

**MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
OCTOBER 5, 2023 COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council President Kirsh 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 JANUARY 10 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. A SUBSEQUENT NOTICE WITH REVISED LIVESTREAM INFORMATION WAS PROVIDED ON AUGUST 15, 2023.

On call of the roll, the following Council members were present:

Councilman Allen Kurdyla
Councilman Howard V. Norgalis
Councilman Filipe Pedroso
Councilman Timothy Ring
Council President Michael Kirsh

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

Councilman Norgalis led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

AUGUST 9, 2023 & AUGUST 17, 2023- REGULAR SESSION

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the August 9, 2023, and August 17, 2023, regular session minutes were moved for approval and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

AUGUST 17, 2023 - CLOSED SESSIONS

The August 17, 2023, closed session minutes were passed around for Council approval & signature.

Council Reports

Councilman Kurdyla

- Attended the playground improvement event held by the Ingredion

Corporation at Chimney Rock Park this past Monday. Ingridion partnered with Bridgewater Township to enhance and transform the Chimney Rock Playground. Councilman Kurdyla thanked Jennifer Loughran from the Park Board for her work and efforts in coordinating all involved.

- Councilman Kurdyla echoed Councilman Norgalis' comments regarding Scarlett Doyle's retirement noting she has been a tremendous asset to Bridgewater.
- Councilman Kurdyla announced the Elections will soon be forthcoming and cautioned residents to be vigilant about misleading information on newspapers and social media.

Councilman Norgalis:

- Attended the Bridgewater Raritan Municipal Alliance meeting where the key speakers were representatives of EmPower Somerset, a State Health Department, who are a grant-funded organization whose stated objective is preventing drug overdose. Sadly, the program dealt with the Overdose Fatality Review Team which attempts to understand the underlying causes of drug fatalities in Somerset County. They have been tracking approximately 50 suspected county cases identified in their 2022 report. The team's recommendation is to increase community awareness about overdose symptoms and intervention, such as the use of Maloxone, which is also known as NARCAN.
- Councilman Norgalis stated that Township Planner Scarlett Doyle has announced her retirement at the end of this year. He has known Scarlett for over 25 years and will miss her wise counsel. As a former Bridgewater resident, Scarlett has an extensive understanding of the needs of our community.
- Election Day is approaching. Councilman Norgalis cautioned that social media and printed newspaper articles have become popular for purposefully misleading statements. He expressed that the reporting, in regards to the township bond rating being downgraded, is simply not true.

Councilman Pedroso:

- Welcomed everyone to the Council meeting. Councilman Pedroso acknowledged the Animal Shelter representatives noting the shelter is a great asset to our community.

Councilman Ring:

- Joined Councilman Kurdyla and Mayor Moench for the Chimney Rock park

playground improvement event. Councilman Ring extended his sincere appreciation to all involved, including the Public Works and Recreation Departments.

- Attended the bulky trash drop-off days and stated he enjoyed speaking with the residents.
- Attended a meeting at the request of “Friends of Bridgewater History” to discuss some potential opportunities that he has since passed along to the Administration.
- Spent time in the Morton Street area addressing a resident concern regarding road work in that location. Councilman Ring thanked Engineer Bill Burr and Scott Maraldo, Office of Constituent Relations for addressing this matter.

Council President Kirsh

- Attended Bulky Trash Drop-Off days on September 3rd and September 30th. Despite the bad weather on September 23rd, it was a well-attended event with the highest volume of cars.
- On October 1st, Council President Kirsh had the privilege of attending the Bridgewater Chinese American Association’s “Mid-Autumn Moon Festival” event.
- Visited the Animal Shelter to preview what they will present later in the meeting.
- Council President Kirsh stated he will be attending a session regarding the rise of antisemitism in the schools on October 11th.
- Bridgewater Township and Bridgewater United Soccer Club will be joining together for an annual food drive that benefits food banks in Somerset County.
- Council President Kirsh stated he had the privilege of working with Scarlett Doyle on both the Zoning Board and Planning Board for 10 years. He added the contributions she made to the township cannot be measured, noting she is substantially responsible for what the township looks like today.

Mayor’s Reports

Mayor Matthew C. Moench

- Mayor Moench advised those impacted by the water main issues today that the American Water Company has assured that everyone who was affected

will have water restored by 8pm today.

- D&R Greenway will soon make the \$154,000 available which will help offset the purchase of the Stempien property. Mayor Moench stated they have been a great partner to the Township in helping locate funds to aide in the cost of saving properties, which total 30 acres. The goal is to open up trails in the near future and continue to make additional progress.
- Congratulated the Somerset Patriots on their baseball season.
- Thanked Ingredion for providing parks equipment for children who do not have access as other children do.
- Attended the tying of ribbons around the Municipal Building for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Ribbons will be put up around town and throughout the community.
- Attended the Al-Falah car show to help raise money for Al-Falah and to support their philanthropic endeavors.
- Attended the robotics competition at the mall. The Bridgewater-Raritan High School Robotics Team, known as Team 303, was among the winners. Mayor Moench offered his congratulations to all who participated.

Michael Pappas, Township Administrator

- Administrator Pappas stated that one of the annual requirements for municipalities in New Jersey is to have a brief report regarding the best practices inventory that the Department of Community Affairs has for each municipality. Bridgewater has exceeded those requirements. The township has addressed a couple of items this past year, such as the implementation of two-factor authentication on township email and the township's enrollment in the NJ Cyber Security and Communication Integration Program.

Presentation CAPITAL ROADS PROGRESS / USDA UPDATES

Thomas Genova, Director of Municipal Services made presentation as follows:

We are in year 3 of the 5-year Capital Road Project. Of the approximate 667 Township Roads, 200 have been completed since 2020. 30% of the Township Roads have been repaved in the last 4 calendar years. This is an exceptional accomplishment that the Administration is extremely proud of. A project of this size requires countless hours of planning, organizing, budgeting, coordinating and directing. The feedback we have received from residents has been

overwhelmingly positive because the conditions of Township Roads are a top priority of residents.

Mr. Genova thanked Bill Burr, Township Engineer, for leading this project. He also thanked Tony Gallo, Assistant Township Engineer for managing all aspects of the subcontractors and consultants from design through completion. Mr. Genova further acknowledged Maria Schaumberg, Project Manager for Municipal Services noting she prepares all of the required resolutions and paperwork and maintains the project files.

After the 5-Year Road Project is completed, a continuation of the pavement Management System will continue. This includes annual pavement surface evaluation and Pavement Preservation. Mr. Genova offered a well-managed Pavement Maintenance Program that provides for proper treatments at proper intervals should ensure that pavement life is maximized with the net cost of the program minimized.

William Burr, Township Engineer made presentation as follows:

In 2020, the Township attorney's office was consulted to address municipal sidewalk responsibility and liability. It was concluded that the best practice would be to identify problem areas and develop a data base to prioritize the sidewalks in most need of repair, then proceed with repairs. To do so, they created the Sidewalk Maintenance Program.

Like the Capital Road Project, the Sidewalk Maintenance Program evaluates the condition of sidewalks and where there are trip hazards. The contractor, Always Safe Sidewalks, utilizes saw-cutting technology to repair trip hazards. This complies with ADA slope requirements and provides an enormous savings over total replacement.

If the repairs cannot be made due to the severity of the problem, those slabs are replaced under a separate contract.

Following the presentation, Mr. Genova and Mr. Burr fielded questions from the governing body.

Proclamation DESIGNATING OCTOBER AS "ADOPT A SHELTER DOG MONTH"

Matthew C. Moench, Mayor read the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, the Bridgewater Town Council and Mayor recognize the vital role that shelter dogs play in our community, offering companionship, love, and a second chance to those in need; and

WHEREAS, the tireless efforts of local animal shelters, especially the Somerset County Regional Animal Shelter, in caring for and finding forever homes for countless dogs, enriches our community in the process; and

WHEREAS, it is important to promote responsible pet ownership and encourage the adoption of shelter dogs to provide them with loving homes; and

WHEREAS, raising awareness about the benefits of adopting shelter dogs can foster a more compassionate and caring community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Matthew C. Moench and Bridgewater Township Council do hereby proclaim the month of October as **ADOPT A SHELTER DOG MONTH** in Bridgewater, New Jersey.

During this month, we urge our fellow residents to consider the option of adopting a shelter dog as they bring joy, companionship, and unconditional love into our lives. We further encourage all citizens to support and visit the Somerset County Regional Animal Shelter and meet the dedicated employees and volunteers that make the Shelter so special.

We commend the Somerset County Regional Animal Shelter for their unwavering dedication to dog welfare and their tireless efforts to find loving homes for all the animals under their care.

2023 FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Councilman Allen Kurdyla read the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, fire is a serious public safety concern both locally and nationally, and homes are the locations where people are at greatest risk from fire; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Bridgewater is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all those living in and visiting our community; and

WHEREAS, home fires killed more than 2,800 people in the United States in 2021, according to the National Fire Protection Association, and fire departments in the United States responded to 338,000 home fires; and

WHEREAS, the six volunteer fire companies serving Bridgewater Township - Bradley Gardens Fire Department, Country Hills Volunteer Fire Company, Finderne Engine Company, Green Knoll Volunteer Fire Company, Martinsville Fire Company, and North Branch Volunteer Fire Company - are dedicated and selfless organizations composed of brave individuals who work tirelessly to protect our community from the devastating effects of fire; and

WHEREAS, these volunteer fire companies, along with our Fire Marshall's office, provide crucial firefighting and emergency response services, engage in educational outreach, and continuously strive to improve the safety of our residents through their commitment and professionalism; and

WHEREAS, Bridgewater's residents are responsive to public education measures and can take personal steps to increase their safety from fire, especially in their homes; and

WHEREAS, residents who have planned and practiced a home fire escape plan are more prepared and will therefore be more likely to survive a fire; and

WHEREAS, working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires almost in half;

THEREFORE, I Matthew C. Moench, Mayor of Bridgewater, along with the Bridgewater Town Council, do hereby proclaim October 8-14, 2023, as Fire Prevention Week, and I urge all the people of Bridgewater to take this opportunity to learn more about fire safety, encourage and practice fire prevention practices, and express our gratitude to our Bridgewater volunteer firefighters for their outstanding service.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Councilman Howard Norgalis read the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, there will be over 297,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer in the U.S. in 2023; and

WHEREAS, over 40,000 Americans are likely to pass away due to breast cancer this year; and

WHEREAS, though these figures are tragic, all Americans rejoice that from 1989 to 2020, the breast cancer mortality rate decreased by over 40%; and

WHEREAS, this marked decrease is far more than just a statistic, for it represents over 400,000 women who have survived the disease who otherwise may not have; and

WHEREAS, the saving of those lives is directly attributable to advances in research, treatment, awareness and support that is spearheaded by organizations like Dance for the Cure; and

WHEREAS, Dance for the Cure is a 100% volunteer organization supporting breast cancer patients in Somerset, Hunterdon and Middlesex counties; and

WHEREAS, Dance for the Cure has so far gifted over \$970,000 in donations to individuals in these counties to aid them in their fight against breast cancer;

WHEREAS, Bridgewater resident Brooke Herbst and the Bridgewater Raritan High School Cheer Team, in coordination with Dance for the Cure's Ribbons of Hope initiative, hung pink bows at the Bridgewater Municipal Complex; and

WHEREAS, these pink ribbons are a symbol of hope for those fighting breast cancer now, a sign of support from all those who stand by them, a commemoration of those we have lost, and a mark of triumph for those women who have overcome this terrible disease; and

NOW THEREFORE I, Matthew C. Moench, Mayor of Bridgewater Township do hereby proclaim the month of October as **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month** And urge all the citizens of the Township to recognize Dance for the Cure and other critical programs like it throughout the nation, and the laudable efforts of Ms. Herbst and the Bridgewater Raritan High School Cheer Team have taken to raise awareness and support for that confronting breast cancer in our community and all over the world.

**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 Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the meeting was opened to the public for comment.

Kathy Healey, 514 Jackson Avenue - Manville, NJ 08835

Ms. Healey stated she is the president of Somerset Regional Animal Shelter and expressed her gratitude to Council for the continued support of the shelter. She acknowledged the importance of the shelter to the community. Due to a great manager and staff, along with a great group of volunteers, the shelter has been thriving; last year, they adopted over 1000 animals. Ms. Healey encouraged everyone to pay the shelter a visit.

Cathy Franco, 766 Weemac Road - Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Ms. Franco was appreciative of the road improvements on Weemac Road noting it is the first time in 30 years that water has not run down her driveway. She asked that the township address issues on Hillcrest Road. Ms. Franco further expressed concerns with traffic matters involving the Mayor and the Planning Board.

Public
Hearing &
Final Action
Ordinances

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

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER, CHAPTER 206 “VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC,” TO ADD THE PARK AND RIDE FACILITY (LOT 1, BLOCK 173) LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF MILLTOWN ROAD AND ROUTE 22 EAST TO THE LIST OF RESTRICTED PARKING AREAS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER

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

No one wished to be heard.

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

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

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

ORDINANCE [#23-18](#) WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-265](#) is appended to the official minutes

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 26 ENTITLED “PERSONNEL POLICIES”, ARTICLE 32, SICK LEAVE, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER

Township Administrator Pappas explained that the state legislature, several years ago, enacted a statute that altered and limited the amount of payouts for municipal, county, and state employees for compensation regarding accumulated sick time. When that legislation was enacted, Bridgewater Township began to implement the statutory changes. The township was notified, along with dozens of municipalities that the change had not been codified in municipal ordinances. This was reviewed and confirmed, and the state was notified through the labor attorney that this was the case and that no improper payments had been made.

Christine Madrid, Director of Human Resources, addressed the council and assured them that the township has been in full compliance with the laws since they were enacted.

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting was opened to the public.

Cathy Franco, 766 Weemac Road - Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Ms. Franco stated she was happy to see that the Council is taking steps to codify the policy to assure compliance. She asked that in the future, when a problem arises, it be corrected promptly.

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

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

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

ORDINANCE [#23-13](#) WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-266](#) is appended to the official minutes

Resolutions

AWARD OF CONTRACT TO ALWAYS SAFE SIDEWALKS, 821 N. BETHLEHEM PIKE, SPRINGHOUSE, PA 19477, FOR 2023 SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TO BERTRAN DRIVE, COLMART WAY, FLANDERS WAY, FREEMAN LANE, O'KEEFE ROAD, SALLY COURT, SHAFFER ROAD, AND TERRACE LANE, IN THE SUM OF \$50,258.00, FUNDED THROUGH THE 2023 CAPITAL FUND

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-267](#) is appended to the official minutes

AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1/FINAL CHANGE ORDER DECREASING THE CONTRACT PRICE FROM \$815,665.48 TO \$758,797.33 A DECREASE OF 6.97% OR \$56,868.15, AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROJECT, RELEASE OF THE PERFORMANCE BOND, ACCEPTANCE OF THE MAINTENANCE BOND, AND FINAL PAYMENT TO CCM CONTRACTING, INC. (336 ROUTE 22 WEST, GREEN BROOK, NJ 08812) FOR THE 2021-4 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, ENTIRE LENGTHS OF CAMBRIDGE LANE, MARK DRIVE, MUIRFIELD LANE, AND TOK PLACE, FUNDED THROUGH THE 2021 CAPITAL ROAD FUND

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-268](#) is appended to the official minutes

AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER #1/FINAL CHANGE ORDER INCREASING THE CONTRACT PRICE FROM \$43,700.00 TO \$50,200.00, AN INCREASE OF 14.87% OR \$6,500.00, AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROJECT, AND FINAL PAYMENT TO FRANK GALBRAITH & SON EXCAVATION AND DEMOLITION LLC. (831 RARITAN ROAD, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076) FOR THE STEELE GAP ROAD DEMOLITION PROJECT, FUNDED THROUGH THE OPEN SPACE TRUST

Thomas Genova, Director of Municipal Services explained that the project went very smoothly, however, during excavation of the basement floor, a secondary well was found. An increase in change order was necessary in order to properly close the well through the NJDEP. The increase requested is the exact cost to cover the closing of the secondary well.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-269](#) is appended to the official minutes

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF FIRE PERMIT FEE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$100.00 FOR THE BRIDGEWATER SENIORS COUNCIL, A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, IN CONNECTION WITH A HINDU NEW YEAR CELEBRATION SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2023 FROM 1 PM TO 10 PM AT THE BRIDGEWATER/RARITAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#23-10-05-270](#) is appended to the official minutes

Adjournment

On the motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Deputy Township Clerk

Michael Kirsh
Council President