

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

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on **Thursday, February 5, 2026**, at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council President Geiger 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**

On call of the roll, the following Council members were present:

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

Also Present: Michael Pappas, Township Administrator  
Christopher Corsini, Township Attorney  
Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk

Council President Geiger led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes**

**JANUARY 22, 2026 – REGULAR SESSION**

On motion of Councilman Bucko, seconded by Council President Geiger, the regular session minutes of January 22, 2026, were approved by a unanimous voice vote. Councilman Ring abstained, as he was absent from that meeting.

**Council Reports**

Councilman Bucko:

- Councilman Bucko reported on recent community and volunteer activities, highlighting his attendance at the Van Horne House open house tour hosted by the Heritage Trail Association. As one of Bridgewater’s premier historic sites, the house famously hosted a Revolutionary War general. He also noted that Somerset County offers a bus tour featuring five historic homes where Revolutionary War generals stayed; this includes Bridgewater’s Van Veghten House (General Nathanael Greene) and the Van Horne House (General William Alexander). The tour is scheduled for February 22 and offers a great opportunity for local history enthusiasts.

- Regarding local health initiatives, Councilman Bucko participated in a recent blood drive. He noted that two drives were held last Thursday at the Bradley Gardens Fire Station and the Elks Lodge on Union Avenue, with an additional drive held at the Elks Lodge earlier today. He encouraged eligible residents to donate, emphasizing the ongoing need and the availability of donation opportunities at Somerset Hospital.
- Finally, Councilman Bucko shared that he and Councilwoman Isla volunteered last Wednesday at the food bank on Easy Street. He encouraged residents to support local charitable efforts whenever possible and to continue helping neighbors in need.

#### Council President Geiger

- Council President Geiger encouraged residents to submit volunteer applications, noting that hard copies are currently available outside the meeting room. She advised that an updated digital application will be posted once the Township website transition is complete, and she thanked the public for their patience while technical issues are being resolved. Moving forward, applicants will be required to include a letter of intent detailing their interest in specific committees.
- In coordination with Councilman Kirsh, Council President Geiger is drafting amendments to the Council bylaws to formalize expectations for volunteer applicants. A resolution for these changes is expected to be considered at the next Council meeting.
- Regarding the evening's agenda, the Council President noted that most professional appointments on tonight's agenda will be postponed. This delay allows additional time for candidates to respond to requests for proposals (RFPs). She clarified that these roles are primarily alternate positions and will not displace individuals currently serving or already scheduled for appointment.
- On a celebratory note, Council President Geiger recognized Coach DJ Catalano of Bridgewater-Raritan High School for receiving an award from the New Jersey Suburban Football League. A copy of the featured article was provided for public review.
- On behalf of the Council, President Geiger expressed her deepest condolences to the family of New Jersey State Police Sergeant First Class Sean William Acker, who passed away due to complications from a work-related injury.

- Finally, in anticipation of the Township's 250th anniversary, Council President Geiger shared a historical highlight: during the Revolutionary War, George Washington famously spent several hours dancing at Bridgewater's Van Veghten House with the wife of General Nathanael Greene.

Councilwoman Isla:

- Councilwoman Isla reported on environmental, public health, and regional engagement matters. In reference to recent snow events, she stated that she consulted with an environmental advocate regarding potential impacts once the snow begins to melt, including flooding concerns. She noted that New Jersey remains in drought status and that conditions are being monitored. Councilwoman Isla indicated that any issues will be addressed as they arise and that coordination is ongoing with environmental commissions locally and throughout the state.
- Councilwoman Isla reported that she has been active at the local, national, and international levels, advocating on behalf of Bridgewater to strengthen public health initiatives, expand coalitions, and enhance community partnerships. She noted that updates regarding the Gateway Hudson Tunnel Project will be provided at a future meeting and emphasized the project's importance as a quality-of-life issue for residents who commute regionally.
- Councilwoman Isla shared that she recently met with New York Governor Kathy Hochul at the Canadian Consulate in New York to discuss inclusion, safety, and regional resilience. She noted the importance of Bridgewater's leadership being recognized beyond the Township and emphasized the value of interstate and regional collaboration. She also noted discussions with the Canadian Consulate regarding potential future partnerships related to upcoming events, including the FIFA World Cup and America 250.
- Councilwoman Isla further reported attending a public health leadership reorganization meeting conducted by the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, where emerging infectious disease trends, vaccination rates across New Jersey, and potential airborne and foodborne health concerns related to large-scale international events were discussed. She noted that preparedness efforts are underway in anticipation of increased regional activity associated with the FIFA World Cup.
- Additionally, Councilwoman Isla reported that radon testing initiatives are anticipated in Bridgewater and emphasized the importance of radon awareness and testing as a public health measure.
- In closing, Councilwoman Isla acknowledged recent community events and volunteer activities and encouraged continued resident participation, noting

that strong community engagement contributes significantly to the success of local initiatives.

Councilman Kirsh:

- The blood and platelet drive held at the Bradley Gardens Firehouse as part of Maternal Health Awareness Day was discussed. The event was led by local residents Casey Cattell, Mino Patel, and Briana Zarenkiewicz, and focused on raising awareness for maternal health. Councilman Kirsh noted that he had the opportunity to present a proclamation in recognition of the initiative and emphasized the importance of blood donation, particularly in support of maternal health.
- Councilman Kirsh also reported attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Nirvana Recovery Centers alongside Council President Geiger and Councilwoman Isla. The facility, led by Dr. Patel, will employ approximately twenty-five individuals in Bridgewater and will focus on post-traumatic mental health support, contributing positively to the community's overall health services.
- Councilman Kirsh reminded residents of the upcoming Saturday walk-in opportunity for dog licensing and stressed the importance of pet licensing as both a legal requirement and a public safety measure for residents and animals.
- Councilman Kirsh noted that winter weather and snow conditions remain a topic of interest and anticipated further discussion during the Public Works report.
- Finally, Councilman Kirsh shared that he recently spoke with State Senator Steinhart and plans to meet formally next week to discuss potential improvements to public notice requirements for development applications. He explained that the goal is to explore whether different types of projects should have tailored notice requirements rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Senator Steinhart has expressed interest in pursuing the matter further, and Councilman Kirsh will provide updates as discussions continue.

Councilman Ring:

- Councilman Ring reported on recent activities and observations. He noted that although he was unable to attend the previous Council meeting, he participated in and attended the annual banquet of the Martinsville Rescue Squad. He also attended the Somerset Patriots' annual partners' event.
- Councilman Ring further reported that he was involved in pre-storm communications with the Office of Emergency Management regarding winter

weather preparation. He acknowledged the challenges associated with snowstorm response, including reliance on weather forecasts and the logistical considerations involved in determining appropriate staffing and deployment times.

- Councilman Ring expressed his appreciation for the Public Works crews for their extensive efforts during the recent storm, noting that conditions were particularly challenging. He referenced commentary indicating that ice accumulation contributed to prolonged snow coverage despite above-freezing temperatures. He thanked the Public Works staff for their dedication and extended hours in response to the storm.

## **Mayor's Reports**

### **Michael Pappas, Township Administrator reported on behalf of Mayor Moench**

Mr. Pappas began by addressing the recent snow event and expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Works and the Police Department for their efforts in keeping residents and businesses safe. He noted that public cooperation in limiting travel during the storm contributed significantly to safety and efficiency. Based on discussions with Police Chief Mitzak and the Superintendent of Public Works, Richard Shimp, he reported that there were very few incidents requiring emergency response.

Administrator Pappas reported that a total of forty-two vehicles, including Township equipment and contracted vehicles, were deployed during the storm. Cleanup operations are ongoing, and the Department of Public Works continues to respond to resident inquiries, concerns, and complaints as they are received. He noted that requests submitted to the Township or Police Department are forwarded to Public Works and addressed as promptly as possible.

Administrator Pappas explained that it is not practical to remove all snow and ice from every roadway, particularly during periods of extremely low temperatures, noting that salt is ineffective when temperatures fall below 20 degrees. He further reported that statewide salt supplies have been limited, requiring the Township to conserve resources and prioritize application when temperatures permit, particularly on steep or higher-risk roadways.

Administrator Pappas also reported that the Governor issued an Executive Order permitting unanticipated snow-related expenses, including contractor costs and employee overtime, to be excluded from municipal budget cap restrictions.

Additionally, Administrator Pappas addressed concerns related to snow removal at Bridgewater Square Apartments, a privately owned complex in the northern portion of the Township. He reported that Township officials have communicated with property management, conducted site visits, and that the Mayor issued a letter to the

management company, which was hand-delivered. Residents who contacted the Township have been advised accordingly.

Administrator Pappas further clarified a previously raised public inquiry regarding a \$25 fee associated with delinquent property taxes. He explained that the fee is authorized to reimburse municipalities for the cost of sending delinquency notices to property owners and is unrelated to the electronic tax sale process.

Finally, Administrator Pappas reported that the Township's monthly newsletter has been issued and is available in printed form at the meeting and electronically through Township channels.

Council President Geiger commented on a letter issued by the Mayor regarding snow removal at Bridgewater Square Apartments. She noted that the letter was well-written, balancing firmness and diplomacy, and expressed confidence in its effectiveness.

Councilman Kirsh provided follow-up comments regarding snow removal operations. He noted that snow clearing is an ongoing process, with initial priorities focused on ensuring road safety, followed by creating pathways through streets and clearing intersections. He commended the Department of Public Works and contracted crews for their efforts under extreme weather conditions.

Councilman Kirsh observed that newly paved roads are cleared more effectively during plowing operations, while emphasizing that road paving decisions are based on broader infrastructure needs. He offered to work with the administration and Mr. Pappas on potential policy improvements for future storm response. One suggestion included temporarily permitting parking on portions of lawns adjacent to driveways in extraordinary storm events to reduce vehicles on roadways and improve snow clearance. He also recommended revisiting snow emergency route designations to enhance efficiency.

Administrator Pappas stated that the Township meets weekly to review snow removal operations. He noted that preliminary discussions have been held with the Police Department and Public Works to explore various strategies for improving snow clearance. He reported that many municipalities employ different approaches, such as restricting parking on certain roads or alternating sides of the street during snow events, and these options will be considered for future planning.

Administrator Pappas added that a zoning board meeting is scheduled for February 10th, during which a notable and unique case will be considered. The matter involves Rockland APV, a lithium battery storage facility located in the Finderne section of the Township, and is expected to draw community interest.

**Public  
Comment**

Members of the public wishing to address the Council on any matter will be allowed three minutes to speak unless there are unusual circumstances.

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

- **Hursith Adimulam: 457 Milltown Rd- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Adimulam inquired about the recent closure of Redstone American Grill at the Bridgewater Commons Mall and asked whether the Council had any involvement in the matter. He also referenced the long-vacant Tectonic property on Route 22 and asked whether the Council has authority over that site.

Council President Geiger responded that the Tectonic property is currently before the Zoning Board and, therefore, the Council cannot comment on the matter.

Regarding the restaurant closure, Councilman Ring explained that under New Jersey law, liquor licenses may enter “pocket” status if not actively used, and that state regulations require such licenses to be reactivated or transferred within a specified timeframe. He noted that the State has taken a more active role in regulating inactive licenses.

Mr. Adimulam also inquired about the Voorhees House property located near the pickleball courts on Milltown Road and asked whether it falls under Council jurisdiction.

Administrator Pappas stated that the Voorhees House property is owned by Bridgewater Township. He reported that the Township has received grant funding from the County for the property and that renovations were undertaken in or about 2019 through 2020. He noted that a portion of the grant funds remains available.

Administrator Pappas explained that, in order to preserve the property’s historic designation, grant funds must be utilized in accordance with specific requirements, including the use of qualified contractors and oversight by a historical architect. He further noted that a comprehensive report was previously prepared outlining recommended renovations necessary to maintain the structure’s historic status. He indicated that an additional project related to the property may be presented to the Council later this year for consideration.

- **Katie Kachmar: 543 Berrywood Lane- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mrs. Kachmar addressed the Council regarding traffic safety concerns related to roadway construction and utility work. She stated that she resides on Berrywood Lane, off Foothill Road, and has observed that during construction activities or tree-trimming operations, large “Flaggers Ahead” signs are posted; however, she has not observed flaggers directing traffic. She noted that Foothill Road and Country Club Road are hilly and curved, limiting visibility, and expressed concern that the absence of active traffic direction in such areas creates potentially hazardous conditions.

Mrs. Kachmar further referenced similar circumstances on North Bridge Street near Route 22, where signage was present, but no flaggers were visible. She stated that police vehicles were positioned at each end of the work zone, but officers appeared to remain inside their vehicles. She indicated that snow accumulation and narrowed roadways have further reduced available driving space, making navigation difficult when drivers must cross into opposing lanes without guidance. She also conveyed that she has heard similar concerns from other commuters traveling through Bridgewater.

In response, Councilman Ring noted that North Bridge Street is a County roadway and that permits for work on County roads require coordination with Somerset County. He also stated that some contractors occasionally perform work without providing advance notice to the Township. He further clarified that on North Bridge Street that day, contractors appeared to be installing wires rather than trimming trees.

Mrs. Kachmar reiterated her concern regarding work performed on Country Club Road near Route 22 area and along Foothill Road, stating that drivers often cannot see what is ahead when cresting hills. She referenced access challenges experienced by individuals traveling to the Temple Preschool located at the corner of Foothill Road and North Bridge Street. She asked whether there is a mechanism to ensure that flaggers are present when signage indicates they should be, particularly on Township-controlled roadways.

Councilman Ring explained that portions of Foothill Road fall under Township jurisdiction and portions under County jurisdiction.

Administrator Pappas advised that when residents observe a potentially dangerous situation, they should contact the Bridgewater Police Department immediately so that a supervisor can respond and assess the matter. He explained that officers assigned to traffic details are typically working extra-duty assignments and are not regular patrol officers. If off-duty Bridgewater officers are unavailable, the assignments may be filled in by officers from

other departments. Administrator Pappas encouraged residents to report concerns in real time so they could be investigated promptly.

- **Claudia Bateman: 94 Catherine Lane- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mrs. Bateman thanked Township Clerk Grace for the preparation of the meeting minutes, complimenting their clarity and professionalism. She stated that the minutes reflected positively on those referenced and expressed her appreciation.

Mrs. Bateman also commented on the production *Come From Away*, noting that she had seen it on Broadway and describing it as a beautiful story. She expressed interest in its upcoming local availability. She further remarked that she is not accustomed to federal or New York State attention being focused on Bridgewater, but acknowledged that circumstances appear to be evolving.

Mrs. Bateman referenced Middlebrook Public Health and stated that representatives had recently provided information to the Alliance regarding a substance that is currently unregulated and reportedly increasing in prevalence. She asked whether similar information had been shared with the Council.

She then addressed the Township's active recruitment of committee members. Mrs. Bateman inquired about the total number of committees and available seats and asked whether there were plans to ensure geographic representation across the Township's voting districts. She further questioned whether consideration would be given to balancing committee participation based on level of responsibility and frequency of meetings, and whether a database or tracking system would be implemented to ensure equitable distribution of representation.

Council President Geiger responded that the Township does not intend to make the process overly complicated. She stated that the Council will first review the number of applicants and then make appointments to the best of its ability, with the goal of increasing participation and ensuring that the Township is broadly represented by its residents.

- **Samantha Alley: 29 Manville Blvd- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Alley addressed the Council regarding a pending zoning application for a lithium battery storage facility in the Findern section of the Township. She stated that she understands that the proposed facility would be located near the intersection of East Main Street and Finderne Avenue and expressed concern that the area is prone to flooding, even during moderate rainfall. She noted that flooding conditions at such facilities could pose fire and environmental hazards. Ms. Alley further referenced existing soil

contamination concerns in the Findern area related to the American Cyanamid site and questioned whether additional potential risks should be introduced to the community.

Councilman Ring responded that the matter is currently before the Zoning Board of Adjustment. He stated that the application had previously commenced and has been carried to resume on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. He explained that the Zoning Board is the appropriate body to hear testimony and address questions regarding the application. He further advised that under New Jersey law, there is an appeal process, and depending on the outcome, the matter could ultimately come before the Township Council. For that reason, he stated it would not be appropriate for the Council to discuss the merits of the application at this time. He encouraged Ms. Alley to raise her concerns directly before the Zoning Board.

Councilman Kirsh added that members of the Zoning Board are Bridgewater residents appointed by the Township Council and are charged with serving the best interests of the Township. He stated that the Board functions in a quasi-judicial capacity and is required to follow established legal procedures. He further noted that applicants receive a thorough and fair hearing, and that there are multiple opportunities for public participation, including the ability to ask questions of witnesses and provide public comment. He indicated his understanding that the Chair of the Zoning Board is a resident of the Findern section.

Ms. Alley inquired whether Zoning Board members are elected officials. Councilman Kirsh clarified that Zoning Board members are appointed by the Township Council to staggered terms, depending on the position.

- **Tim Kenny: 198 Short Hills Drive- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Kenny addressed the Council regarding the benefits of native plantings. He stated that through educational programming, including NPR and PBS, he learned about the importance of planting species native to New Jersey. He shared a personal example of planting coneflowers in his yard, noting that after doing so, he observed increased activity from bees, hummingbirds, and other birds, including native species. He explained that native plants provide long-established ecological benefits for local wildlife.

Mr. Kenny encouraged the Township to promote the use of native plants among residents, noting that many commonly planted ornamental species are not native to New Jersey. He referenced resources available through New Jersey native plant organizations and suggested species such as the Jersey tea shrub as suitable options for residential properties. He stated that increased

use of native plantings would benefit local wildlife and overall environmental health.

During the discussion, there was brief commentary regarding the potential involvement of the Environmental Commission in promoting such initiatives.

Mr. Kenny also noted that he had submitted an application to serve on a Township committee but realized after submission that additional documentation, including a résumé, may have been required. He indicated his willingness to provide any supplemental materials needed.

Councilman Bucko added that, as an example, the Somerville Environmental Commission distributes seeds for native plants and coordinates plantings throughout the Borough. He suggested that once Bridgewater's Environmental Commission is fully reestablished, it may wish to explore similar initiatives.

Administrator Pappas stated that the Administration is planning an upcoming event in recognition of Arbor Day and tree planting season. He advised that additional details will be provided in the near future.

- **Marlaina Mykytok: 2 Cedar St- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Mykytok addressed the Council regarding a pedestrian safety incident near Garretson Road, in the vicinity of the high school crosswalk near the student parking lot. She stated that her son, a freshman student, was struck by a vehicle while crossing at the marked crosswalk after participating in an after-school track activity. She indicated that two older students were also crossing at the time and that vehicles in one lane had stopped to allow the students to pass.

Ms. Mykytok reported that a vehicle traveling in the opposite lane allegedly passed at a high rate of speed and struck her son. She stated that her son was transported to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital as a Level One trauma patient and, fortunately, did not sustain serious injuries. She further stated that the driver left the scene and that video footage from the student parking lot may assist in identifying the vehicle.

Ms. Mykytok expressed concern that the 25-mph flashing school zone sign was not activated at the time of the incident and noted that there are frequent after-school activities during which students cross the roadway. She suggested that additional safety measures be considered at that location, including activation of flashing signals during after-school hours, installation of traffic-calming devices such as speed humps, or pedestrian-activated crossing signals similar to those used in other areas of the Township.

She stated that there have been prior incidents involving students at or near that crosswalk and emphasized the importance of taking preventative action to avoid future accidents. Ms. Mykytok expressed gratitude that her son was not seriously injured and urged the Township to evaluate possible safety improvements at the location.

Ms. Mykytok shared a past experience in which she administered CPR to a man who went into cardiac arrest at Crim Field during a soccer game. She noted that, at the time, local first responders were occupied, and she continued CPR for approximately 30 minutes until additional assistance arrived. The individual ultimately survived.

She highlighted that at that time; there were no Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) available at most parks in Bridgewater or Somerset County. While efforts had been made to obtain and place AEDs in public spaces, challenges remained regarding proper maintenance, including battery replacement and outdoor storage requirements, particularly the temperature sensitivity of the devices.

Councilman Ring clarified that proper AED storage is critical due to temperature constraints, which limit the effectiveness and longevity of the units if not stored according to manufacturer specifications.

Ms. Mykytok emphasized the importance of public access to AEDs at recreational facilities, noting the potential risk to individuals participating in sports or other activities. She reiterated that the individual in her prior experience survived but stressed the ongoing need for safety preparedness.

- **Filipe Pedroso: 5 Yohn Dr- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Former Councilman Pedroso read the following statement:

At the January 22nd Council meeting, I raised concerns about the direction this governing body is taking. I specifically called out the three Democratic Council members for prioritizing prejudicial, identity-based considerations over merit when making appointments to Bridgewater’s boards. More broadly, I warned against the growing tendency to judge people based on assumptions and appearances rather than facts, character, and qualifications.

As part of that discussion, I referenced a statement made by Councilwoman Isla at the Reorganization meeting, where she declared herself the “first Muslim” elected to this Council. Her personal faith is not the focus here. What matters is how the conclusion of “first” was reached—and what it reveals about the mindset behind it.

In response to my remarks at the January 22nd meeting, regarding her assertion that she is the first Muslim to serve on this governing body, Councilwoman Isla said, and I quote:

“We have fact checked everything I have said in my speech, so if you would like the list, we have a list of all the elected council members here since 1948. ...because not only do I look for facts and I requested those before I came here and made my speech to make sure, but I also double triple checked everything I speak out to the public.”

I did follow up and Councilwoman Isla did provide me the list she relied upon. It confirms exactly what I feared. The list contains only the years of service and the names of Council members, nothing more. No religions. No affiliations. No statements of belief. Nothing.

It is impossible to determine the religion of any individual from that list. The only way Councilwoman Isla or anyone could conclude that no prior Council member was Muslim is by judging based on how a name looks or sounds. There is no other method. That is not fact-checking. That is bias and prejudice. And it is unacceptable from any elected official.

I have friends and family who are Muslim with names as common as those on that list. In fact, my wife, Liana Pedroso—maiden name Valeeva—grew up Muslim, and her parents are Muslim. I doubt Councilwoman Isla would assume their faith based on appearances or names that do not “look” or “sound” Muslim.

This is precisely the danger of prejudice. It reduces people to assumptions. It replaces facts with stereotypes. And when it comes from those entrusted with public power, it undermines confidence in fair and equal governance.

Prejudicial conduct by elected officials is wrong. Councilwoman Isla did not have the proof she claimed. She reached a conclusion based on prejudicial assumptions, not facts, and then presented that conclusion as verified truth to the public.

More broadly, the three Democratic members of this governing body have begun their tenure on a dangerous path—placing identity ahead of merit, narrative ahead of facts, and symbolism ahead of substance. Bridgewater deserves better. Appointments should be based on qualifications, character, and service—not on checkboxes or preconceived labels.

I hope the new Democrat Council members reflects on this approach, corrects course, and recommitments themselves to governing fairly, honestly, and based on facts—for the good of Bridgewater and all its residents.

- **Manjunath Rao: 31 Murphy Drive- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Manjunath Rao raised a question regarding snow removal on Murphy Drive, noting that cars were still parked outside despite the recent snowstorm. He asked whether the township could implement a mandate requiring residents to keep cars off the street during snow events, similar to practices in other municipalities.

Councilman Kirsh responded that the council is actively exploring ways to improve snow management. He noted that he has volunteered to work with the administration on solutions for keeping streets clear during significant storms. One potential solution being considered is temporarily allowing vehicles to park partially on lawns to keep streets passable for plows. He emphasized that the township is reviewing snow emergency routes, exploring temporary parking options, and considering lessons learned from each storm to improve future operations.

Mr. Manjunath Rao expressed concern that some cars on Murphy Drive remained outside, and the street was not fully cleared.

Councilman Kirsh concluded that the township will continue learning from each storm and that removing more cars from streets will be a priority moving forward.

- **Ayaz Baig: 5 Fairway Ct- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Baig addressed the council to clarify a recent misunderstanding regarding his volunteer status. He shared that he has been a resident of Bridgewater for 11 years and highlighted his long history of community service and volunteerism, including work with youth programs, civic organizations, and emergency response training. He emphasized his commitment to public service and civic engagement, explaining that his earlier social media post was a policy question intended to understand the direction of town leadership and future policies, not to cause harm or offense.

Council President Geiger asked Mr. Baig to confirm that he never intended to upset anyone. Mr. Baig affirmed that this was the case and reiterated that his intent was to stay informed about policy changes as a concerned resident. Council President Geiger acknowledged his response and thanked him for coming forward to provide context.

Mr. Baig also noted his personal awareness of bias and sensitivity to community concerns, stating that his goal is constructive civic participation. He expressed his dedication to the town and pride in being part of Bridgewater's community, emphasizing that his question was motivated by a desire to understand and engage, not to criticize.

- **Jennifer Loughran: 716 Falcon Court – Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mrs. Loughran highlighted several community and historical topics during her remarks. She shared the story of Oliver Cromwell, one of the first Black soldiers in the Continental Army who served in the Middlebrook area and suggested recognizing historically significant Americans locally. She expressed appreciation for DPW's quick resolution of a mailbox issue and emphasized public health awareness, particularly regarding the dangers of substances like kratom, supporting continued education for parents and residents.

Mrs. Loughran voiced strong support for volunteer engagement, citing past successful events such as native flower plantings during Earth Day and Arbor Day, and praised their positive impact on children and community participation. She also raised concerns about safety for young people using John Christian Road and nearby routes, suggesting improvements such as color-coded safe paths and enhanced pedestrian measures. Finally, she acknowledged and supported Councilwoman Isla's accomplishments, emphasizing the importance of celebrating representation and diversity in local government.

- **Michael Pepe: 33 Second St- Raritan, NJ 08869**

Mr. Pepe expressed his honor in serving as board president of the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional Board of Education for the year and thanked the council for the thoughtful recognition of School Boards Month, highlighting the pride in the schools' academic, social, and athletic achievements. He emphasized the vital contributions of student representatives, noting their dedication to attending late meetings and providing valuable feedback that helps improve the student experience. He specifically acknowledged the three student representatives this year—Crystal, Paritosh, and Matt—for their insight, service, and representation of the high school and community.

Additionally, Mr. Pepe thanked the DPW from both Bridgewater and Raritan for their prompt snow removal efforts, which allowed schools to operate with only one missed day, noting that their work was crucial and greatly appreciated.

Council President Geiger reinforced this sentiment, clarifying that while complaints were received regarding outside contractors, none were directed at the DPW, and commending the DPW staff for their excellent performance.

On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Council President Geiger, the public comment portion was closed.

## Resolutions

### **A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTRATION AND INSPECTION OF FEDERAL AID HIGHWAY PROJECTS**

Councilman Ring moved to table the resolution above until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Kirsh and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

### **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE HUDSON TUNNEL PROJECT FUNDING**

Mr. Bucko presented a resolution expressing support for continued funding of the Hudson River train tunnel project, emphasizing its benefits for Bridgewater residents who commute on the Raritan Valley line. He noted that the expanded tunnel capacity would improve service, allow for one-seat rides beyond off-peak times, and address the deteriorating existing tunnels. Additionally, he highlighted that thousands of jobs are at stake due to halted funding, and the resolution underscores the importance of completing the project to ensure both commuter convenience and economic stability.

On motion of Councilman Bucko, seconded by Council President Geiger, the foregoing resolution was proposed. The vote was as follows:

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

### **THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

A copy of resolution #26-02-05-051 is appended to the official minutes

**AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 26-01-22-037 APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE FOR STAGGERED TERMS - COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY RING, LIEUTENANT JAMES EDWARDS, ALLEN KURDYLA, ROBERT E. ALBANO, KATELYN SOWDEN & CHRISTOPHER IRELAND**

Councilman Ring moved to table the resolution above until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Council President Geiger and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

**AUTHORIZATION APPROVING FINAL LIST OF VOLUNTEER MEMBERS OF THE BRIDGEWATER FIRST AID AND RESCUE SQUADS WHO QUALIFY FOR CONTRIBUTIONS, \$1,557.38 FOR THE YEAR 2025, UNDER THE TOWNSHIP LOSAP LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM IN THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER, COUNTY OF SOMERSET TO BE FUNDED FROM THE 2025 LOSAP ACCOUNT**

Council President Geiger explained that the program is required by state law and highlighted that the town’s contribution of just over \$40,000 is a small price for the work that volunteer rescue squad members and firefighters provide.

Councilman Ring noted his past role in establishing the statewide program and emphasized that while the award is modest, it recognizes meaningful volunteer hours and increases annually based on state formulas.

Councilman Kirsh added that beyond verbal appreciation, the township should actively demonstrate support for volunteers and take steps to encourage participation in programs like the CERT program, EMS, and volunteer fire services, underscoring the critical role volunteers play in the community.

On motion of Councilman Ring, seconded by Council President Geiger, the foregoing resolution was proposed. The vote was as follows:

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

**THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

A copy of resolution #26-02-05-052 is appended to the official minutes

**AUTHORIZATION TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF SOMERSET COUNTY FOR 2026 RECYCLING IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$477,537.28 BASED ON A FEE OF \$28.16 FOR SERVICES FOR UP TO 16,958 HOUSEHOLDS FUNDED FROM VARIOUS ACCOUNTS FROM 2023, 2024, 2025 AND 2026**

Councilman Ring moved to table the resolution above until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Council President Geiger and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

**AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS FOR THE LOCAL RECREATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT – ALFRED E. BROWN PARK – IN AN AMOUNT UP TO \$75,000 WITH AN ADDITIONAL \$75,000 FUNDED FROM THE OPEN SPACE FUND FOR THE TOTAL PROJECT AMOUNT OF \$150,000**

Council President Geiger noted that the project involves repairing and renovating the tennis courts at the park in the Bradley Gardens area.

Administrator Pappas added that the township has been remarkably successful in securing park improvement grants in recent years, with this potential award being the third, following prior grants for the Kids Street Park complex and Miller Park in the Hobbstown section.

On motion of Councilman Bucko seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the foregoing resolution was proposed. The vote was as follows:

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

**THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

A copy of resolution #26-02-05-053 is appended to the official minutes

**AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF JORDAN R. VOLK, P.E., P.M.P. OF COLLIERS ENGINEERING & DESIGN TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SEWER ENGINEERING SERVICES, CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT, INSPECTION, AND NEW JERSEY WATER BANK LOAN ADMINISTRATION SERVICES FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER FOR THE TERM OF THE PROJECT COMMENCING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2026, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$327,225.00**

Councilman Ring moved to table the resolution above until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by Council President Geiger and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

**AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF MICHAEL SULLIVAN OF THE FIRM OF CLARK CATON HINTZ PC AS REDEVELOPMENT PLANNER AND AWARD OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACT IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$20,000.00 FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM COMMENCING ON JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026**

**AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR PROFESSIONAL LEGAL**

**SERVICES FOR THE LAW FIRM OF SAVO, SCHALK, GILLESPIE, O'GRODNICK & FISHER, P.A., IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$460,000.00 FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026**

**AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE LAW FIRM OF SAVO, SCHALK, CORSINI, WARNER, GILLESPIE, O'GRODNICK & FISHER, P.A., IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$100,000 FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026 DECEMBER 31, 2026**

**AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR TAX APPEAL LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE LAW FIRM OF SAVO, SCHALK, CORSINI, WARNER, GILLESPIE, O'GRODNICK & FISHER, P.A., IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000.00 FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026**

**AUTHORIZING A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH CARLIN, WARD, ASH & HEIART, LLC FOR SPECIAL TAX COUNSEL SERVICES AND APPOINTING CARLIN, WARD, ASH & HEIART, LLC SPECIAL TAX COUNSEL TO BE PAID ON A CONTINGENT BASIS AT NO COST TO THE TOWNSHIP**

**AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF MATTHEW GIACOBBE, ESQ., OF THE LAW FIRM OF CLEARY, GIACOBBE, ALFIERI & JACOBS, LLC, AS LABOR COUNSEL FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM COMMENCING ON JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$120,000.00**

**AUTHORIZING AWARD OF CONTRACT PROFESSIONAL LEGAL SERVICES: MUNICIPAL PROSECUTOR JOHN LANZA, ESQ. IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$80,000.00 FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM COMMENCING ON JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026**

**AUTHORIZING AWARD OF CONTRACT PROFESSIONAL LEGAL SERVICES: MUNICIPAL PUBLIC DEFENDER TO SCOTT MITZNER, ESQ. FOR A ONE-YEAR TERM COMMENCING ON JANUARY 1, 2026 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000.00**

Councilman Ring moved to approve the above-referenced resolutions by consent. The motion was seconded by Councilman Kirsh. The vote was as follows:

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

As the motion to approve by consent failed, the resolutions were pulled from the agenda and will be presented for action at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

**AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 26-01-08-010 PROVIDING FOR 2026 APPOINTMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 4-85, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL CODE**

Councilman Kirsh proposed advancing Mr. Baig for the CERT program by creating a resolution that mirrors the previously approved Resolution 26-01-08-010, but with only Mr. Baig’s name added. He asked Attorney Corsini whether simply describing the intention would suffice or if a formal draft was required.

Attorney Corsini clarified that either amending the existing resolution or drafting a new one would work, depending on what is cleanest.

Councilman Kirsh then moved to amend the prior resolution (as Resolution 12P) to include Mr. Baig, thereby completing the CERT roster.

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

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

**THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

A copy of resolution #26-02-05-054 is appended to the official minutes

**Adjournment**

On the motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Council President Geiger, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC  
Municipal Clerk

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Joan Geiger  
Council President