

**MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
APRIL 18, 2024 - COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council President Ring 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 DECEMBER 21, 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

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

Councilman Michael Kirsh (absent)
Councilman Allen Kurdyla
Councilman Howard V. Norgalis
Councilman Filipe Pedroso (arrived at 7:35pm)
Council President Timothy Ring

Also Present: Michael Pappas, Township Administrator
Christopher Corsini, Township Attorney
Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk

Councilman Norgalis led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

APRIL 4, 2024 - REGULAR SESSION

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the April 4, 2024, regular session minutes were moved for approval and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

APRIL 4, 2024 – CLOSED SESSIONS

The April 4, 2024, closed session minutes were passed around for Council approval & signature.

Council Reports

Councilman Kurdyla:

- Attended the Opening Day for Bridgewater Baseball, Inc. last Saturday.

- Over the past two weeks, Councilman Kurdyla attended the initial meeting for this year’s Community Block Grant. He will be reviewing multiple projects in order to make a recommendation in the coming weeks.

Councilman Norgalis (*verbatim*):

- April is Earth Month when we should all consider what we can do in our personal lives to improve our environment. Earth Day is an annual event on April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental protection. First held on April 22, 1970, it now includes a wide range of events coordinated globally by Earthday.org. Earth Day was the brainchild of Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin.
- I will bet, if you were in NJ on April 5 at 10:23am, you will recall exactly where you were when the 4.8 Earthquake shook our state. The epicenter was in nearby Tewksbury. Sadly, one of the victims of the quake at my home was one of four plates from my 1975 Bridgewater Heritage Plate Collection. Its 6-foot fall from a kitchen shelf did not end well for the plate.
- The Patriot Stadium opening day for baseball, also on April 5th, featured a strong aftershock minutes before game time. It was a very memorable day.
- April is Child Abuse month as the proclamation from our last meeting supported the many organizations that work on this endeavor. Among them is the Bridgewater Woman's Club which installed pinwheels in the municipal courtyard to display continued support for this important cause.
- Two weeks ago, I reported that the lighting of the Crescent Moon display at the municipal building in support of the Muslim community would take place on Tuesday April 9, the day before the end of Ramadan. Shipping issues have again delayed the arrival of the display, so the event is postponed until later in the year. The good news is the display has arrived in Bridgewater.
- The Master Plan presentation originally set for April 11 has been moved to May 22nd.
- The 2024 solar eclipse occurred on Monday, April 8, 2024. Our state was not totally in the dark, but it was still quite a spectacle if you had your special glasses. The next total solar eclipse in NJ will be in 2079 so mark your calendar and save your glasses.
- After our last Council meeting, I received several calls from residents concerned that based upon the potential redevelopment of the site on Chimney Rock Rd., which includes the yard waste site, we would lose that facility. Let me be very clear, we will continue to have a yard waste site available to township residents somewhere on that property.

Councilman Pedroso:

- Councilman Pedroso thanked everyone for being in attendance.

Council President Ring:

- Due to a family conflict, Councilman Kirsh will not be at tonight's meeting.
- This past Saturday, Council President Ring attended the Opening Day of Bridgewater Baseball and Softball at Prince Rodgers where he threw out the first pitch.
- He will be attending the Bradley Gardens Baseball Opening Day this Saturday.
- This Saturday, the township is hosting an Earth Day event, "Can You Dig It", at Chimney Rock Park from 2pm – 4pm. This is a rain or shine event, and all are welcome.
- Due to quorum concerns, the May 18, 2024, Council Meeting has been rescheduled for May 23, 2024.

Mayor's Reports

Michael Pappas, Township Administrator reported on behalf of Mayor Moench.

Township Administrator Pappas stated that he will reserve his comments for the presentation portion of the meeting.

Swearing In

Officer Michael Thomsen
Chief Mitzak (*verbatim*)

Good evening, everyone, I would like to welcome everyone to the swearing-in of Officer Michael Thomsen. I would like to thank Mayor Matthew Moench, along with Council Members, Council President Tim Ring, Council Vice President, Howard Norgalis, Councilman Michael Kirsh, Councilman Allen Kurdyla and Councilman Filipe Pedroso for allowing the police department to swear in a new officer tonight. The mayor and council are strong supporters of the police department.

I am thrilled to announce the hiring of a highly skilled and experienced 16-year veteran police officer. As a long serving officer, you bring with you a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and dedication to upholding the highest standards of public safety. In your new role, you will play a pivotal part in maintaining law and order within the Bridgewater Community, ensuring the safety and security of our residents. Your extensive experience in law enforcement will be invaluable in leading and mentoring junior officers, providing guidance and support in complex situations. Additionally, your exceptional communication and problem-solving skills will aid in building strong relationships within the community, by fostering trust and cooperation.

A background about Officer Thomsen: He resides in Great Meadows, NJ, where he currently resides with his wife and four children. As stated earlier, Officer Thomsen has 16 years of police experience, where he worked with the Lebanon Township

Police Department. Officer Thomsen graduated from Somerset County Police Academy in 2007. Prior to this Officer Thomsen earned his Associate of Arts Degree in CJ from Raritan Valley Community College and his bachelor's degree in Sociology, with a minor in CJ from Fairleigh Dickerson University. Officer Thomsen enjoys spending time with his family, riding motorcycles, fixing cars, hunting, and fishing. He is genuine outdoorsman. While conducting his background we learned from numerous contacts that Officer Thomsen is a team player and is always willing to lend a helping hand.

Officer Thomsen, I thank you for becoming part of the Bridgewater PD family. Your goals while working here are to do your best every day for the Bridgewater Community and your fellow officers and to go home to your loved ones every night.

Officer Michael Thomsen was sworn in by Council President Kirsh.

Presentation PSE&G

Township Administrator Pappas stated the administration has been working closely with PSE&G to ensure efficient gas main replacement throughout the township while minimizing disruption to the ongoing road improvement project.

The following representatives were present from PSE&G:

- Mike Coyle, Public affairs manager with PSE&G
- Mike Gallagher, Manager Gas Construction, Mid Central
- Andrea Almeida, Project Manager
- Jason Postorino, Outreach Supervisor
- Jeannemarie Ryder, Outreach Specialist

Communication and Coordination:

Regular communication between Township Administrator Pappas, Deputy Administrator Wells Winegar, and Township Engineer William Burr and PSE&G ensured coordinated work schedules, preventing freshly paved roads from being dug up for gas main replacement.

Biweekly meetings facilitated communication between PSE&G, various township departments (Administration, Public Relations, Engineering, Police, and Schools), and the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District to address traffic control and detour needs.

PSE&G Gas System Modernization Program:

Project Manager Andrea Almeida presented the program's benefits:

- Reduced leaks and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Cost savings for customers (through a higher-pressure system allowing for efficient appliances).
- Enhanced safety and reliability.

- Improved meter placement for reduced risks and better emergency access.

Ms. Almeida emphasized PSE&G's commitment to minimizing resident impact through a comprehensive communication strategy:

- Biweekly meetings with township and school officials.
- Daily meetings with police for optimized detours.
- Daily text chains for work location updates.
- Door hangers, mailed notices, and weekly emails with project details.
- Biweekly Zoom meetings.
- In-person meetings upon request.
- Weekly website updates.

Following the presentation, PSE&G representatives addressed questions from the governing body.

TURF FIELDS

Township Engineer William Burr discussed proposed plans to replace two turf fields nearing the end of their lifespan (approximately 10 years).

Fields and Usage:

- One field resides on the municipal complex, solely maintained by the township.
- The other, known as the "1000 turf field," sits behind Bridgewater High School. A lease agreement dictates shared use and maintenance costs (50/50) between the township and school district.
- Both fields experience heavy use. G-MAX testing (safety evaluation) by the school district on the 1000 turf field indicated a decline in safety. Engineer Burr explained there is a need to replace both fields.

Replacement Plan:

- The project will take 4-5 weeks, ideally scheduled for July/August to minimize disruption.
- The township will fully fund the municipal complex field replacement.
- Costs for the 1000 turf field will be split 50/50 with the school district.
- Awarding the contract at the next meeting will ensure construction commences in the summer months.

Township Administrator Pappas offered to meet with the Council individually to address any concerns they may have.

UPDATES TO CHAPTER 40 “SUBSTANCES, HAZARDOUS”

Sergeant James Edwards, OEM coordinator, highlighted a situation from October 2021. The Police Department and Green Knoll Fire Department responded to a fuel leak on Route 202/206, incurring \$2,315 in personnel and equipment costs. Despite

repeated requests, the responsible party refused to reimburse the township.

Sergeant Edwards explained that the current ordinance lacks a mechanism for recovering such costs from the responsible party. To address this gap, a proposed ordinance amendment has been drafted. This amendment will allow the township to recover damages and an administrative fee in cases where the responsible party fails to pay. The collected funds would be directed to supporting future emergency preparedness efforts.

Council President Ring confirmed no action is anticipated tonight; the proposed ordinance will be presented for introduction at the next council meeting.

**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 Pedroso, the meeting was opened to the public for comment.

No one wished to speak.

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

Resolutions

AWARD OF CONTRACT TO CRS LLC, 107 BLUEBIRD DRIVE 1D, HILLSBOROUGH, NJ 08844 IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$20,400.00 TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD OF MAY 1, 2024 – JULY 31, 2024; FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT AMOUNT OF \$40,800.00 TO BE FUNDED FROM THE IT DIVISION - PROFESSIONAL SERVICES ACCOUNT

Councilman Norgalis stated that when he had trouble accessing his township email, he was contacted within thirty minutes and the issue was resolved.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-04-18-122](#) is appended to the official minutes.

AWARD OF CONTRACT TO DESANTIS CONSTRUCTION, INC. (491 ELIZABETH AVENUE, PO BOX 6030, SOMERSET, NJ 08875) FOR ROLLING HILLS ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT WHICH INCLUDES THE ENTIRE LENGTHS OF ROLLING HILLS ROAD, BRANDYWINE ROAD, HILL LANE AND VICKI DRIVE, IN THE SUM OF \$1,290,578.73, FUNDED THROUGH THE 2024 CAPITAL ROAD IMPROVEMENT BOND AND NJDOT MUNICIPAL AID GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$442,500.00

The project which will consist of improvements to the entire lengths of Rolling Hills Road, Brandywine Road, Hill Lane, and Vicki Drive, including but not limited to milling and overlay of the pavement with full-depth reconstruction in certain areas, storm sewer upgrades, new accessible ramps, new curbing and sidewalk, and driveway repairs. The total project length is approximately 6,310 linear feet. All disturbed areas will be restored to their original condition.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-04-18-123](#) is appended to the official minutes.

SUPPORTING NJ STATE LEGISLATURE BILL A-3806 AND S-2819 ESTABLISHING REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION OF PRETRIAL DETENTION AND INCREASING PENALTIES FOR MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT OFFENSES; AUTHORIZING HOME DETENTION FOR MINORS ADJUDICATED DELINQUENT FOR MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT OFFENSES; ESTABLISHING GRANTS FOR UNDERAGE AUTO-THEFT RISK DETERRENCE PILOT PROGRAM IN JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION

Township Administrator Pappas stated that Mayor Moench and Chief Mitzak have been part of a working group of Mayors and Police Chiefs from the County. Multiple municipalities have adopted similar resolutions to address motor vehicle theft offenses.

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

Councilman Kirsh	Absent
Councilman Kurdyla	Aye
Councilman Norgalis	Aye

Councilman Pedroso Aye
Council President Ring Aye

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-04-18-124](#) 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 litigation 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 Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Norgalis, Council convened in closed session at approximately 9:10 p.m.

A copy of resolution [#24-04-18-125](#) is appended to the official minutes.

On the motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Norgalis, the meeting reconvened to open session at approximately 9:27 p.m. and adjourned immediately thereafter.

Adjournment

On the motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Timothy Ring
Council President