

BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE
Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2025

Mayor Canose called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Council Members Jena McCredie, Al Ribeiro, Rich Traynor, Christine Zamarra, and Ross Zazzarino. Also present were John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney, Nancy Malool, Administrator, and Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk. Council Member Jeff Roos was absent.

STATEMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Notice of this meeting was provided to the Bernardsville News and Courier News, filed with the Municipal Clerk and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board on December 5, 2024.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATIONS

Somerset Hills School District, Dr. Brian Brotschul, Superintendent of the Somerset Hills School District, provided an overview of the district's upcoming school facilities referendum scheduled for March 10, 2026. He thanked the council for the opportunity to speak and explained that the referendum aims to address facility improvements across all three district schools while maintaining fiscal stability. Dr. Brotschul outlined that the district is at a unique juncture, with existing debt expiring and the potential to replace it with new debt without increasing the local tax rate—resulting in a net-neutral tax impact for residents. The proposal totals \$38,024,257, with approximately 34% (\$12 million) expected to be funded through state debt service aid over 20 years, reducing the district's share to about \$25.4 million.

The referendum focuses on three primary goals:

1. Enhancing safety and security – including expanded camera systems, new notification and lockdown systems, construction of a security vestibule at Bedwell Elementary, installation of ballistic film on first-floor windows, and upgraded fire alarms and roofing.
2. Upgrading and maintaining facilities – addressing operational needs such as roofing and bleacher replacements and modernization of aging infrastructure.
3. Improving learning environments – major renovations to science labs at the middle and high schools; creation of new STEM and technology labs at Bedwell; a new culinary arts program at the high school; visual and media arts classroom upgrades; and continued improvements to media centers and kindergarten spaces.

He reviewed several recent capital projects already completed through the district's regular budget, including high school media center renovations, performing arts upgrades, synthetic turf and track replacement, field lighting, and tennis court renovations. Dr. Brotschul emphasized that by pursuing the referendum, the district can leverage state aid, which is unavailable for projects funded through the annual operating budget. He also noted that community information sessions will be held in November, December, and January, and detailed materials are available on the district's website and social media. In response to council questions, Dr. Brotschul

clarified that:

- The referendum will be decided by a single vote across all three municipalities in the district.
- The last referendum occurred around 2016.
- If the referendum fails, the board could either postpone the projects, fund some items through the regular budget without state aid, or revise and resubmit the proposal for another vote.
- The referendum is separate from the district's annual operating budget, which is limited by a 2% state tax levy cap, meaning routine tax increases for operations are independent of this capital proposal.

Dam Removal Project, Mary Paist-Goldman of Rippled Waters Engineering gave an updated presentation on the dam removal project, building on her 2022 report. She outlined the benefits of removing the dam, including reducing borough liability, restoring the Mine Brook habitat, improving water quality, and addressing sediment buildup. She reviewed the engineering design, which includes streambank stabilization, native plantings, and park improvements such as walking paths, bridges, and benches. Ms. Paist-Goldman reported that the dam safety construction permit was approved in June 2025, while the wetlands permit remains pending but is expected by year-end. She discussed updated cost estimates, explaining that increases stem from added design elements, disposal of impoundment materials, and higher contingencies due to fluctuating construction costs. Construction is estimated to take about four months under favorable conditions and would be completed under one bid. Funding efforts are ongoing, with \$25,000 secured from the Nature Conservancy and several other grant applications pending, including a \$500,000 NRCS Equip grant. She noted that the state now requires construction to begin within one year of the permit issuance, though extensions are possible. In response to questions, Ms. Paist-Goldman reviewed the project's history, explaining that dam safety regulations required a hydrologic and hydraulic analysis, which found the structure could not safely pass the design storm. Rehabilitating the dam would cost roughly \$3.4 million plus engineering and long-term maintenance expenses, compared to the estimated removal costs. She confirmed that doing nothing would result in state enforcement and potential fines. The Mayor and Council thanked Ms. Paist-Goldman for her continued work and detailed update on the project's progress.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ribeiro moved to approve the minutes of September 15, 2025 and September 29, 2025. Ms. McCredie seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Fran Daley, Library Director, thanked Ms. Malool and Leslie Roberson for their work on the health insurance program referenced later in the meeting in Resolution #196. She said their efforts helped mitigate the impact of rising benefit costs. She acknowledged the extensive

review, paperwork, and decision-making involved in the process and added appreciation that the Library was able to participate in the Borough's program.

Joe Rossi, Crest Drive, said he had concerns regarding parking shortages at the schools (Bedwell and Bernards High School), noting that overflow parking is occurring on Borough lots and residential streets. He said he had spoken with the School Superintendent and offered to assist in identifying areas on school property that could be developed for additional parking. Mr. Rossi also discussed the use of Borough recreational fields by school teams and outside organizations, questioning how rental fees are allocated and about nonresidents using local facilities. It was noted that certain parks and courts are subject to Green Acres restrictions, which require public access and prevent limiting use to Borough residents.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the open session.

ORDINANCES (Public Hearing)

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2025-2027, **REQUIRING THE PAYMENT OF DELINQUENT TAXES AS A CONDITION FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A MUNICIPAL LICENSE OR PERMIT AND SUPPLEMENTING AND AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE BOROUGH CODE ENTITLED "ADMINISTRATION"**. Hearing no comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Mr. Traynor moved to pass Ordinance #2025-2027 on final reading and adopt as published. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2025-2028, **AMENDING ORDINANCE #2024-2000 ENTITLED "AN ORDINANCE VACATING A PORTION OF BERNARDS AVENUE WHICH IS OUTSIDE THE PAVED ROADWAY AND SIDEWALK AREA AND WHICH IS NECESSARY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT 63 BERNARDS AVENUE" BY CORRECTING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA VACATED**. Joe Rossi, Crest Drive, spoke about the parking layout at the affordable housing location at 63 Bernards Avenue, noting that parking was moved from the front to the rear of the building. He said that the access road is only 18 feet wide, making it difficult for vehicles, including garbage and delivery trucks, to maneuver without damaging parked cars. He added that cars are now parking along the narrow roadway, creating a safety hazard, and urged the Borough to address the situation through enforcement. Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Mr. Zazzarino moved to pass Ordinance #2025-2028 on final reading and adopt as published. Mr. Ribeiro seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2025-2029, **AN ORDINANCE CHANGING THE MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE BERNARSVILLE FIRE COMPANY NO. 1 FIRST AID SQUAD AND AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE BOROUGH CODE ENTITLED "ADMINISTRATION"**. Harrison Clark, a member of the Fire Department, stated that the Fire

Department's bylaws allow any legal resident to become a member. He noted that in the past, legal resident members have been valuable contributors and said the department wishes to ensure that no qualified individuals are excluded from membership. Mayor Canose thanked him for bringing the matter to the Council's attention. Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Ms. Zamarra moved to pass Ordinance #2025-2029 on final reading and adopt as published. Mr. Zazzarino seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

ORDINANCES (Introduction)

Mr. Zazzarino moved that Ordinance #2025-2030, **AUTHORIZING 2026 SALARIES & WAGE RANGES FOR NON-CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYEES OF THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE**, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, November 24, 2025. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

Ms. Zamarra moved that Ordinance #2025-2031, **APPROPRIATING THE SUM OF \$100,000 FOR REPLACEMENT OF SBR BLOWER FOR SEWER PLANT & GENERAL CAPITAL ITEMS**, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, November 24, 2025. Ms. McCredie seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

Ms. McCredie moved that Ordinance #2025-2032, **ADDING ONE NEW SERGEANT POSITION IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE BOROUGH CODE ENTITLED "ADMINISTRATION"**, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, November 24, 2025. Mr. Roos seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

RESOLUTIONS

- #25-193 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF BILLS (AS OF 10/8/25)**
- #25-194 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF BILLS (AS OF 10/22/25)**
- #25-195 AUTHORIZING THE CANCELLATION OF SMALL BALANCES ON TAX AND SEWER UTILITY ACCOUNTS**
- #25-196 AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE TO JOIN THE NJ SOLUTIONS JOINT HEALTH INSURANCE FUND**
- #25-197 AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF FUNDS**
- #25-198 AUTHORIZATION TO REQUEST CHANGE IN TITLE, TEXT, OR AMOUNT OF APPROPRIATION PURSUANT TO NJS 40A:4-85**

- #25-199 REQUESTING APPROVAL OF ITEMS OF REVENUE AND APPROPRIATIONS PER NJSA 40A:4-87 SOMERSET COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE GRANT – FY2024/2025**
- #25-200 APPROVING RECREATION SEASONAL SALARIES**
- #25-201 AUTHORIZATION OF TAX REFUND**
- #25-202 REAFFIRMING THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE’S REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF ITS APPLICATION TO THE STATEHOUSE COMMISSION AND THE NJDEP GREEN ACRES PROGRAM FOR THE DISPOSAL OF A PORTION OF CLAREMONT FIELD (BLOCK 69, LOT 8)**
- #25-203 AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH SOMERSET COUNTY FOR THE PURPOSES OF PROVIDING PRINT, COPY AND SERVICES**
- #25-204 APPOINTING RYAN VALENTINO AS FIRE OFFICIAL/FIRE INSPECTOR AND STEVE WATERS AS FIRE INSPECTOR**
- #25-205 ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATION OF CHRISTOPHER WEBER, DRIVER/LABORER IN THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
- #25-206 APPOINTING A DRIVER/LABORER IN THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
- #25-207 AUTHORIZING RENEWAL OF ABC LICENSE**
- #25-208 AUTHORIZING AN ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES CONTRACT WITH ANIMAL CONTROL SOLUTIONS, LLC**
- #25-209 APPROVING ITEMS OF BUSINESS FROM THE OCTOBER 20, 2025 WORK MEETING**
- #25-210 RESTRICTING ACTIVITIES ON THE TURF FIELD AT THE POLO GROUNDS**

Regarding Resolution #25-210, Ms. Malool explained that the proposed change would restrict use of the turf field to athletic events only, prohibiting parties, tables, or chairs in order to protect the field’s surface and reduce costly repairs. It was noted that the turf requires regular maintenance and that repeated damage increases long-term expenses. Events and gatherings would instead be directed to the lower field area.

Ms. Zamarra moved to pass Resolutions #25-193 through #25-210. Mr. Zazzarino seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Ms. McCredie, Mr. Ribeiro, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

REPORTS

Mayor's Update, Mayor Canose thanked Ron and Carol Davi for once again hosting their annual First Responders event, marking its 10th year. Mayor Canose attended the Apple Festival at the Farmers Market on October 4th. Mayor Canose participated in a county-organized downtown roundtable with other local officials to discuss issues related to downtown development and New Jersey Transit. The county's economic development office offers free access to demographic and visitor data, which she suggested could be useful for the Borough. Mayor Canose performed a wedding and is up to over 20. The Haunted History Tour was held on October 11th. The Main Street Board meeting and business mixer was held on October 12th at The Bernie. The first "Music on the Benches" performance series was held on October 15th, featuring live music at various downtown locations. Mayor Canose attended the Downtown New Jersey Conference in Flemington, where she toured the major redevelopment of the historic Union Hotel. Mayor Canose participated in a League of Municipalities Legislative Committee meeting on October 24th. The Trunk or Treat event was held on October 25th and was well attended. There was assistance from the Recreation Department, DPW, Police, and Fire Company. The event included a petting zoo and hay maze in addition to traditional activities. Mayor Canose reviewed the results of the Borough's Quality of Life survey via FlashVote, noting that 83% of respondents rated the quality of life as good or excellent. The community identified the library, safety, and the school system as the Borough's top strengths, while local business development, open space preservation, and traffic improvements were seen as priorities. A copy of the results will be posted on the borough website. Mayor Canose said there is progress on the Highlands Council planning initiative, explaining that the Borough is working to designate its downtown center area for future development while ensuring that surrounding areas remain protected. A meeting with the Highlands Council will be scheduled to finalize that designation.

Administrator's Report, Ms. Malool said the Health Department will hold free rabies vaccination clinics for dogs on November 8 and January 10 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Basking Ridge Community Center, with no appointment required. She thanked everyone involved in organizing the Trunk or Treat event and mentioned possible future additions, such as a dog costume parade. She also provided an update on the New Jersey American Water road closure on Mount Airy Road, noting that work was rescheduled from nighttime to daytime hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., to minimize disruption during school and rush-hour traffic. The police department and Borough staff have been notifying residents, and an additional police officer will assist with detours. It was noted that unexpected concrete beneath the roadway required special equipment but should not delay completion. Ms. Malool added that a new pedestrian flashing beacon was installed to replace a failing one, with the Borough funding the replacement. Ms. Malool said all lights near the Library, Fenwick statue, and Olcott Square are now functioning, though the Borough is still awaiting a replacement light on Route 202 near Bernardsville Print Center.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Zazzarino moved to accept the monthly reports. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Correspondence

NJ League Dues, Mayor Canose said a letter received from the New Jersey League of Municipalities regarding a proposed 2% dues increase.

Letter from Heather Eich, a letter from resident Heather Eich was sent to the Mayor and Council via email. She wrote to inquire about Bernardsville's preparedness if ICE operations occurred in town. Mayor Canose explained that the Police Department has been instructed by the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office that local police are not to assist with such actions but also cannot interfere. Mayor Canose said she had visited several Latino-owned businesses in town to distribute copies of residents' immigration rights.

NJ Transit, Mayor Canose said a letter was received from a resident offering to assist with outreach to New Jersey Transit. She welcomed the offer, noting that any additional help in communicating with NJ Transit would be appreciated.

Unfinished Business

Stop Signs at Five Corners Intersection (Claremont Road), council discussed installation of stop signs at the Five Corners intersection on Claremont Road. It was noted that although Somerset County proposed the installation, an ordinance must be adopted by the Borough for the police to enforce the stop signs. Without an ordinance, violations could not be ticketed. Council agreed to introduce the necessary traffic ordinance at the November meeting.

RPM Fees, council discussed a request from RPM regarding their recent Planning Board application. The developer had modified materials such as siding and roofing for the three scattered-site affordable housing locations. The changes required Planning Board approval. They submitted a check for \$3,750, originally intended as an application fee, and requested reimbursement. It was noted that the same amount was needed for the required escrow account, so the payment would be applied to escrow rather than refunded. Council consent was given by motion. Ms. McCredie moved to apply the \$3,750 to escrow. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

New Business - None

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Joe Rossi, Crest Drive, inquired about the cost associated with rock blasting at the affordable housing location construction site on Mine Brook Road. Mayor Canose and Ms. Malool explained that the Borough has not yet received a bill detailing the blasting costs, as they are incorporated within the contractor's overall project expenses. Mr. Rossi asked for clarification regarding an increase in project funding from \$1.9 million to approximately \$2.6 million. It was noted that was attributed to the passage of time, additional units, and certain design changes made over the course of seven years. Mr. Rossi requested installation of an earth clock which he explained is a system to automatically adjust lighting based on sunrise and sunset times.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Mayor Canose closed the open session.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved to adjourn to an executive session to consider Contract Negotiations, Attorney/Client Privileges, Pending Litigation and that the time when and circumstances under which the matter can be disclosed to the public is when it is finally resolved. The motion was seconded and approved with five yes votes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm.
