

**MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
AUGUST 1, 2024 - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on Thursday, August 1, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council Vice President Norgalis 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 21, 2023, 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 Michael Kirsh
Councilman Allen Kurdyla
Councilman Howard V. Norgalis
Councilman Filipe Pedroso
Council President Timothy Ring - Absent

Also Present: Matthew C. Moench, Mayor
Michael Pappas, Township Administrator
Alex Fischer, Deputy Township Attorney
Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk

Councilman Kurdyla led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was held for the passing of Retired Police Lieutenant Thomas Dinan.

Minutes

Meeting minutes for July 18, 2024, will be presented for Council action at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting.

Council Reports

Councilman Kirsh:

- On July 19, 2024, Councilman Kurdyla delivered welcome comments at the Mental Health Awareness Forum sponsored by United for Impact and the Bridgewater-Raritan Youth Services Commission which featured six experts in the field of mental health. Councilman Kirsh stated it is important to have continued discussions on such matters and to provide resources for those in the community who are impacted by mental health and addiction challenges.

- Attended a tour of the Stavola Quarry which was hosted by Tom Branch on July 25, 2024. Councilman Kirsh stated it is a remarkable operation that is dedicated to being good stewards of the land, as well as being as efficient as possible.

Councilman Kurdyla:

- Attended two Open Space and Recreation Master Plan meetings.
- Councilman Kurdyla met with Township Administrator Pappas and OEM Coordinator, Jamie Edwards to discuss funding needs for township First Responders due to federal radio frequency changes that are being mandated for Bridgewater Township.
- Invited residents to attend ‘National Night Out’ being held on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the municipal building.

Councilman Norgalis: *(verbatim)*

- Township employees were treated to ice cream by Gabriels Foundation located in Martinsville. Two tables in the employee break room last week were covered with cups of delicious ice cream in eight different flavors and mixtures.
- I sat in on the interviews conducted by Township Clerk Grace Njuguna and Deputy Clerk Juliana Coelho to fill the administrative position in the Clerk’s office. They selected Natalie Troisi, an internal candidate from the Tax Collector’s office who has worked for the township for ten years. Good luck in your new job Natalie.
- The Township Administration is working to revisit the 50+ year sewer contract with Warren Township whereby we facilitate the pumping and piping of Warren sewerage to the Somerset Regional Sewerage Authority treatment plant located in Bridgewater. I spoke to Warren Mayor Victor Sordillo yesterday to reinforce the Council and Administration position already communicated to Warren via a letter by Admin. Michael Pappas that this issue needs serious attention. More to follow in late August on this matter.
- I hope that residents have seen the news release entitled “Bridgewater Township’s efforts to protect resident’s emails ends with “Victory”. Last week the State Supreme Court dismissed the appeal by an organization called Rise Against Hate seeking to gain email addresses for residents who signed up for township email. In my opinion, this was simply their effort to broaden their marketing base.
- Bridgewater Township Police Department’s National Night Out is scheduled

for Tuesday, August 6th at 5:30 pm at Bridgewater Municipal Complex.

Councilman Pedroso:

Councilman Pedroso read the following statement:

I am deeply saddened to address a troubling incident that occurred last week. Someone defaced a pillar of the mosque at the Al Fatah Center in Bridgewater with hateful, anti-Muslim graffiti. Such acts of bigotry and discrimination against places of worship are utterly unacceptable and must not be tolerated.

The United States was founded on the principles of religious freedom, championed by pilgrims who risked their lives to practice their faith without persecution. Our forefathers enshrined the right to religious liberty into the very fabric of this nation. These fundamental values are so intrinsically fair and just, and it's unfortunate that I even have to talk about them today.

Bridgewater Township is a vibrant, diverse community where individuals of all races, colors, and religions coexist. It is essential that everyone feels welcome here. Let me be clear: Bridgewater stands united against hate. We will not allow the despicable actions of a few to tarnish the welcoming spirit of our community. Our Muslim friends, along with all religious groups, should know that they are respected and embraced in Bridgewater.

In 2016, as Council President, I broke tradition by inviting representatives from all four major religious groups in town to offer prayers at our Council reorganization meeting. This gesture was meant to convey a powerful message: Bridgewater celebrates its diversity, condemns discrimination, and is a place where everyone belongs.

Today, I reiterate that same message, and I hope it's loud and clear.

I must also address a recent issue involving false accusations of discrimination. A.J. Joshi, a Board of Education member, who was the keynote speaker at the Bridgewater-Raritan High School graduation, falsely claimed that his son was racially discriminated against by the Bridgewater Police Department. Chief John Mitzak presented findings from the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office at our last Council meeting, revealing that no misconduct occurred.

When Mr. Joshi initially brought these accusations before the Council, I was deeply concerned. Our police department is exceptional, and such serious allegations warranted attention. However, after reviewing the police body camera footage, it is clear that Mr. Joshi misled this governing body. The officer involved acted with professionalism, sympathy, and courtesy.

False claims of racial profiling or discrimination are a grave disservice to our community and the cause of equality. These lies not only undermine the integrity of our police department but also sow division and distrust. By fabricating victimhood, Mr. Joshi disrespects the genuine struggles of individuals who have faced real discrimination. His actions dishonor the legacy of civil rights heroes like Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and diminish the credibility of those with legitimate grievances.

Mr. Joshi's conduct demands accountability. He should apologize to the Bridgewater Police Department and our community for the harm and division he sought to create. Our society cannot afford leaders who undermine the fight for racial equality and disrespect the true victims of discrimination. Our children deserve better role models. Mr. Joshi should resign from the Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education immediately.

Let us stand together as a community, united in our commitment to justice, equality, and respect for all. Thank you.

Mayor's Reports

Michael Pappas, Township Administrator reported on behalf of Mayor Moench

- A memo was distributed to the council from Township Engineer, Bill Burr regarding PSE&G's extensive gas main replacement throughout Bridgewater. Also, attached was a map of ten roads that will be paved, curb to curb, over the next few weeks.
- Township Administrator Pappas circulated a memo and photographs regarding the successful installation progress of the turf field replacements which should be finished by the end of next week.

Public Comment

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

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

- **Denise Rinn – 2 Hayward Street, Bound Brook, NJ 08805**

Ms. Rinn expressed concerns regarding vehicles speeding and not obeying street signs near Shady Lane Park. She stated that her daughter reached out to the township but had not received a response. She requested a study be conducted and gave suggestions on how to alleviate the problem.

Ms. Rinn stated there is use of marijuana, as well as vaping, in the township parks and asked that this be monitored. She also stated that there was an issue with mosquitos in her neighborhood.

On motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the public comment portion was closed.

**Public
Hearing &
Final Action
Ordinances**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A QUITCLAIM DEED RELEASING THE AFFORDABILITY CONTROLS ATTACHED TO CERTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS AT BLOCK 526, LOT 16

Deputy Township Attorney, Alex Fisher stated that the township must release affordability controls for eight rental units located at the Village since the thirty-year restriction has expired. He then fielded questions from the dais.

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

No one wished to be heard.

On motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the public comment portion was closed.

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

Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Kurdyla	Aye
Councilman Norgalis	Aye
Councilman Pedroso	Aye
Council President Ring	Absent

ORDINANCE #24-10 WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-08-01-208](#) is appended to the official minutes

**Introduction
of Ordinances**

ADDING CHAPTER 63 TO THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP CONCERNING LEAD-BASED PAINT INSPECTIONS

Township Administrator Pappas stated that the State requires all municipalities to adhere to this code regarding lead-based paint inspections.

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

Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Kurdyla	Aye
Councilman Norgalis	Aye
Councilman Pedroso	Aye
Council President Ring	Absent

THE ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED.

A copy of resolution [#24-08-01-209](#) is appended to the official minutes

Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk read the following report:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the said pending ordinance be passed on first reading and advertised as required by statute fixing the 18th day of August 2024, at 7:30 p.m. prevailing time on said day as the time and the Bridgewater Township Municipal Court Chambers at 100 Commons Way in said Township as the place for hearing and final action.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township Clerk shall forthwith post on the bulletin board in the Township Municipal Building at 100 Commons Way, a true copy of said ordinance and make copies available to members of the general public and spread the same upon the minutes of the meeting.

Resolutions

CONSENT VOTE

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

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF MATTHEW D. JESSUP OF THE LAW FIRM OF McMANIMON, SCOTLAND & BAUMANN, LLC AS SPECIAL COUNSEL FOR REDEVELOPMENT MATTERS TO BE PAID FROM ESCROWS ESTABLISHED BY THE REDEVELOPER OF THE APPLICABLE PROJECTS

AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF REBECCA ROBLES, ESQ., FROM THE LAW OFFICES OF REBECCA ROBLES AS ALTERNATE MUNICIPAL PROSECUTOR

AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF DANIEL FRASCELLA, ESQ., FROM THE LAW OFFICES OF DANIEL FRASCELLA AS ALTERNATE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

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

Councilman Kirsh	Aye
Councilman Kurdyla	Aye
Councilman Norgalis	Aye
Councilman Pedroso	Aye
Council President Ring	Absent

THE RESOLUTIONS WERE ADOPTED.

Copies of resolutions [#24-08-01-210 thru #24-08-01-212](#) are appended to the official minutes

**Closed
Session**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Bridgewater Township Council that this body will now hold a closed meeting to discuss litigation.

When and if the matters discussed become public record, this will be made known to the public at that time.

The public is excluded from said meeting and further notice thereof is dispensed with all in accordance with Sections 8 and 4a of the Open Public Meetings Act.

On the motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the Council convened in a closed session at approximately 7:59 p.m.

A copy of resolution [#24-08-01-213](#) is appended to the official minutes.

On the motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the meeting reconvened to open session at approximately 8:11 p.m. and adjourned immediately thereafter.

Adjournment

On the motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Timothy Ring
Council President