

**MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
JANUARY 5, 2026 - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

REORGANIZATION MEETING

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on **Monday, January 5, 2026**, at **5:30 p.m.** in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Councilman Kirsh read the following announcement:

Notice of Meeting

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT OF NEW JERSEY, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS PROVIDED ON DECEMBER 5, 2025, WITH WRITTEN NOTICE AND ELECTRONIC NOTICE PROVIDED TO THE COURIER NEWS AND THE BREEZE POSTING ON THE WEBSITE AND THE BULLETIN BOARD IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING AND FILING WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK

Pledge of Allegiance

Girl Scouts Heart of New Jersey, Troop 60029, presented the Pledge of Allegiance

National Anthem

The National Anthem was performed by Township employee Nicole Smith.

Invocation

The invocation was presented by Father Brian Nolan, Pastor of the Church of Blessed Sacrament

Certification of Election

Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk, read the following:

Following the election held in Somerset County on November 4, 2026, the Board of Canvassers has issued its determination regarding the municipal offices for Bridgewater Township. For the three available four-year seats on the Township Council, the Board officially declares **Joan Geiger, Andrew Bucko, and Ridwana Isla** as the elected representatives.

Oaths of Elected Office

Oaths of Office were administered as follows:

COUNCILWOMAN – JOAN GEIGER

Performed by Honorable Judge Rochelle Gizinski

COUNCILMAN – ANDREW BUCKO

Performed by Honorable County Commissioner Elizabeth Graner

COUNCILWOMAN – RIDWANA ISLA

Performed by Honorable Judge Bernice Jalloh

Roll Call

Councilman Andrew Bucko
Councilwoman Joan Geiger
Councilwoman Ridwana Isla
Councilman Michael Kirsh
Councilman Timothy Ring

Also Present:

Matthew C. Moench, Mayor
Michael Pappas, Township Administrator
John DeLuca, Deputy Township Attorney
Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk
Juliana Coelho, Deputy Township Clerk

Selection of Council President

SELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Councilman Bucko nominated Councilwoman Geiger to serve as Council President for the year 2026. Councilwoman Isla seconded the motion. The vote on the foregoing motion was as follows:

Councilman Bucko	Aye
Councilwoman Isla	Aye
Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Ring	Aye
Council President Geiger	Aye

Selection of Council Vice-President

SELECTION OF COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT

Councilwoman Isla nominated Councilman Bucko to serve as Council Vice-President for the year 2026. Council President Geiger seconded the motion. The vote on the foregoing motion was as follows:

Councilman Bucko	Aye
Councilwoman Isla	Aye
Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Ring	Aye
Council President Geiger	Aye

Selection of Clerk of the Council

SELECTION OF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Councilman Ring nominated Grace Njuguna to serve as Clerk of the Council for the year 2026. Councilman Kirsh seconded the motion. The vote on the foregoing motion was as follows:

Councilman Bucko	Aye
Councilwoman Isla	Aye
Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Ring	Aye
Council President Geiger	Aye

**Council
President
Message**

COUNCILWOMAN JOAN GEIGER

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for being here.

A year ago, if you asked me what I wanted to be doing today, I would have said, "Climbing a mountain on the Appalachian Trail with my husband Tom". Instead, I stand here as Bridgewater Townships Council President, the second most powerful and important elected office in this town of 46,000 people.

The thought that not 1, not 2, but 3, Democrats could be serving on our council after none had been elected for 37 years, seemed impossible a year ago.

BIG, Bucko, Isla and Geiger are now the face of change in Bridgewater, both literally and figuratively. Fortunately for us, while we may be the face, there has been a dedicated, hardworking, caring body of people that brought us here today. While most were Democrats, many were Independents and some were Republicans. (And, no, I will not tell you who.)

We are here because the voters put us here and this is because we reached out, listened and made promises.

This change is both exciting and challenging. BIG, Bucko, Isla and Geiger are new to politics and now have the awesome responsibility of governing for the first time in 37 years. Our colleagues are new to bi-partisanship township governing and may find it difficult to adjust to working with people who think differently. But as a wise man once told me, you learn more from folks who think differently than you, then you do from those who think alike. I have already learned much from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and I trust they will be open minded and learn from us. Together we can make Bridgewater an even better place to live, work and educate our children. While I cannot speak for others on the Dias, I know I will stumble and falter as together we climb a steeper, rockier and more difficult mountain than I imagined. So, to the residents of Bridgewater, our fellow elected officials, employees of Bridgewater, and our body of supporters, give us time to become acclimated.

Having said that, I will share some of my background and the implications that it has for my style of governing. I am an attorney, a mediator, a devoted family member and friend and a 28-year resident of Bridgewater. As an attorney and mediator, I am trained to look at both sides of an issue. The attorney in me is trained to advocate, sometimes vigorously, for my beliefs. As a mediator, I understand the value of listening, compromising, and working with people on both sides of the aisle. In all cases, I seek fairness and what will be for the highest good of all concerned.

BIG has goals, and to accomplish them with Bridgewater's "mayor, council" form of government, we will work together with Mayor Moench, Council members Kirsch and Ring, and town administrator, Pappas to govern in best interest of our Bridgewater residents.

First and foremost, we want safety for our residents. In this regard, we all agree we have a highly competent and excellent police department and volunteer emergency responders, including Councilman Ring.

Together we can work on storm water management. People died in town during Ida, others had to be rescued by our police officers and a Good Samaritan last summer. This problem is bigger (pun not intended) than Bridgewater. On the local level we need to prioritize our public works department, so they have the people power and resources to take preventative measures. On the Federal, State and County level we need to explore the available resources, including grants and infrastructure improvements.

This relates to the concerns expressed by many of our residents regarding development. BIG favors open space and housing affordability over trucking depots and data centers. We have to. This is New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the nation. The need is here and thanks to our excellent public school system, people want to live here, and enjoy the great outdoors and recreational activities.

While campaigning, we heard residents' concerns about traffic, speeding, and the rise of e bikes. We can work together with our police and public works department to better control traffic and make needed improvements. We can work with neighboring towns to have consistent policies regarding e bikes.

In light of the recent shootings once again we are reminded of the need for gun safety. Let us join approximately 10 other towns in Somerset County and become part of "SMART" - a program of the "Everytown for Gun Safety" organization to promote secure firearm storage as part of our National Night Out. (NOT IN SPEECH BUT FOR REFERENCE -Branchburg, Bernards, Bernardsville, Green Brook, Hillsborough, North Plainfield, Raritan, Somerville, South Bound Brook, and Warren)

Another concern is community involvement and diversity.

Yes, I said "DIVERSITY" and I am an unapologetic supporter of it. Having experienced the time when female attorneys were a barely tolerable novelty in Somerset County, I understand how important equality and inclusiveness is. Bridgewater is a diverse town. 35% of our population are people of color, 50% are women and, we have an LBGTO community. We have houses of worship for Buddhists, Christians, Hindu's, Moslems, Sikhs, and others. We house millionaires and folks who live paycheck to paycheck and everyone in between. About 1/3 of our voters are D's, 1/3 R's and 1/3 independents. Mayor Moench, I ask you to work with us to reactivate our numerous township committees and fill them with all of the above. Together, we thrive.

BIG raised other issues during our campaign that I leave it to Andrew and Ridwana to address.

Finally, and most importantly, it is time for thanks-you's.

First and foremost, to the residents of Bridgewater. To those who voted for BIG, we humbly accept your trust and honor your confidence in us. To those of you who did not, we will do our best to pleasantly surprise you. To all of you, we will listen and do our best to address your concerns.

To all our committee members and volunteers, who made this happen, by canvassing, phone banking, stuffing envelopes, and donating, again and again. How tired are you of writing checks for \$37?

To our campaign manager, our chair and his wife.

To my running mates

To the up-ballot candidates and especially their staff, including those who ran for governor, the assembly, county commission, surrogate, and sheriff. I hope we supported you as much as you were there for us.

To the "too many to count" congressional candidates, who we continue to support.

To the past and present Board of Education Members, Superintendents, educators and their staff, who oversee our "Crown Jewel", the Bridgewater Public School System – you are partly responsible for bringing BIG to Bridgewater since we all chose to live for partly for the schools.

To our friends on the other side of the aisle, including former and present officials, who graciously congratulated us and worked to make a smooth transition and have shared knowledge and information. This is a rare, but desperately needed part of effective governing – bi-partisanship.

To the Bridgewater Clerk's office and other Bridgewater Township Staff, who helped us with the transition.

To my predecessor, the outgoing Council President whose shoes it will be very hard to fill.

Lastly, to my friends from grammar school, high school and law school, and the many new friends made on the trail, (even it was not the AT), my colleagues in law and mediation, my bookkeeper, cousins, nephews, niece, and grandnieces, sisters, brother-in-law's, sons and their father, and my husband, Tom. I am indebted to all of you.

I end with a pledge - as your newly elected Council President, I will give you my best, try my hardest and always bear in mind the BIG things (pun intended) Bridgewater needs. Thank you.

**Council Vice-
President
Message**

COUNCILMAN ANDREW BUCKO

First, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wife Katie and our daughter Elizabeth both for being here this evening and also for the patience, understanding, wisdom, and strength they have given me over the past year. Thank you to the voters of Bridgewater who put their trust in me to represent them on this council for the next four years. Thank you to our honored guests who have joined us this evening.

We continue a great tradition that began 250 years ago this summer, not too far from here, where Americans threw off the shackles of monarchy and declared to each other, to George the III, King of England, and to the entire world, that the United States would be a country governed by the rule of law and stewarded by representatives who are elected by the people.

The Constitution of the United States lays out in the very first sentence the desire and intent to create “a more perfect Union”. That simple qualifier bears a large volume of truth: at our nation’s founding, we were not perfect and even today, we still are not perfect. But the great experiment of the United States is that we are constantly working toward achieving that lofty goal. Throughout our nation’s history, that has not been an easy task, and we have certainly stumbled along the way.

Who are we who do not know our history? Our history has been one of struggle and success, tragedy and triumph, where people from around the world have come together to build this nation. It is that diversity that has, and continues to make the United States great. Bridgewater, with our diverse population, is a microcosm of our country as a whole.

Today marks a new beginning for the people of Bridgewater. We now have a council that better reflects the residents of our town. But you should expect more from your local government than just a new look from your council.

You should expect a government that is transparent. Deliberation and decision making should be open to the public and one shouldn’t need to file open records requests to see the details of how the township spends your money.

You should expect a government that operates in a timely manner. Previous years’ budgets have regularly been months late. We will expect that the administration will deliver their budget on time, as required by state law. You should also expect that we will be here, holding our scheduled meetings when we say we will. No longer will we cancel meetings to hide from the public when the political heat is on us, claiming lack of business, only to have pages of work waiting at the next meeting.

You should expect a government that is accountable. The aforementioned failures to meet deadlines have been met with nary a peep from the prior council and hand waving from the administration. The audits of the township’s finances from 2022,

2023, and 2024 uncovered basic deficiencies requiring the implementation of remediation plans. When residents questioned the extreme lateness of 2024's audit, the previous council was silent, and the administration was once again dismissive. I can assure you; that cavalier attitude ends right now.

You should expect a government that is responsive. Residents often come before this council because their concerns are not being addressed. You deserve follow up and follow through. You deserve honest answers, even if that means getting back to you at a later date, and we will make sure that happens.

You should expect a government that treats you with respect. The type of behavior we have seen from individuals up on this dais towards members of the public in previous years should never have been tolerated and will not be tolerated any more.

Most of all, you should expect a government that works for you, and with you, for the betterment of everybody who calls Bridgewater their home.

This transformation will not happen overnight; it will require hard work to ensure that Bridgewater's priorities are focused on providing services to residents. We will go overspending with a fine-tooth comb, making sure that every dollar spent going forward is done so for the benefit of Bridgewater residents.

We also need to increase participation by residents in township decision making. We have a number of committees that are comprised of ordinary Bridgewater residents who simply want to get involved, and I want to encourage further involvement. We need to ensure that they meet on a regular basis and that the meeting schedules are publicized ahead of time to foster more participation. We also need to create additional new opportunities for involvement to bring more Bridgewater residents out to improve our community.

Bridgewater has been a great place to raise a family, and it must be a priority to keep it that way. We need to ensure that our parks are properly maintained so that they can be used and enjoyed by our residents. We need to ensure that recreational programs continue to be available. We need to make sure that our streets are safe for cyclists and pedestrians. We need third spaces to be available to the youth of our town so that they have constructive outlets for their energies and support their growth into adulthood.

Don't get me wrong – we face some tremendous challenges right now and some difficult decisions will need to be made. I look forward to working with my new colleagues to bring Bridgewater forward. We might not agree on everything but that does not mean we need to be disagreeable. I am confident that we can find some common ground and that the results we will ultimately deliver will benefit us all.

**Council
Member
Statements**

Bridgewater's rich history is something we can all be proud of. It is up to us – all of us – as we ring in the 250th anniversary of American independence to lay the groundwork for the next 250 years. Together, in our own little corner of the world, we can do our part to move us closer to that more perfect Union that our nation's founders envisioned.

Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN RIDWANA ISLA

Good evening, Bridgewater and esteemed guests.

Thank you so much for gathering here tonight. This township that feels like a quiet treasure to me, a community where history, diversity, and modern life meet with a grace that is uniquely our own. Founded in 1749, Bridgewater's story actually reaches back before the United States itself, yet it has never felt old to me or distant to me. It feels vibrant, evolving, welcoming, and full of promise.

But this evening is not simply about a transition in leadership. It is about honoring the enduring character of a community that has welcomed families from every background, including mine, and offered them a place to plant our roots, to raise our children, and to dream boldly.

Tonight invites us to lift our eyes, to look beyond what is familiar and recognize what is possible. It reminds us that progress is never a product of chance. It is built by citizens who believe in one another, who show up for one another, and who choose to shape their future together.

As I look across this room, I see the strength of Bridgewater reflected in every face, families whose stories stretch back generations, newcomers who might have just moved here last month. And they chose this township with intention and hope. And neighbors that extend their kindness to me without hesitation. You are the stewards of Bridgewater's spirit. You are the reason this moment carries so such promise.

And I stand before you humbled by your trust. This is not just the beginning of a term. It's the continuation of our efforts and we will continue with more achievements ahead.

And I wanted to start with my gratitudes to our Mayor, our Council, both our current and past council, our Township Clerk, and the Township office as well as all of the dedicated public servants who sustain the daily life of this township. Thank you for your partnership, especially during this very critical transition period, your professionalism, and your unwavering commitment to Bridgewater. Night after night, day after day, thank you for staying after those long meetings that you've told us about. Thank you for making this township so strong. And for years, your leadership

has provided Bridgewater with steadiness and continuity. And we do honor that legacy, but we will not preserve it unchanged. We will strengthen it, modernize it where needed, and fortify essential changes by carrying it forward with clarity and purpose.

And to Joan and Andrew, congratulations on your tremendous victories. I have witnessed your dedication, your integrity, and your deep love for Bridgewater. I look forward to building our strong foundation together with everyone in the Municipal Council.

To our volunteers, I know there are a lot of people who couldn't make it today, there are a lot of tests going on, our students, our Gen Z leaders, and every neighbor who knocked on doors in the rain, as well as the heat, sometimes with our children by our side, you reminded us that democracy is not an abstract ideal. It is a living force sustained by all those who participated. I met these high schoolers while they canvassed with me in between their tests, retirees who walked neighborhoods, believe it or not, with the energy of people half their age, and parents who squeezed in numerous phone calls in between their work and dinners. And to our small business owners, including some remarkable women entrepreneurs who opened their doors and shared their ideas, to our teachers who shared their hopes, and to our first responders who shared their courage, this moment belongs to all of you.

To of course to my family, my husband, Ekram, my son, Ethan, my parents, my sisters, and my nieces who traveled from Canada and all the way from Australia, your love is my compass. And now going back to my Stuyvesant High School friends, Staten Island girls, they braved the ferry with me through wind and winter, thank you for shaping me early on into the woman I became. And specifically my dear friend, Dr. Sarika Modi, who has been writing me handwritten Christmas cards for the last 36 years, you recently said, "It's inspiring to see you being the change you want to see in the world." You reminded me that service is both a privilege and a joy for me.

So tonight, I stand before you as a proud representative of Bridgewater's diversity, the first South Asian, the first Muslim on this council, as well a fun fact, I'm one of the only five Bangladeshi American women in the whole United States that have been elected, including Shepa Uddin, our Deputy Mayor from Franklin, who was able to join me tonight, so we have 2 currently in the room out of the 5. While I might be breaking barriers, I do stand committed to all of you and serving every single resident of this town because this milestone is not mine alone. It belongs to Bridgewater, a town that measures people not by their origins, but by their contributions, their character, and their commitment to Bridgewater. It belongs to every child who wonders if they belong, and to every parent who dreams of a future where their child's potential knows no bounds.

And my journey across continents and cultures from Dhaka to Bangkok to cities

across North America and Europe, as the eldest of 3 daughters, taught me that responsibility is not a burden, it is a calling. My parents taught me that nothing is given, everything is earned, and service to others is the highest privilege that we have. Their sacrifices are the foundation of my path, and tonight, I carry their dreams into this chamber with pride and gratitude.

But tonight is not just about my story. It is about our story and this chapter that we are ready to write together.

Bridgewater stands at a moment of genuine possibility. We are a community with deep historic roots and expansive potential. We have long established families of multiple generations as well as our newly arriving neighbors. But we all want the same things that Andrew and Joan talked about: safety, stability, opportunity, and belonging.

So my vision is to elevate the future of our town, strengthen our financial foundation. Let's listen, let's be fair, let's be transparent and share responsibility. And I didn't shape this vision alone on my own. I had these conversations with you, either in my house, on your porches when we were knocking on doors, in the driveways, at the school, at the library, on the sidelines of community events, or in the aisles of stores.

- 1. We need a Government That Listens Before It Acts because Leadership begins with listening, truly listening. When people feel heard, they feel represented.*
- 2. We need A Budget That Reflects Community Priorities. A responsible budget is more than numbers, it is a reflection of what we value. And a budget should not surprise people. It should reflect them.*
- 3. We need Fairness and Stability for Taxpayers. Good governance protects families from unnecessary financial strain. Fairness is felt in every household. We need to ensure that the new development we bring in strengthens our tax base instead of shifting burdens onto residents. Let's ask the right questions: Are we getting the best "bang for our buck", like Civil Engineers like to say, while balancing safety and risk?*
- 4. We also need Smart Growth That Strengthens Community Life. Growth should enhance the character of our Bridgewater, not overwhelm it. And a thriving local economy is where residents feel proud of the places that we gather together and our quality of life. We must attract businesses that fill real needs.*
- 5. Transparency That Builds Trust means that leadership must open the doors of government and not close them. Our Residents have been telling me that we need clearer updates on township projects, easier access to information, and more visibility on how decisions are made. So let's grow that trust so that*

government is easier to understand.

- 6. And let's keep developing a Community Where Everyone Belongs. Bridgewater's greatest strength is its people, as you can see, ALL of its people. Some of our residents know of about our deep history, many of us speak many languages including five like myself, we celebrate many traditions, we bring extraordinary richness to our community. And I've met young people that are eager to lead, volunteer, and shape our future of our hometown. So let's keep this at the forefront. Belonging is the foundation of a strong community and the heart of Bridgewater's promise.*

Let's get ready to build together. I do want to work across the aisle with all of our leaders and public servants who have guided Bridgewater for long. I honor your service. I honor your partnership, not partisanship. It is how strong communities endure. And I pledge to work with anyone, from any background, any party, any perspective, just like I do at work, who is committed to the well being of this township.

So let's work together, whether you voted for me or not, I am now your councilwoman. My commitment is to your families, your hopes, and your future. I will listen. I will learn. And I will lead with integrity and purpose.

And I want to end with President George Washington who used to sleep just nearby here with all of his famous troops. In 1796, in his famous Farewell Address, he reminded our nation in a critical moment "unity of government... is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence." And tonight, we can honor that truth by choosing collaboration over division and service over self-interest.

So the next chapter of our story is ours to write, and we will write it side by side.

Thank you, Bridgewater, for your trust and your partnership.

COUNCILMAN MICHAEL KIRSH

Good Evening.

Tonight, we begin a new chapter in Bridgewater's history, with a fresh year filled with promise. In just six months, we all have something great to look forward to when we celebrate our nation's 250th birthday.

To our new Council colleagues-- Joan, Andrew, and Ridwana, along with your families and supporters-- I offer sincere congratulations on this accomplishment. At the final meeting of 2025, I noted that one of the things I cherish most about being on Council is the building of relationships within this fraternity that is responsible for leading what we affectionately term the Bridgewater family. In the coming years, we will spend a lot of time together. Hopefully we will laugh a little. And we will identify those

issues we each care deeply about, working on them for the good of this wonderful community.

Though some of the faces on this dais are different, the underlying goal of this Council should not change. We will continue to build on a very successful past as we meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Some of those challenges are well known-- we need to continue to strike the right balance between smart development, community desirability, and overall affordability to leave Bridgewater even better than we found it. Others are subject to fate and are simply unknown at this time.

Success on Council is achieved when the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. In other words, when one plus one plus one plus one plus one can yield a result even greater than the five individuals seated here.

To our first responders, employees, and volunteers: Thank you for what you do each and every day to keep us safe and make Bridgewater the highly desired, robust place we so proudly call home.

To all Bridgewater residents: I continue to appreciate the opportunity to work on your behalf each and every day, now into a 7th year on this Council. We have achieved some amazing things together and will accomplish even more. Please accept my sincerest wishes for a Happy, Healthy, Prosperous, and Fulfilling New Year.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY RING

Councilman Ring extended his congratulations and welcome to the newly elected Council members noting “*if we succeed together, Bridgewater succeeds*”.

**State of the
Township
Address**

MAYOR MATTHEW C. MOENCH

Good evening, everybody.

It was refreshing to hear the comments from our council members—especially our new council members—because we share many of the same goals and viewpoints. In fact, quite a few parts of those speeches were parts I could have given myself tonight.

And, Council President, I would have been just as surprised a year ago to learn that you weren’t climbing a mountain on the Appalachian Trail. That’s what I would have expected this time last year. But it truly is great to see so many people out here tonight.

I know most of you did not come here primarily to hear me speak. You came to support the elected officials—those who put themselves out there, who stand up to represent this town. A night like tonight is special. It’s celebratory. It’s ceremonial.

Usually, when you see a room with this many people, they're not smiling, and they're here to yell at us about something—hopefully collectively, and not just at one of us individually. It takes a lot to sit up on that dais and do that job. Anyone willing to put their name on a ballot, to stand up and ask for the public's trust, deserves a night like this—one filled with support and appreciation for the work they're about to undertake.

There are many dignitaries here this evening, and I won't attempt to name everyone, but I do want to acknowledge a few county officials who are with us tonight. County Commissioner Sarah Sooy is here—thank you for being here, Sarah. County Commissioner Paul Drake is also here. Our County Clerk, Steve Peter, is here. I believe Sheriff Russo may be here as well—if he isn't, I'm giving him extra credit. I also want to acknowledge County Council Joe DeMarco.

I appreciate all elected officials who serve, and I thank you for being here tonight.

Tonight, we gather to celebrate the beginning of a new year. But we do more than reorganize a governing body. We pause to take stock of where we've been, to give thanks for what we've accomplished together, and to renew our commitment to the community we are privileged to serve.

For most of us, this is not just a town on a map. It's our home. It's where we raise our families. It's where we return every night seeking safety, security, and the love of family and friends. And it is our obligation to pass that legacy on from one generation to the next.

This community gives so much to so many of us, and it is a privilege to give back. That promise guided us in 2025, and it will continue to guide us in 2026.

The past year was not defined by headlines or theatrics. It was defined by work—often unglamorous, sometimes difficult, but always necessary.

When I first took office as mayor in 2020, Bridgewater undertook one of the most ambitious infrastructure efforts in its history. Six years later, nearly 300 roads—almost 60 percent of our entire municipal roadway system—have been repaved or repaired. That didn't happen by accident. It happened because the Council made deliberate decisions to prioritize long-term infrastructure investment over short-term gains.

We respected residents' hard-earned tax dollars and aligned our priorities with the needs of our town. Smooth roads may not make flashy speeches, but they make safer neighborhoods, more opportunities for our children to ride their bikes, stronger property values, and a town that functions as it should. We are 60 percent done—and we have more work to do.

This year, we also advanced two critical master plans—thoughtful, forward-looking documents that reflect not only where Bridgewater is today, but where we are headed. Planning is not about control for its own sake; it is about stewardship. It is about asking what we want this township to be—not just now, but ten, twenty, and even more years from now. It ensures that growth occurs in the right places, in a responsible and measured way, consistent with the character of the community we cherish.

Few challenges are as complex as stormwater management and flooding mitigation. In 2025, Bridgewater approved the most aggressive stormwater and flooding mitigation initiatives in our Township’s history. I want to thank our current and former council members who supported these efforts.

These initiatives are driven by data, engineering expertise, and a clear understanding that protecting our homes, infrastructure, and residents is not optional—it is our responsibility. Significant funding will be required, and we will continue to leverage state and federal resources to stretch every tax dollar as far as possible. We will work together to ensure the long-term security of our neighborhoods and homes.

Economic vitality remains the cornerstone of our success. In 2025, we welcomed a diverse range of new businesses—from family-owned enterprises like the Learning Center and Aurora Eye Care, to national brands like Kendra Scott, to global firms like Lupin Pharmaceuticals. This balance matters. It means jobs for residents, services for families, and a tax base that allows us to maintain excellence without overburdening homeowners. It proves that Bridgewater can be both business-friendly and community-focused.

At the same time, we confronted one of the most difficult issues facing municipalities across New Jersey: affordable housing mandates. Through foresight, strong planning, and determined advocacy, Bridgewater reduced its affordable housing obligation by 11.2 percent. We met a challenging state requirement not by radically transforming our town or surrendering local control, but by doing the hard work—by standing up for our residents while honoring our New Jersey constitutional obligations.

Just as importantly, we limited inappropriate development and preserved the character of the town we love. We chose balance and restraint to protect our homes.

As we talk about protecting our home, I want to note that January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. It is important to state plainly and without qualification that human trafficking is a moral evil that has no place in our society and no refuge in our community.

Exploitation thrives in the shadows, and local government has a duty to ensure those shadows are not tolerated. Over the past year, my administration enacted targeted

ordinance changes to crack down on bad-actor massage establishments that serve no legitimate purpose. In many of these cases, the women working there are victims—forced into these situations through trafficking.

These establishments also attract individuals who come into our community to do harm, and unfortunately, residents have been victimized as a result. Our actions were deliberate, lawful, and necessary. They reflect our belief that public safety, human dignity, and the rule of law are not negotiable. In the year ahead, we will continue working with our police department, strengthening enforcement where needed, and making clear that Bridgewater will not look the other way.

This evening would not be complete without paying tribute to two individuals whose service embodies the very best of local government: Councilman Howard Norgalis and Councilman Allen Kurdyla.

Together, they are concluding nearly 50 years of distinguished service to Bridgewater. Howard is here with us tonight—Howard, give us a wave.

Between them, there have been decades of meetings, budget debates, tough votes, and quiet moments of leadership that never made the headlines but made a real difference. They understood something essential about public service: it's not about being flashy—it's about doing the work.

They showed up early, prepared, having already reviewed their materials. They asked hard questions. They listened. They voted—whether those votes were popular or not. Their legacy is not measured in speeches, but in preserved open space, improved sewer infrastructure, and the countless services that keep this town functioning.

In an era where it is tempting to substitute performance for progress, Howard and Allen modeled thoughtful, results-driven leadership. Bridgewater deserves leaders who wrestle with facts, offer solutions, and make decisions. We will miss them on the dais.

I am encouraged by the comments from council members of both parties tonight, all looking to find the best path forward for our residents. That spirit of cooperation is what we are here to celebrate—new beginnings.

To our new council members: thank you for stepping up to serve. The energy and fresh perspectives you bring are important. Healthy debate strengthens democracy, and viewpoints offered in good faith will lead to the best outcomes for Bridgewater.

I extend to all council members a hand of friendship, collaboration, and bipartisanship. My door is open. The work ahead demands mutual respect and shared commitment to the best interests of our township.

Township government is complex. It is bound by law, fiscal responsibility, professional standards, and long-term consequences. When I speak to schoolchildren, I often explain it this way: everyone agrees we want better parks—but when resources are limited, the challenge becomes deciding which priorities come first. That’s local government. It’s about choices, consensus, and responsibility.

Together, we will work through those challenges. We will align our priorities, deliver for our residents, and ensure that everyone who lives here now—and in the future—can enjoy the same quality of life we value today.

Thank you all for coming out tonight. Whether you traveled from down the street or from halfway around the world—apparently from Australia—you win the award for farthest traveled to a Bridgewater reorganization.

Thank you for spending your evening with us. And to our residents, I promise this township will continue to protect your quality of life, your safety, and your tax dollars. Thank you all.

God bless Bridgewater.

Resolutions

COUNCIL PRESIDENT GEIGER READ THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS BY TITLE AND ALLOWED FOR DISCUSSIONS/QUESTIONS. SHE THEN CALLED FOR A CONSENT MOTION.

- 1. 2026 GENERAL BUSINESS RESOLUTION GRANTING VARIOUS AUTHORITIES TO TOWNSHIP STAFF AND SETTING OFFICIAL DESIGNATIONS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES PURSUANT TO VARIOUS APPLICABLE LAWS**
- 2. 2026 BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE AND SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**
- 3. ESTABLISHING CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN AND NAMING OFFICIAL DEPOSITORIES**
- 4. AUTHORIZING BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP ENGINEER WILLIAM H. BURR, IV, P.E OF THE FIRM OF COLLIERS ENGINEERING & DESIGN TO EXECUTE NJDEP, NJDOT, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AND SOMERSET COUNTY PERMITS ON BEHALF OF THE TOWNSHIP FOR THE YEAR 2026**

On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the foregoing resolutions were proposed. The vote was as follows:

Councilman Bucko

Aye

Councilwoman Isla	Aye
Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Ring	Aye
Council President Geiger	Aye

THE RESOLUTIONS WERE ADOPTED.

Copies of resolutions [#26-01-05-001 thru #26-01-05-004](#) are appended to the official minutes

**Meeting
Open to
Public**

On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the meeting was opened to the public.

Members of the public wishing to address the Council on any matter will have three minutes to speak, which may be extended in the discretion of the Council President. An additional minute will be allotted for responses to comments from the Dias.

Paul Drake, Somerset County Commissioner

He extended formal congratulations to the newly elected Council members. Speaking on behalf of the Somerset County Board of Commissioners, he expressed a commitment to collaborating with the Mayor and Council on any local issues they may have. Commissioner Drake also recognized several county officials in attendance.

Shepa Uddin, Franklin Township, NJ

Ms. Uddin stated she is a Deputy Mayor and Councilwoman in Franklin Township. She congratulated the newly elected officials and encouraged the Bridgewater governing body to reach out for any collaborative needs. Additionally, she highlighted the upcoming Muslim Heritage Month in January, noting the importance of diversity and inclusion within the community.

David Reyes, 797 County Route 601, Skillman, NJ

Mr. Reyes Congratulated the newly elected council. He recounted his efforts canvassing for the candidates in the Vanderhaven neighborhood, noting his work encouraging residents to vote and familiarizing them with the candidates' names. He concluded by expressing his pride in their victory and his best wishes for the Council's success in the year 2026.

Bal Mukand Gupta, 4 Decker Lane, Bridgewater, NJ

Mr. Gupta Congratulated the newly elected council and shared his hopes that the Council will follow through on commitments to promote diversity, development, and progress to further enhance the community.

Mr. Adimulam, 497 Milltown Road Bridgewater Township, NJ

He congratulated the newly elected Council members and expressed optimism for

the future. He shared his hopes for positive changes in the town, specifically regarding infrastructure projects, roadway improvements, and the development of local establishments.

Wen-Ling Hsu, 4 Adrian Terrace Bridgewater NJ

She congratulated the newly elected Council members. She noted that the Mayor's statement concerning his commitment to protecting tax dollars was particularly important to her. She concluded by expressing her desire for continued transparency from the governing body over the coming years.

Niren Choudhury, 10 Galway Lane, Bridgewater Township, NJ

He congratulated the newly elected Council members noting that the current bipartisan mix of Republicans and Democrats is a positive combination for the township. He expressed a desire to make Bridgewater a premier destination on the East Coast, citing the presence of international visitors as a sign of the town's existing appeal. Mr. Chadri highlighted the unique density of the Route 202 corridor, which includes various religious institutions, businesses, corporate offices, and residences. He noted that the road has become dangerously narrow and congested, requesting a township-led initiative to seek federal or state funding for widening and improvement. He expressed support for ongoing stormwater management strategies and urged the council to find ways to limit new construction within the constraints of the Master Plan and state regulations. As a 30-year resident and current member of the Planning Board, Mr. Chadri reaffirmed his commitment to volunteering and offered his continued assistance to the administration.

Audrey Deanna Lloyd, 201 Brokaw Court, Bridgewater, NJ

Ms. Lloyd observed that Bridgewater currently lacks a traditional "downtown" center and is often defined primarily by the Bridgewater Commons Mall. She expressed a strong desire for the new governing body to foster a deeper sense of community. She emphasized the need for residents to better understand, communicate with, and protect one another, rather than remaining isolated in their homes. Ms. Lloyd concluded by stating she has "great expectations" for the new council, expressing her belief that they will successfully bring a stronger sense of connection to the township

John Colucci, 1776 Washington Valley Road, Martinsville, NJ

Mr. Colucci extended his congratulations to the Mayor, the returning Council members, and the newly elected Council members. He expressed his hope for a productive year, emphasizing the importance of everyone working together for the betterment of Bridgewater Township.

On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the public portion of the meeting was closed.

Benediction The benediction was presented by Sri Hemanthachari Mariganti

Adjournment On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Joan Geiger
Council President