, we have a lot of construction going on here, paving of streets, as well as improvement of parks. He expressed that if the resident hasn't had an opportunity to see Vivyen Field, we have a nice, professional great soccer field and football field. Councilperson Rivera stated that is the direction that we are going in. He inquired if residents would prefer, rather, to spend \$500,000 every year in the old building, or have this building for the next three or four generations, for the next 100 years? He reiterated that he thought this was the best thing for future generations. Councilman Rivera welcomed the resident to the Council meetings.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

The Mayor and Council thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Councilperson Lodato stated tonight's meeting was very productive, informative, and mutually respectful. He would like to see everyone again.

Councilperson Deauna thanked all for coming. The Council hears the residents and will address the issues. They are doing their best.

Councilperson Rivera stated they are doing the best they can.

Councilperson Pascual reminded everyone that this Friday, September 18th, 2026 is National POW/MIA Recognition Day. He invited everyone to join the Borough at a ceremony sponsored by Bergen County in remembering all POW/MIA Veterans on September 18th at 12:30 p.m. in Hackensack.

Mayor Amatorio invited everyone to the last summer concert on September 26th, 2026 at Cooper's Pond.

CLOSED SESSION

RESOLUTION **26-249**/Authorizing the Governing Body to Enter into Closed Executive Session to discuss:

A.) Attorney-Client Privilege/Agreements

1. Revaluation Services

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 Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Rivera, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Session in the Executive Chambers at 9:10 pm.

On a motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, seconded by Councilperson Pascual, and all present voting in favor, the meeting returned to Open Session at 9:47 p.m.

Motion by Councilperson Lodato, seconded by Councilperson Deauna, to provide authorization to start the process for a tax reassessment with Appraisal Systems Inc.

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

Councilperson Lodato:	aye	Councilperson Kornbluth:	aye
Councilperson Deauna:	aye	Councilperson Rivera:	nay
Council President Almonte:	nay	Councilperson Pascual:	aye

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilperson Kornbluth, second by Councilperson Pascual, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Marie Quiñones-Wilson
Borough Clerk