

BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE
Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2026

Council President Christine Zamarra called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Council Members, Al Ribeiro, Jeff Roos, Charlie Szrom, Rich Traynor, Christine Zamarra (remotely), and Ross Zazzarino. Also present were John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney, Nancy Malool, Administrator, and Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk. Mayor Mary Jane Canose arrived at 7:10pm.

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 4, 2025.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

OPEN SESSION

Ms. Zamarra opened the meeting to the public. Hearing no comments, Ms. Zamarra closed the open session.

MAYOR & COUNCIL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Raritan Headwaters Stream Cleanup, council discussed a request from Raritan Headwaters to include the Moraine Crest area in the upcoming stream cleanup. DPW has confirmed the site is accessible, although there is a steep slope and bike ramps so any volunteers would participate at their own risk. Council consented to Raritan Headwater adding Moraine Crest as a site to their upcoming cleanup and noted appropriate safety awareness. A resolution will be prepared for adoption at the February 23rd council meeting.

Mayor Canose arrived.

Community Development Block Grant, Claremont Road Group Home Project, the Community Development Block Grant application for the Claremont Road group home was reviewed by council. It was noted the project involves removing trees to improve the usability of the rear yard and requires a formal acknowledgment from the Borough to move forward. It would not create any financial obligation for the borough. A resolution will be prepared for adoption at the February 23rd council meeting.

Summit Health, Parking Spaces at the Library Lot, council considered a request from Summit Health for additional employee parking spaces in the library lot. Council consent was to allow a temporary arrangement in which Summit Health would be given three additional parking spaces for their employees and they would install and pay for signage. If needed in the future, the Borough could revise the arrangement. There are four existing employee spaces in the lot that will be reassigned for public use while approximately ten will remain for municipal employees. Ms. Malool and council also agreed that a broader review of parking regulations, enforcement, technology, and overall lot configuration should be referred to the Public Safety Committee. It was suggested a FlashVote survey on parking could be done.

2026 Pool Rates, the proposed three percent increase in pool membership fees was supported. Council consented to having a discounted non-resident family membership for families within the local school district (Bedminster, Peapack/Gladstone, and Far Hills) to encourage greater participation. A resolution will be prepared for adoption at the February 23rd council meeting.

Presentations

Mayor Canose said presentations at the February 23rd council meeting will be the swearing-in of Police Sergeant Christopher Luckenbach; a presentation by Rippled Waters Engineering on the Dam Removal Concept Plan and Summary of the Environmental Assessment, with a public comment period; and the Library's annual year-in-review presentation.

Ordinances

Public Hearing of the following ordinances be held at the February 23, 2026 council meeting:

Ordinance #2026-2036, Concerning Sewer Connection Fees and Sewer User Rates and Allocation and Amending Chapter XVI of the Borough Code Entitled "Sewer Regulations"

Ordinance #2026-2037, an Ordinance Removing Kennel Fees from the Borough Code so that they can be set by Resolution and Amending Chapter 5 of the Borough Code Entitled "Animal Control"

Ordinance #2026-2038, Concerning Council Meeting Procedures and Supplementing and Amending Chapter 2 of the Borough Code Entitled "Administration"

Ordinance #2026-2039, Calendar Year 2026, Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget Appropriation Limits and to Establish a Cap Bank (N.J.S.A. 40a:4-45.14)

Ordinance #2026-2040, an Ordinance Concerning Affordable Housing Set-Asides and Amending Article 13 of the Borough Land Development Regulations Entitled "Affordable Housing"

Ordinance #2026-2041, an Ordinance Adopting Zoning Regulations Necessary to Implement the Borough's Fourth Round Settlement Agreement with Fair Share Housing Center and Supplementing and Amending Various Sections of the Borough Land Development Code

Introduction of the following ordinance will be done at the February 23, 2026 council meeting:

Ordinance #2026-2042, Supplementing and Amending Section 12-1.2 of the Borough Code by Adding an Exemption from Fees for a Continued Certificate of Occupancy Related to the Extension of Affordability Controls Under the Borough's Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan

Mr. Pidgeon said that following the last council meeting, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs released a comprehensive model affordable housing ordinance. The following ordinance will also be introduced at the February 23, 2026 council meeting.

Ordinance #2026-2043, an Ordinance Repealing and Replacing Chapter LD-13, “Affordable Housing,” Including § LD-13-19 “Development Fees,” of the Borough Land Development Regulations, and Adopting Updated Affordable Housing and Development Fee Regulations Based on the Model DCA Ordinance.

Mr. Pidgeon said a special meeting will need to be scheduled to ensure adoption of the affordable housing ordinance is done within the required timeline.

Resolutions

The following resolutions will be on for adoption at the February 23, 2026 council meeting

- Bill List
- Approving Person-To-Person Transfer of A.B.C. License #1803-44-005-007
- 2026 Pool Rates
- Adopting The Fourth Round Affordable Housing Spending Plan And The Fourth Round Affirmative Marketing Plan, And Directing Implementation Consistent With The Mediation Agreement With Fair Share Housing Center And The Court Order Approving Settlement
- Implementing Requirements Of The Mediation Agreement With Fair Share Housing Center And The Court’s Order Approving Settlement; Adopting Plan For Continuing Certificates Of Occupancy And Repairs For Extended Units; Directing Cost And Rehabilitation Analysis, Funding, And Manual Preparation And Stating Intent To Fund
- Authorizing Rippled Waters Engineering LLC to Apply for a Grant for Dam Removal
- Authorizing the Hiring of a Police Officer
- Appointing Virginia Chiesa to the Library Board of Trustees to Fill Unexpired Term of Amy DeMilt to 12/31/30
- Appointing Junior Membership in the Fire Company
- Authorizing the Mayor & Clerk to Sign a Qualified Private Community Services Agreement with Somerset Hills Village Condominium Association
- Authorizing Cancellation and Refund of Property Taxes for 100% Disabled Veteran, 25 Highview Avenue
- Accepting the Resignation of Samantha D'Antuono as Full Time Police Dispatcher and Changing Her Status to Part Time Police Dispatcher
- Accepting the Resignation of Bill Roberts, Zoning Code Enforcement Officer
- Approving the Transfer of Caryn Neri to Planning & Zoning Administrative Coordinator
- Authorization of Tax Refund
- Authorizing a Contract for Meeting Room Technology Improvements
- Accepting a Grant for Leaf Composting 2025
- Awarding a Contract for Janitorial Services
- Designating Field Treatments in 2026
- Accepting the Resignation of Jack Bertha, Driver/Laborer
- Endorsing the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan Adopted by the Borough Planning Board

on February 11, 2026

--Authorizing the Hiring of a Police Dispatcher

Municipal Attorney Report, there were no comments or questions from council about Mr. Pidgeon's report. Some items will be discussed in closed session.

Council Liaison Reports

Library Board, Mr. Traynor said the Board met and administered the oath of office to new member Virginia Chiesa. The Board reviewed the Library's proposed budget, and is coordinating with the Finance Committee for further discussion. An executive session was held regarding the annual evaluation of the Library Director. The Board and Friends of the Bernardsville Library discussed the upcoming mini-golf fundraiser. It was noted that the new member will likely be sworn in again after formal appointment following a council resolution on February 23rd.

Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, Mr. Traynor said the committee discussed the proposed Revolutionary War sign project initiated by Spencer Peck. The state has approved only one sign to date, and if additional state funding is not awarded, the committee may request municipal sponsorship for an individual sign, with fundraising also identified as a possible option.

Environmental Commission, Mr. Szrom said the Commission continued discussion of the C-PACE program. The Commission revisited the proposed process for allocating recreation and environmental open space funds so that recreation-related expenditures continue to receive Recreation Committee review and environmental projects receive Environmental Commission input. Commission members also raised the possibility of pursuing grants related to the Nervine Pond project and discussed long-term planning for trail connections to link existing open space.

Recreation Committee, Mr. Zazzarino said a successful ski season with five trips were completed. There will be an Easter event scheduled for March 28th with Community in Crisis assisting. Four summer camp trips have been booked, and participation in those trips will be open beyond camp registrants. Planned destinations include bowling and laser tag, Liberty Science Center, and mini-golf. The committee said there is intention to paint and retile all three pools this year. The committee also discussed strategies to increase pool use, including potential senior programming during less busy hours.

Public Safety Committee, Mr. Roos said the committee will meet in early March.

Board of Health, did not meet this month due to inclement weather.

Public Works, Ms. Zamarra said the committee is looking to schedule an upcoming meeting.

Finance Committee, Mr. Ribeiro said the committee held its initial budget meeting and reviewed a draft budget, which included a review of the Library's request. The committee will continue its review of the budget at a follow-up meeting.

Correspondence

Letter from Somerset County OEM, 2025 Municipal OEM Evaluation for Compliance with NJ Statutes, Mayor Canose commended OEM Coordinator, Sergeant Tim Richard, for consistently achieving top ratings and for his exceptional work administering the OEM program.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved to adjourn to an executive session to consider Personnel Matters and Attorney/Client Privilege 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 six yes votes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40p.m.
