

MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 19, 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, September 19, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council Vice President Norgalis 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
Councilman Allen Kurdyla
Councilman Howard V. Norgalis
Councilman Filipe Pedroso
Council President Timothy Ring (**absent**)

Also Present: Michael Pappas, Township Administrator
Alex Fisher, Deputy Township Attorney
Grace Njuguna, Township Clerk

Councilman Kurdyla led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

AUGUST 15, 2024 & SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 – REGULAR SESSION

On motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the August 15, 2024 & September 5, 2024, regular session minutes were moved for approval and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

AUGUST 15, 2024 & SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 – CLOSED SESSION

The August 15, 2024, and September 5, 2024, closed session minutes were passed around for Council approval & signature.

Council Reports

Councilman Kirsh:

- On September 10th, the zoning board considered a proposal from Somerset Property Associates LLC to convert an existing Class A office building on 202/206 into a senior daycare center. This will be a valuable addition to the community, providing essential services for seniors and repurposing underutilized office space.

- On September 11th, attended both the county and municipal remembrance ceremonies. As Mayor Moench eloquently stated, 23 years after the tragic events, we must continue to honor the victims and survivors. It's a solemn commitment to never forget.
- On September 12th, attended the Somerset Patriots Day, sponsored by PLAN NJ. This organization provides essential services to individuals with disabilities and their families. It was a successful event with a large turnout.
- On September 14th, attended the Mid-Autumn Lantern Festival, a celebration of Chinese American culture. Later that day, Councilman Kirsh had the honor of speaking at George Bateman's funeral, recognizing his significant contributions to Bridgewater.
- On September 15th, attended the JCC Community Day and Touch a Truck event at Bridgewater Commons. It was a huge success with families from all over the region. The kids loved honking the horns of the school buses but were a bit scared of the police car cages.
- On September 17th, the planning board meeting was canceled, allowing Councilman Kirsh to attend a Somerset Patriots playoff game. They won and are now playing game two of a three-game series. If they win, we'll see the lights on at the ballpark next Tuesday and Wednesday nights, a sign of good things to come.
- Councilman Kirsh reminded everyone about our upcoming fall food drive, a partnership between Bridgewater Township and Bridgewater United. We will be distributing bags to our soccer families and setting up a tent in the courtyard for food collection on October 7th. The tent will be available during the week of the 14th. The collected food will be donated to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, located in Bridgewater. This collaboration between the soccer association, the town, and the food bank is a great way to support our community.

Councilman Kurdyla:

- Attended the September 11th ceremony in Bridgewater Township, a solemn event commemorating the tragic events of that day.
- Attended a workshop on stormwater management.
- Attended the New Jersey State Firemen's Association Convention. Due to his attendance at the convention, he was unable to attend a luncheon where Congressman Kean was scheduled to honor him as a Senior Member of Distinction.

Councilman Norgalis:(*verbatim*)

- The State of NJ Record of Unclaimed Property was again printed in the Courier News in the smallest print available making it extremely difficult to read for most of us. Bridgewater is unfortunately well represented among the names and addresses so I will again leave my copy in the clerk's office at the desk and if you are in the municipal office and wish to browse thru it, please stop by. I have also placed a copy of the entire report just outside the courtroom with a magnifying glass for anyone wishing to check it out tonight.
- The Township 9-11 service was held on that date. This year, I want to depart from simply saying there was a 911 ceremony and share what happened at the 23rd Anniversary ceremony. Mayor Moench opened and closed the ceremony with insight as to how 911 was personal to NJ as opposed to other parts of the County where it is considered a national event.

Participants included:

Police Honor Guard

Allen Kurdyla reading the Fireman's Prayer

Filipe Pedroso reading the EMS Prayer

Police Chief John Mitzak reading the Policemen's Prayer

The following 911 Bridgewater deaths were memorialized

Noel Foster by Mathew Moench

Ronald Tartaro by Allen Kurdyla

Lance Tumulty by Howard Norgalis

Thomas Polhemus by Michael Kirsch

Evan Baron by Filipe Pedroso

We remember and honor those who fell on that fateful day.

- I want to share a few words about some special happenings. The first is the Hindu festival of the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrating the birthday of the Hindu deity Ganesha. The festival is marked with the installation of Ganesha's clay murtis (devotional representations of a deity) privately in homes and publicly on elaborate temporary stages. Observances include chanting of historic Vedic hymns and Hindu texts, such as prayers and fasting. Offerings and Prasada, a vegetarian food cooked especially for devotees after praise and thanksgiving are distributed to the community, The festival ends on the tenth day after the start, when the clay Murti is carried in a public procession with music and group chanting, then immersed in a nearby body of water such as a river or sea, called. In Mumbai alone, around 150,000 Murtis are immersed annually. Thereafter the clay Murti dissolves, and Ganesha is believed to return to his celestial abode.

- Another activity in our township is the Al Falah's Annual Fall Festival on September 22nd from 2-7 pm at the Temple location on Route 202/206. All are welcome.
- Temple Shalom will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Judaic Ministry of Rabbi Isaac on Nov 24th. Invitations are being sent out to Temple members.
- The joint outing of the Township and the JCC was held last week at the mall parking lot and hundreds turned out to enjoy rides for the kids, food and displays, and informational handouts.

Councilman Pedroso: *(verbatim)*

On September 7th, I had the privilege of participating in a deeply moving ceremony at the historic Prince Rodgers Cemetery, where we were joined by the remarkable reenactors of the 6th Regiment U.S. Colored Troops. Standing there, surrounded by the echoes of history, I was reminded of the incredible courage and sacrifice of those who fought not just for their country, but for their freedom and dignity.

Prince Rodgers was born into slavery right here in Bridgewater in 1815 and was freed in 1839. His story didn't end there—he answered the call of duty and served in the United States Colored Troops, a brotherhood of men who fought not only for the Union but for the very principles of equality and justice.

During the event, I learned that the United States Colored Troops played an invaluable role in shaping the course of the Civil War. Over 130 regiments of infantry, 6 regiments of cavalry, and dozens of artillery units were formed, with Black men from many states stepping forward to serve. It is believed that around 1,500 Black men from New Jersey alone fought in that war, with 680 of them in the 22nd United States Colored Troops.

To delve deeper into the powerful history of the U.S. Colored Troops, I encourage you to watch the video I took and posted of one of the reenactors sharing their story. You can find it on my Facebook page, Filipe Pedroso - Bridgewater.

I also want to thank Lorayn Allen and The Prince Rodgers Foundation for cleaning up and preserving the Prince Rodgers cemetery and for hosting this event.

Now, shifting to another solemn moment in our nation's history—I'd like to take a moment to express my gratitude to Mayor Moench for once again leading a poignant September 11th remembrance ceremony here at Town Hall. On that fateful day, nearly 3,000 souls were lost, and countless more

lives were forever changed by the terror attacks. This year, the Girl Scouts Troop 60029, in collaboration with our dedicated Town staff, placed 2,977 flags along Woodlawn Avenue adjacent to the Administration Building. These flags stand as a powerful and heartbreaking reminder of those we lost on September 11th. But let's not forget—if we were to place a flag for every son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, and friend who had a loved one ripped away from them that day, the flags would stretch far beyond this Town Hall, and still, it wouldn't capture the enormity of the loss.

Bridgewater itself lost six of its own that day—Noel Foster, Ronald Tartaro, Lance Tumulty, Thomas Polhemus, Evan Baron, and Allison Wildman. We honor their memory as part of a community that stands united in the face of tragedy, and forever committed to remembering.

Mayor's Reports

Michael Pappas, Township Administrator reported on behalf of Mayor Moench

- Administrator Pappas, on behalf of Mayor Moench, thanked the council members, staff, and the JCC for a successful Community Day last Sunday. We also appreciate the council members' participation in the 9/11 ceremony.

Presentation

Recognition of Councilman Allen Kurdyla and Council Vice President Howard Norgalis as "Seniors of Distinction" from the Office of Congressman Tom Kean Jr.

Gerald Bryden (JD) presented a certificate on behalf of Congressman Tom Kean Jr to honor Allen Kurdyla, as he could not attend the event. He also read a letter written by Congressman Tom Kean Jr.

(Verbatim)

Dear Councilman Kurdyla,

I am sorry that you were unable to attend the Congressional District 7 Seniors of Distinction event held on September 13th in Bridgewater. I would have enjoyed the opportunity to have congratulated you in person for being selected for this honor. One of the best parts of being a congressman is that I wake up every day with the opportunity to make a positive difference in somebody else's life. I know you share that same mindset and have dedicated your time, experience, and talents to serving others around you.

Your nomination and selection as a Senior of Distinction serves as a testament to your passion and your commitment to service, particularly your more than 55 years of service on the FINDERNE Fire Department, including serving as chief, your current position as the chair of Bridgewater's Fourth Fire District, and your service as a Bridgewater councilman for over 15 years.

Please accept this certification of recognition with my most sincere thanks for all you have done and continue to do to better the world around you. Again, congratulations and best wishes for much happiness in the years ahead.

*Sincerely,
Tom Kean Jr
Member of Congress*

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

- **Joan Geiger- 154 Hillside Ave, Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Geiger expressed her appreciation for the Bridgewater Police Department's professionalism in handling recent incidents. She emphasized that this behavior is not only disrespectful but also illegal, as outlined in New Jersey statute 2C20:3A. Sign theft is a disorderly person's offense punishable by fines and potential jail time.

She also praised Councilman Pedroso for his insightful council report this evening.

- **Cathy Franco - 766 Weemac Road, Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Franco expressed concerns about several issues facing the community. She highlighted the neglected condition of the planting areas in front of the municipal building, urging the council to allocate resources for maintenance. Additionally, she questioned the delayed access to the D & R property, which was purchased with public funds, and called for the expedited development of public access features. Ms. Franco also voiced concerns about the deteriorating state of Camp Cromwell, advocating for restoration efforts. Finally, she emphasized the importance of attracting businesses that align with the community's values, rather than solely relying on redevelopment projects. Ms. Franco urged the council to take action on these issues to improve the quality of life for all Bridgewater residents.

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

**Public
Hearing &
Final Action
Ordinances**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 126, PART 11, ARTICLE XXXVIIB OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER ENTITLED "STORMWATER CONTROL" TO REFLECT AMENDMENTS TO THE NEW JERSEY STORMWATER MANAGEMENT RULES AT N.J.A.C. 7:8, ADOPTED JULY 17, 2023

Councilman Norgalis discussed the issue of unfunded band dates, previously raised during a previous meeting. He mentioned a joint letter sent to the Commission on Unfunded Issues, a state organization that reviews approvals by various ruling organizations. While he initially stated that he would not support stormwater management until receiving a response from the Commission, he has since changed his mind, emphasizing the need to implement the stormwater rules regardless of the Commission's findings.

Administrator Pappas explained that a presentation was made to the Bridgewater Township Council regarding a new stormwater management ordinance. The ordinance, mandated by the state of New Jersey, aims to strengthen requirements for development before the township's land use boards. The presentation highlighted the ordinance's similarity to those adopted by other municipalities statewide. The council is expected to review and consider the ordinance, potentially seeking public input and making amendments before a final vote.

Councilman Pedroso confirmed that he had met with the Township Engineer to discuss the stormwater management ordinance. He stated that the engineer said that the ordinance is necessary for compliance with state law and will not result in increased fees for the township. This information indicates that the ordinance is a crucial step for Bridgewater to meet regulatory requirements while avoiding any additional financial burden.

The council was in consensus to pass this ordinance.

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

- **Joan Geiger- 154 Hillside Ave, Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Geiger expressed strong support for the proposed stormwater management ordinance. She emphasized the ordinance's importance in addressing the challenges posed by extreme weather events, citing basement flooding, road closures, and tragic human losses. She further acknowledged the potential costs associated with implementing the ordinance but argued that the long-term consequences of inaction would be far greater. Ms. Geiger urged the council to pass the ordinance to protect the safety and well-being of Bridgewater residents.

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

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

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

ORDINANCE #24-13 WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-239](#) is appended to the official minutes

Resolutions

AWARD OF CONTRACT TO RJM LANDSCAPE AND DESIGN, LLC OF 821 PARSONAGE HILL DRIVE, BRANCBURG, NJ 08876 FOR SNOW REMOVAL SERVICES IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$75,000.00 FOR THE 2024 – 2025 WINTER SEASON

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-240](#) is appended to the official minutes

AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF ROAD SALT FOR THE 2024 - 2025 WINTER SEASON FROM THE SOMERSET COUNTY ROAD & BRIDGE DIVISION, P.O. BOX 3000, SOMERVILLE NJ 08876 IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$70,000.00

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-241](#) is appended to the official minutes

APPROVING PARTICIPATION WITH THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY IN A SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY FOR A GRANT AMOUNT UP TO \$45,150.00 AND A MATCHING EXPENSE OF UP TO \$221,921.64.

Councilman Norgalis informed the public that grants often require matching funds, which are additional funds that must be spent in relation to the grant. In this specific case, the matching funds would need to be allocated for police salaries.

Councilman Pedroso added that he understood the matching funds from the stormwater management grant would be used to offset the cost of two Traffic Safety officers. He noted that regardless of whether the grant is received, the township would likely incur this expense. The council will need to carefully evaluate the budgetary implications of hiring these officers and explore alternative funding sources if necessary.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-242](#) is appended to the official minutes

SUPPORTING THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ROUTE 202/206 AND ROUTE 22 INTERCHANGE, PETERS BROOK TO COMMONS WAY PROJECT LOCATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER, SOMERSET COUNTY

Administrator Pappas distributed a photograph provided by Mr. Burr to illustrate the state's proposed project for the Interchange. He requested the council's careful consideration and support for the project, encouraging them to review the photograph and gather additional information before deciding.

Councilman Norgalis clarified that local approval or disapproval of the proposed project would not impact the state's decision. He emphasized that local approval is primarily for administrative purposes, allowing the state to circulate the conditions of approval within their departments. He further expressed his disappointment that the project would not include the ability to go south on 202 from 206 going east, acknowledging that further improvements would be necessary in the future.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-243](#) 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.

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 Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the Council convened in a closed session at approximately 8:20 p.m.

A copy of resolution [#24-09-19-244](#) is appended to the official minutes.

On the motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the meeting reconvened to open session at approximately 9:10 p.m. and adjourned immediately thereafter.

Adjournment On the motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Timothy Ring
Council President