

**MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
JUNE 16, 2022 COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a Special session on Thursday, June 16, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council President Kurdyla read the following announcement:

**Notice of Meeting**

**IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT OF NEW JERSEY, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS SPECIAL MEETING WAS PROVIDED ON JUNE 13, 2022, WITH 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 Howard V. Norgalis  
Councilman Filipe Pedroso  
Councilman Timothy Ring  
Council President Allen Kurdyla

Also Present:

Matthew C. Moench, Mayor  
Michael Pappas, Township Administrator  
Wells Winegar, Deputy Township Administrator  
Christopher Corsini, Township Attorney  
Linda J. Doyle, Township Clerk

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

**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 Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting was opened to the public for comment.

***Victor Calliman, 79 Village Circle, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

Stated he and his neighbors are very challenged by the Green Knoll Grille (GKG) which continues to ignore their own rules about playing loud music during the allowed time frames. He questioned why a bar that lies 50-ft from a densely packed residential community is allowed to play music outdoors thereby disturbing the tranquility of their lives. The Police Department has been

engaged multiple times for help and although they are wonderful, they do not know the guidelines imposed upon the GKG for playing music outdoors. It appears no one is enforcing the guidelines and its left to the residents to engage the police and GKG directly in order to get them to adhere to the rules established by Council.

Mr. Calliman discussed the days that GKG has played loud music outside of the prescribed hours and offered he has brought signed petitions from 21-families that are directly affected. Mr. Calliman requested that Council eliminate the ability of the GKG to play live music outdoors because they do not care about their neighbors and do not adhere to the rules.

Council President Kurdyla offered the administration will look into these issues and address accordingly,

***Daria Melynyczuk, 12 Cain Court, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

She lives 45-yards from the patio directly across from the GKG. Moved in in 1995 and in the 27-years she has lived here, the only time she ever had peace and quiet and good quality of life is the 2-years during COVID. She complained about blaring blasting music which booms through the walls and drag racing. She added she now suffers from hearing loss which is possibly from the loudness of the music. Ms. Melynyczuk asked Council to act in support of the residents.

Council offered administration will talk to Police Chief Payne and find ways to address.

***Trini Stelz, 16 Cain Court, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

Complained about the noise emanating from the GKG noting their amplifiers are too loud which disrupts her peace.

***Julie Caliman, 79 Village Circle, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

She complained about the noise emanating from the GKG adding the noise is interfering with her medically by causing heart palpitations. She added the music is so loud that her whole house shakes.

***John Kulak, 13 Ramsey Street, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

Spoke in support of the settlement agreement that the Township Council and Mayor have come to regarding what was referred to as the Center of Excellence. He commended the Mayor on his efforts in creating and negotiating a settlement. He also commended the Mayor and Council for their open communication with the residents.

***Kathy Franco, 766 Weemac Road, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

She offered it is important that as we look into the settlement plan to also consider the background for the residents who may not have studied the entire concept. She added it is important that all information is shared and that the Council is transparent. She questioned how the settlement restricts overdevelopment yet we are using more square footage, building buildings that will generate traffic during rush hour for all the R&D and Life Sciences and will add 24/7 traffic due to the warehouses and loading docks with backup noises and heavy trucks. Ms. Franco asked that Council consider the impact this settlement will have on Bridgewater.

***Trini Stelz, 16 Cain Court, Bridgewater, NJ 08807***

Stated that when a popular band is playing, the GKG is often overcrowded and as such are violating the life safety code by the number of people in the building.

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

**Introduction  
of  
Ordinances**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER AMENDING SECTION 126-321.6 OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER'S ORDINANCES, ENTITLED "R-SEED REDEVELOPMENT SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT (R-SEED) DISTRICT ZONE," TO ESTABLISH AN ALTERNATIVE SET OF PERMITTED PRINCIPAL USES, DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND RELATED PROVISIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AREA DESIGNATED ON LOTS 17,18 AND 19 IN BLOCK 483 ON THE TOWNSHIP'S TAX MAP, FRONTING ON ROUTE 206 WITH THE NEAREST ROADS TO THE NORTH (NOT ADJACENT) CEDARBROOK ROAD AND OLD FARM ROAD AND TO THE SOUTH (NOT ADJACENT) MOUNTAIN VIEW AVENUE AND BYRD AVENUE AS REFLECTED IN NEW SECTION 126-321.7, ENTITLED "ALTERNATIVE R- SEED DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS"**

Mayor Moench offered this agreement eliminates apartments and the impact that would have on our school district and taxes. It also eliminates the supermarket which would have had a great impact on traffic. This agreement also reduces the amount of retail which will have significant impact on the quality of life. On the weekends, estimates suggest the traffic will drop 80% from what was proposed and, on the weekdays, depending on final use, it will drop to about 40% from what was proposed. This settlement will have significant increase in quality of life on traffic, economy and less impact on our neighborhoods. Mayor Moench offered this agreement is not perfect but is vastly improved from what was originally proposed. The approvals remain in place until the process is finalized. Furthermore, the Planning Board will ultimately also have to review and approve the Site Plan.

Councilman Norgalis stated that although not a perfect plan, it is much better from what was originally proposed.

Councilman Pedroso read the following statement:

The story of the proposed “monstrosity” overdevelopment of the Center of Excellence for me started back sometime around 2014. I was invited by then Mayor Hayes to attend a presentation by the property owner on the site to show me what they envisioned as the future development proposal of the Center of Excellence. After being presented with what I thought was blatant overdevelopment and a concept that included an urban-like apartment complex consisting of hundreds and hundreds of apartments, I turned to the Mayor and asked him, “Do you support this?” His “yes” response was surprising, but I was quick to point out that I would never support building this apartment complex in Bridgewater and had serious reservations at the massiveness of what was proposed.

Time passed, and eventually this matter came before the Council and the Planning Board for site zoning changes in 2016. I clearly saw that Mayor Hayes and the applicant were pushing through the largest redevelopment of Bridgewater since the Mall without encouraging any public feedback or involvement. The Planning Board agenda headers were often listed without much information for anyone to grasp the level of proposed development, and the Planning Board was deciding to recommend this massive rezoning ordinance change without much inquiry or testimony. Councilman Norgalis and I actually attending the Planning Board meetings, and we were amazed at how they were basically rubber stamping it for the Mayor.

What was surprising to me was that all this was happening without hardly any public members in attendance, except one. I noticed one Bridgewater resident, Laura Whalen, who would come to the Council meetings and speak out against the proposed redevelopment. But besides Ms. Whalen, this Council room was practically empty. I realized that Mayor Hayes had strategically planned it that way, with vague agenda listings, in the hopes that this would pass without public knowledge. But that wasn’t acceptable to me.

I initially reached out to Andy Leven, at the time a Bridgewater resident, who often appeared at zoning board and Council meetings to speak out against certain overdevelopment projects. At the time, Mr. Leven was actively involved with Lt. Col. Bob Vaucher’s Foothill Civic Association, and I thought he may be helpful, to use Bob’s words, in “making some noise”. I also reached out to Bob and other community voices.

On November 23, 2015, I created the “Preserve Bridgewater” Facebook group and page to help raise awareness. And on the day of the ordinance passing, February 18, 2016, Lt. Col. Vaucher and Mr. Leven did come to the Council meeting and spoke out against the redevelopment ordinance, and so did Ms. Whalen, as well as a handful of others.

Needless to say, a Facebook group and page criticizing a sitting Mayor and an influential developer didn’t sit well with my local and county Party bosses, and I was threatened to back away. But I believed in my heart that if Bridgewater residents knew about this proposed monstrosity overdevelopment, most would be outraged and we could still save the character of Bridgewater.

Without a doubt, no single project ever threatened the quality of life and the character of what is Bridgewater more than the then-proposed Center of Excellence. And finding a way to stop this project quickly became one of my priorities.

Seeing Laura Whalen at the Council meetings, watching her bravely speak out against the project, and knowing that she shared a common determination to stop this from happening, I approached Ms. Whalen and we had a conversation. I explained to her that I had started a Preserve Bridgewater page on Facebook, and asked her if she would help me manage the page, educate the Bridgewater residents about what was happening, and be the public face of Preserve Bridgewater.

I’m grateful that she accepted. She quickly took on the lead, and although it was lonely and difficult at first, the movement caught on. Preserve Bridgewater grew into a core management circle, with hundreds of active participants. But Laura Whalen was there first. And without her involvement and leadership, I don’t think we’d be here today voting on a proposed settlement and mitigated redevelopment ordinance for this site. It took some time for the movement to grow, as it often does, and Ms. Whalen and I would talk; she was frustrated at how slowly the group was growing at first, but I told her to keep going, people will come once they fully realize the impact this will have. Thankfully, she did. Ms. Whalen kept up the posts and delivering the message, and the group grew.

Later on, Preserve Bridgewater was fortunate to gain another zealous member, Andy Fresco, owner of East Coast Media. Mr. Fresco used his company to print flyers for free, and through his generous contributions, Preserve Bridgewater was able to distribute information to the residents.

During the site plan Planning Board meetings that followed in the fall of 2019, this room was overfilled with so many people that the conference room next

door had to be used. Once people realized what Mayor Hayes' was doing, and the true monstrosity of the project, they came. The Preserve Bridgewater movement grew under Ms. Whalen's leadership into hundreds of active and concerned citizens who simply cared about their township and their community.

In the end, the story of the Center of Excellence is about a community that came together and fought for the character of their town. It is a story of how people can truly make an impact.

The Preserve Bridgewater movement, started by me and led by Ms. Whalen, dominoed into a powerful force that changed the course of Bridgewater's history. As a result of the resistance to the Center of Excellence directed by Preserve Bridgewater, the incumbent Mayor and his supportive Councilwoman were challenged in the primary and lost. Two new council members, both Councilman Kirsh and Councilman Ring, are sitting here today because in some part due to the Preserve Bridgewater movement. And, the Mayor too; we were fortunate to get a new mayor, Mayor Matthew Moench, who has been a champion at keeping his promise to fight the then-proposed monstrosity overdevelopment project. I know Mayor Moench took on the task of renegotiating this redevelopment ordinance as an important priority, and we should acknowledge his steadfast determination, keeping his word to the residents, and delivering a successful outcome.

And so today we are here, at this point, voting to approve a new redevelopment ordinance as a result of a settlement with the property owners. It's been a long journey since 2014, but Ms. Whalen and the Preserve Bridgewater members deserve much of the credit for getting us here.

The take away from this story is that people can have real meaningful impact in their community. Don't be discouraged by the challenge, the obstacles, or the naysayers in your way. If you believe that the government is leading your community in the wrong path, speak up, start a movement, and although it may be hard at first, don't give up. Ms. Whalen and the Preserve Bridgewater movement is proof that you can do it too.

Certainly, there are others that played some role in getting us here, and deserve our gratitude, such as other politicians, lawyers and staff. And while they all certainly deserve thanks for their service and part as Mayor Moench already highlighted, I want to make sure history does not overlook the hometown heroes who volunteered their time to start and participate in a movement that stopped the overdevelopment monstrosity.

If the Center of Excellence had been built into an overdeveloped town center with 400 apartments in an area surrounded by single-family homes, it wouldn't be long before the surrounding area, and Bridgewater's character, would deteriorate into a denser community. It would have a lasting destructive effect that would forever change the township's quality of life, the character of our communities, and the reasons why we all love living in Bridgewater.

Thank you, Laura Whalen, for stepping up, for believing in me, and for leading the Preserve Bridgewater movement. And thank you to the hundreds of Preserve Bridgewater members who talked to your neighbors, distributed flyers, made social media posts, packed Planning Board meetings, and worked to change our elected officials. You did it! Every little action together culminated in the results we have today.

In the end, the Center of Excellence became representative of everything that makes our community excellent: In its center are residents who care deeply about Bridgewater Township and will stand up to protect its quality of life and preserve our Bridgewater. The Bridgewater residents truly are the center of excellence of our community.

Councilman Kirsh offered the following statement:

Bridgewater is a beautiful, well planned community. That's not by accident, it's due to the actions of the people of Bridgewater. Whether in the form of comments at public meetings, discussions by the land-use board members, or resolutions from my colleagues on the dais, Bridgewater's team comes together and gets the tough work done - and that's what we've accomplished with this new agreement on Center of Excellence.

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

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

**[THE ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED.](#)**

A copy of resolution [#22-06-16-171](#) is appended to the official minutes

Linda J. Doyle, 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 7<sup>th</sup> day July 2022, 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; and

**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.

**FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Township Clerk forward this ordinance to the Bridgewater Township Planning Board for their meeting to be held June 28, 2022, to review and prepare a recommendation.

**Resolutions**

**AUTHORIZING SETTLEMENT OF LITIGATION AMONGST AR BRIDGEWATER II LLC (ADVANCE), THE PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER AND THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER**

Mayor Moench stated this resolution goes hand in hand with the previously approved Ordinance.

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

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

**THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.**

A copy of resolution [#22-06-16-172](#) is 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 public safety/personnel and contract negotiations.

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 Ring, seconded by Councilman Norgalis, Council convened in closed session at approximately 8:30 p.m.

A copy of resolution [#22-06-16-173](#) is appended to the official minutes.

On the motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting reconvened to open session at approximately 10:10 p.m. and adjourned immediately thereafter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda J. Doyle, RMC  
Municipal Clerk

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Allen Kurdyla  
Council President