

BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE
Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2026

Mayor Canose called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom only due to inclement weather. Present were Council Members Jeff Roos, Charlie Szrom, Rich Traynor, Christine Zamarra, and Ross Zazzarino. Also present were John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney, Nancy Malool, Administrator, and Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk. Council member Al Ribeiro 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 4, 2025.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATIONS

Swearing in of Sergeant Chris Luckenbach, Mayor Canose said this presentation will not take place tonight due to illness.

Mayor's Proclamation - Parkinson's Disease, Mayor Canose entered a proclamation into the record proclaiming April 2026 as Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month in the Borough of Bernardsville.

Mayor's Proclamation - Arbor Day, Mayor Canose entered a proclamation into the record proclaiming April 24, 2026 as Arbor Day in the Borough of Bernardsville.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Zamarra moved to approve the minutes of February 17, 2026, February 23, 2026, March 2, 2026, March 9, 2026, and March 12, 2026. Mr. Szrom seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Bob Graham, Dryden Road, referenced letters he previously submitted to the Mayor and Council and briefly reviewed the topics raised in them. He suggested that the small lot at the end of Mine Brook Road be considered as part of the AH-10 affordable housing site, stating that it could provide additional access and design flexibility for the development team. He acknowledged that the lot may already have been considered and excluded, but requested that it at least be reviewed. He also requested that, for the same project, the Borough Planner and/or applicant be

asked to provide a viewscape analysis from Route 202, in addition to standard building elevations. He said that such visual renderings could help the public and Planning Board better understand the project's visual impact on the entrance to town and potentially address concerns in advance. He encouraged the Borough to assemble a broader review team to help evaluate and optimize affordable housing projects before they reach the Planning Board. He said that involving additional perspectives earlier in the process could improve project design, reduce delays, and avoid lengthy operational or design discussions during formal hearings. He said that this type of review could also be useful for senior housing proposals. He asked whether the Borough had recently received any updated parking consultant report. Mayor Canose said no new report had been received in the last couple of months.

Fran Daley, Library Director, said that the Library had a successful Makers Day and Makers Week in March. She advised that the Library will partner with the Green Team for a series of environmental-themed events in April between Arbor Day and Earth Day, to be held at and around the Library, including on the patios. Planned activities include themed Library programming, a film screening, walks, a birdwatching talk, and a wildlife photography presentation. She also noted that Library Giving Day, the Library Foundation's primary annual fundraiser, was being promoted on social media. She clarified that this year's Green Team event will take place at the Library rather than at the train station and will run over approximately ten days. She also commented on efforts to host the MVC mobile unit, noting that the Library has been reviewed as a possible location and is awaiting further response. Recent Library programs, including Pi Day and a PB&J event, were both well attended.

Bob Graham, Dryden Road, added a comment regarding pedestrian access from the train station. He suggested the Borough revisit the concept of a stairway or ramp in light of the scale of proposed nearby development and stated his opinion that an elevator would be more practical, more beneficial to the community, and potentially less costly in the long term. He also noted that funding opportunities may be available through Federal and State transit-related grant programs and asked the Borough to consider those options before moving forward with stairs or ramps. Mayor Canose said that she and Ms. Malool had met with Transit Village representatives and were aware of several grant opportunities now available due to the Borough's Transit Village designation. She stated that the Borough is reviewing available funding opportunities.

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

ORDINANCES (Public Hearing)

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on 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.**

Hearing no comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing. Mr. Traynor moved to pass Ordinance #2026-2042 on final reading and adopt as published. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Mr. Roos, Mr. Szrom, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

ORDINANCES (Introduction)

Mr. Zazzarino moved that Ordinance #2026-2045, **AN ORDINANCE SUPPLEMENTING AND AMENDING THE BOROUGH CODE BY CREATING A NEW SECTION 2-27, ENTITLED “DAMAGE TO MAILBOXES RESULTING FROM SNOW REMOVAL,” AND ESTABLISHING A MAXIMUM REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT**, 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., April 27, 2026. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

Ms. Zamarra moved that Ordinance #2026-2046, **ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE MORRISON AVE PUMP STATION BY THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY, AND APPROPRIATING \$900,000 THEREFOR CONSTITUTING PROCEEDS OF GRANTS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$750,000 FROM THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET ARP FUNDS AND \$150,000 IN SEWER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUNDS** be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a special meeting on April 20, 2026.

Regarding the public hearing date of the April 20th work meeting, Ms. Malool said that the borough previously received a \$750,000 county grant to replace the Morrison Avenue Pump Station. The project has been delayed for an extended period due to engineering and DEP permitting issues involving wetlands. Final approval has now been received, allowing the project to move forward. It was noted that the County grant funds must be expended by December 31, 2026, creating a compressed construction schedule. Bids are due April 16th, and if awarded promptly, work could begin May 1st, leaving approximately 200 days for completion. Ms. Malool requested that council consider awarding the contract at the agenda work meeting in order to expedite the process. She said the borough must appropriate the project funds in advance and then seek reimbursement from the county. The ordinance includes the \$750,000 grant amount, plus an additional \$150,000 to cover engineering/contract administration and potential bid overages. Ms. Malool advised council that this request to move the ordinance forward on an accelerated basis (public hearing and adopt at a work meeting) was made as an exception to the normal agenda process due to the project deadline.

Mr. Traynor asked if he needed to recuse himself from voting/discussion on this ordinance since he lives within 200 feet of the Morrison Avenue Pump Station. Mr. Pidgeon said he did not have to recuse himself.

Mr. Roos seconded and the motion was approved with five yes votes.

RESOLUTIONS

#26-73 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF BILLS (As of 3/4/26)

#26-74 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF BILLS (As of 3/18/26)

- #26-75** **AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY, LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT OFFICE 1033 PROGRAM TO ENABLE THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO REQUEST AND ACQUIRE EXCESS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EQUIPMENT**
- #26-76** **APPOINTING JEFF HOROWITZ TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HPAC) TO FILL AN UNEXPIRED VACANT TERM TO 12/31/26**
- #26-77** **AWARDING A CONTRACT FOR THE PURCHASE OF A POLICE VEHICLE THROUGH THE BERGEN COUNTY CO-OP**
- #26-78** **CHANGING THE SCOPE OF THE WEST STREET & BOYLAN TERRACE PROJECT**
- #26-79** **AUTHORIZING REFUND OF STORMWATER ESCROW ACCOUNT 04-280-7110-0100, BOHR – 19 OAK PLACE**
- #26-80** **AUTHORIZATION OF TAX REFUND**
- #26-81** **AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF BODY WORN CAMERAS THROUGH A STATE CONTRACT**
- #26-82** **ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATION OF GARRETT BUCHANAN, RECREATION ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**
- #26-83** **SETTING RECREATION CAMP/VENDOR FEES FOR 2026**
- #26-84** **APPROVING EMERGENCY TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS**
- #26-85** **AUTHORIZATION OF SEWER BILL ADJUSTMENT**
- #26-86** **AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATION RESERVES**
- #26-87** **AWARDING A CONTRACT FOR JANITORIAL SERVICES**
- #26-88** **AUTHORIZING MILLENNIUM STRATEGIES TO FILE AN APPLICATION FOR A GRANT – US CONGRESS—COMMUNITY PROJECT FUNDING FY27**
- #26-89** **ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATION OF CHRIS DIACIK AS CONSTRUCTION OFFICIAL**
- #26-90** **APPROVING ITEMS OF BUSINESS FROM THE MARCH 16, 2026**

WORK MEETING

- #26-91 APPROVING RIDING MEMBERS TO THE BERNARDSVILLE FIRE COMPANY**
- #26-92 ALLOWING SOMERSET HILLS EDUCATION FOUNDATION (SHEF) TO USE THE BEDWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIELD AND BERNARDSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR THEIR 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**
- #26-93 AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN ESCROW AGREEMENT WITH DANBRO PROPERTIES, LLC**
- #26-94 AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD TO UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER ALL OR A PORTION OF THAT CERTAIN PROPERTY IDENTIFIED ON THE TAX MAPS OF THE BOROUGH AS BLOCK 100, LOT 2.01 AND BLOCK 102, LOTS 2 AND 13, CONSTITUTES A NON-CONDEMNATION AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT**
- #26-95 AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN ESCROW AGREEMENT WITH JMF PROPERTY GROUP, LLC**
- #26-96 AUTHORIZING THE BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD TO UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER ALL OR A PORTION OF THAT CERTAIN PROPERTY IDENTIFIED ON THE TAX MAPS OF THE BOROUGH AS BLOCK 66, LOTS 10, 11, 12, 14 AND A PORTION OF LOT 22, CONSTITUTES A NON-CONDEMNATION AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT**
- #26-97 AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN ESCROW AGREEMENT WITH GALLIC REAL ESTATE HOLDING, LLC**
- #26-98 APPOINTING TESS RODGERS AS RECREATION ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**
- #26-99 AUTHORIZING THE SOLICITATION OF BIDS FOR MORRISON AVENUE PUMP STATION UPGRADE**
- #26-100 APPOINTING JEFF HEISS AS CONSTRUCTION OFFICIAL**

Mr. Roos moved to pass Resolutions #26-73 through #26-100. Mr. Zazzarino seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Mr. Roos, Mr. Szrom, Mr. Traynor, Ms.

Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

#26-101 INTRODUCTION OF THE 2026 BUDGET

Mr. Szrom presented an overview of the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget and thanked Ms. Malool, CFO Leslie Roberson, and the Finance Committee for their work during the budget process. He noted that the budget reflects the Borough's financial priorities and continued efforts to balance taxpayer impact with operational and capital needs. He said the proposed budget includes the fifth consecutive year of a flat or reduced municipal tax rate, including one of the most significant municipal rate reductions in recent years. He said this was achieved despite rising costs, including health insurance and utilities, while also maintaining a healthy surplus and funding a capital budget. He highlighted continued investment in capital improvements, including Borough infrastructure, emergency services equipment, the library, the pool, and other community priorities. He said the public hearing on the budget is next step in the statutory budget process, with final adoption required by the end of April.

Resolution No. 26-111 was then introduced, scheduling the public hearing on the 2026 Municipal Budget for April 27, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Szrom moved to pass Resolution #26-101 and schedule a public hearing on the 2026 Municipal Budget at a meeting of the Borough Council on April 27, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved with the following roll call vote: Mr. Roos, Mr. Szrom, Mr. Traynor, Ms. Zamarra, and Mr. Zazzarino voted yes.

REPORTS

Mayor's Update, Mayor Canose said she attended the New Jersey Conference of Mayors Winter Summit, where she moderated a panel on intergovernmental coordination related to permitting and project approvals. She also attended a Somerset County shared services update with county and DCA representatives to review available resources and service opportunities. Mayor Canose said that she and Ms. Malool met with representatives of the Transit Village Initiative regarding data requests and potential grant opportunities, including possible funding for improvements in the train station area. Other events Mayor Canose attended included the Somerset County Business Partnership International Women's Day Breakfast, the Somerset County Commission on the Status of Women Breakfast and Awards Ceremony, a Heartworks fundraiser, a Flex Networks event, a Women in Government panel discussion, and the Shamrock Shuffle. Mayor Canose said she officiated her 31st, 32nd, and 33rd wedding since her last Mayor's update.

Administrator's Report, Ms. Malool said that regarding the train station access project, the borough cannot apply for grant funding until a formal plan is completed. The primary challenge is not the grade of the site, but rather crossing the stream and addressing applicable regulatory requirements, which remains the obstacle. Work on developing a plan is ongoing. She said the county installed flashing beacons at Prospect Street and Childs Road, as well as new stop signs at the Five Corners intersection. While traffic was initially chaotic, police have advised that motorists are adjusting well. She said our Traffic Sergeant suggested to the county and they have agreed to install additional stop signs on both sides of the roadway for improved visibility. The borough is also exploring the possible installation of lights on top of the stop signs to further

enhance safety. Ms. Malool said the Borough's center designation process has delayed by approximately one month due to a continued public hearing. It is expected to proceed later in the spring. She said as a result of the Police Department's state accreditation, the borough will receive a financial benefit of \$11,100 every three years for maintaining that accreditation, amounting to approximately \$3,700 annually. She said New Jersey American Water has completed its work in the downtown area, including repaving and restriping where excavation had occurred, which was a relief for nearby businesses and residents. Regarding the train station building, she advised that NJ Transit construction work is ongoing. NJ Transit has reminded the borough that the building must remain fully closed for public safety while work continues. No completion timeline has yet been provided, though activity is visible at the site. Ms. Malool said that the West Street/Boylan Terrace drainage and roadway improvement project is expected to begin soon, likely in April, following NJDOT approval of a modification and completion of a pre-construction meeting. The contractor is currently ordering materials, and the borough has already begun notifying nearby residents through letters and website updates. She said the project will likely take longer than one month, as it involves drainage work, piping, and paving. She said we heard of some residents' displeasure following utility work by the water company and it was noted that additional information will be gathered.

MONTHLY REPORTS

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

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Correspondence

Board of Adjustment Vacancy, Alt #1 Vascellaro, unexpired to 12/31/27, Mayor Canose mentioned an email that was received indicating the resignation of Rob Vascellaro from the Board of Adjustment. She said vacancies on the Board of Adjustment are council appointments.

Unfinished Business - None

New Business - None

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Fran Daley, Library Director, said while not the Library's initiative, the State of NJ has a "Soluna" app, a mental health resource available to teenagers ages 13 to 18. It was noted that younger teens require a parental waiver. The app provides access to licensed counselors, social workers, and therapists by text, at no cost to users, as it is funded by the State of NJ. In addition to wellness features such as breathing exercises and self-guided reflection tools, the app also includes crisis intervention and escalation resources. Ms. Daley said beginning April 15th,

individuals who live or work in Bernardsville and hold a Bernardsville Library card will be able to make self-service room reservations through the library app for the library's glass meeting pods. Available spaces include one six-person pod and two three-person pods. If demand exceeds capacity, additional reservation options may be added. It was further noted that nonprofit organizations and government users may also reserve the conference room and small meeting room, both of which are equipped with screens and related technology.

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 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 9:45pm.
