

MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
OCTOBER 24, 2024 - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session meeting on Thursday, October 24, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Room 102A&B at 100 Commons Way, 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, BY SENDING WRITTEN NOTICE AND ELECTRONIC NOTICE 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 OF RELOCATION OF MEETING WAS PROVIDED ON OCTOBER 22, 2024.

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

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

Councilman Pedroso led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

OCTOBER 10, 2024- REGULAR SESSION

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the October 10, 2024, regular session minutes were moved for approval and passed unanimously on a voice call vote.

OCTOBER 10, 2024- CLOSED SESSION

The October 10, 2024, closed session minutes were passed around for Council approval & signature.

Council Reports

Councilman Kirsh:

- On October 13th, attended the Paws 'n' Boards event with Councilman Pedroso. It was a great event highlighting skateboarding and partnering with the animal shelter. Money was raised and awareness was generated.

- On October 14th, attended a session at the JCC on addressing anti-Semitism in schools. This was the second annual session, with approximately 25 attendees, mostly school leaders and Board of Education members. Councilman Kirsh's presence at the event was a valuable statement about Bridgewater's commitment to standing up to anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred.
- On October 15th, the Planning Board met to discuss various development proposals. One significant item was the redevelopment of the Route 22 property, which was recommended for further consideration. Additionally, the Planning Board began to hear the case for a new Chick-fil-A, a highly anticipated project in Bridgewater. If approved, the Chick-fil-A would be built in the Wegmans shopping plaza on the former Ruby Tuesday site.
- On October 21st, we had the privilege of receiving a food donation from the Food Network of Somerset County. This donation was collected by Bridgewater United Soccer and our Recreation Soccer program, with the assistance of the DPW. It was a significant donation, and we express our sincere gratitude to the community for their generosity.
- On October 22nd, had the privilege of delivering a proclamation honoring Margaret Schacher on her 105th birthday. She's a remarkable woman who lived independently until the age of 100 and has spent the last five years at Care One on Route 22. The proclamation celebrated her life and accomplishments. Margaret plans to be around until at least 110, so we may need to prepare another proclamation in five years! Born in 1919, she has certainly witnessed a significant portion of American history.
- Attended the congressional District 7 election forum at Temple Shalom. The two major party candidates for Congressional District 7 were present.
- The Zoning Board met and heard a case for a covered deck in the Bradley Gardens neighborhood on Franklin Street, one of our newest streets developed in the past few years.
- On October 23rd, attended the dedication ceremony for the new turf field outside the municipal building. The administration will likely make a formal announcement regarding the field's official name.
- Attended a meeting regarding our sewer utility system. Commissioners Bob Albano and Joe Lefaire, who represent us at SRVA, were also present.
- Attended a budget committee meeting today, where several topics were discussed. More details on these topics will be shared in the coming weeks.

Councilman Kurdyla:

- Attended the dedication of the turf field on Wednesday. It's fitting that the field is named in honor of former Mayor Patricia Flanery, who was instrumental in acquiring the municipal complex property and ensuring the installation of the fields.
- November 5th is approaching, and while we have discussions in the room, the most important action each of us can take is to go out and vote.

Councilman Norgalis: *(verbatim)*

- Due to vacation my report will be mercifully short
- My best wishes to several of the major religious groups who help make up the framework of Bridgewater. Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu groups have already or will some be gathering to celebrate the hallmarks of their religions.
- Because of the current drought and extremely dry vegetation the state is acting to ban firework displays.
- Attended the Bridgewater Raritan Sports Hall of Fame induction dinner where my daughter Karen Travisano and several members of her swim team were inducted into the Hall.
- Attended the Somerville High School Senior Recognition program where my granddaughter Grace Norgalis was recognized for her four years of Field Hockey skills.
- For those of you following the “Best Public Schools in Somerset County” Here are the Top Ten
 1. Montgomery
 2. Ridge
 3. Bernards
 4. Watchung
 5. Somerset Vocational and Technical
 6. Bridgewater / Raritan
 7. Hillsborough
 8. Thomas Edison Energy Charter
 9. Central Jersey College Prep Charter
 10. Somerville
- Lastly, we are getting near the end of the year. For those of you who are

interested in performing work for the township, the Qualified Purchasing Agent Sara Housman, also known as the QPA, told me that the Request for Proposal was publicized earlier in October. If you have not seen them then contact Sara directly.

Councilman Pedroso: *(verbatim)*

- I recently read a powerful statement from Mayor Moench, where he demonstrated true leadership by courageously calling out Board of Education member A.J. Joshi for his blatant lies. Mr. Joshi stood before this governing body and falsely accused a Bridgewater police officer of racism against his son and another individual. This was not just a lie—it was a reckless attempt to divide our community for personal gain and public grandstanding.

Like Mayor Moench, I refuse to stay silent in the face of this dishonesty. Mr. Joshi's accusations were not only an insult to our dedicated police officers and the people of Bridgewater but also a disgrace to the legacy of the civil rights movement. His words diminish the struggles of those who have experienced real racism, mocking the progress we've fought for as a society. A.J. Joshi's behavior makes one thing clear: he is unfit to serve on the Board of Education. And the right thing—the decent thing—would have been to step down. But instead, he clings to power and now seeks re-election.

What makes this situation even more outrageous is the hypocrisy. While A.J. Joshi fabricated a moment of victimhood for himself, he failed to protect others when discrimination concerns were raised within the school system. At a recent Board of Education meeting, community members came forward with claims of discrimination, hoping for a voice and an advocate. And yet, Mr. Joshi—who claims to champion fairness—remained silent. In the moment when he could have stood up for others, he chose to do nothing.

Our community deserves leaders with integrity—those who do what's right, even when it's hard. Mayor Moench exemplifies this courage by speaking the truth, no matter the controversy. Leadership isn't about chasing attention; it's about standing firm for what's best for the people you serve.

A.J. Joshi's actions are not only unfit for someone in public office, but they also send a dangerous message to the next generation. He has shown himself to be a poor role model for our children—one who lies, divides, and shirks responsibility when it matters most. Bridgewater deserves better.

Council President Ring:

- Early voting starts this Saturday, October 26 in the Municipal Courtroom and runs until November 3rd. There are six early voting locations in Somerset County, and Bridgewater is one of the locations.

- Attended the Skate for Paws event organized by Jennifer Loughran, a fundraiser for the animal shelter.
- Also participated in the budget meeting, as discussed by Councilman Kirsh.

Mayor's Reports

Michael Pappas, Township Administrator reported on behalf of Mayor Moench

- Several council members attended a meeting with Bridgewater's representatives on the Somerset Raritan Regional Sewerage Authority (SRVA). The representatives are committed to understanding and addressing Bridgewater's challenges as an SRVA customer.
- The mayor attended the dedication of the turf field in honor of former Mayor Patricia Flannery.
- The Department of Community Affairs requires municipalities to submit a Best Practices Inventory report annually. Bridgewater Township has consistently exceeded the 35-point minimum, ensuring continued state aid. Two new categories have been added to the inventory: affordable housing and lead paint compliance. Overall, the report highlights the township's proactive approach to addressing challenges, honoring its history, and meeting state requirements.

Swearing In

Officer Adam Ruiz

Chief Mitzak (*verbatim*)

Good evening, everyone, I would like to welcome everyone to the swearing-in of Officer Adam Ruiz. I would like to thank Mayor Matthew Moench, along with all the council members, for allowing the Police Department to swear in a new officer tonight. The mayor and council are strong supporters of the Police Department. Officer Adam Ruiz comes to us as a fully sworn police officer. He has worked for the Raritan Boro Police Department for the past year.

A background about Adam: He was born and raised in Bridgewater, NJ, and currently resides in Bridgewater. Adam attended Bridgewater Raritan High School and the Somerset County Vo-tech, where he earned an Electrical Construction Certificate. He is currently attending Raritan Valley Community College, working on his associate's degree.

Prior to becoming a police officer, he worked for Basking Ridge Electric as an electrician, Colonial Motors as a shop employee, Somerset County Communications as a dispatcher and the Somerset County Sheriff's Office working as a correction officer in the jail.

In 2023 he attended the Morris County Police Academy and upon graduation, he was

hired by the Raritan Boro Police Department.

Adam is also a certified EMT and Firefighter. As we can see, Adam brings a tremendous amount of work experience to Bridgewater PD. While interviewing Adam, I asked him why he wanted to leave Raritan Boro to work in the town next door. Adam related that he was born and raised in Bridgewater, and he has a tremendous amount of pride in our town. He told me that he always wanted to be a police officer in Bridgewater. I am thrilled that we are able to offer a hometown resident a job with his police force.

In closing, Adam, I thank you for becoming part of the Bridgewater PD family. We will provide you with the equipment and training to have a safe and effective career. "Remember, every badge you wear is a symbol of trust and responsibility. Serve with integrity, protect with courage, and let your actions inspire hope in your community. I wish you all health, success, and safety in your next 25 to 30 years as a Bridgewater Police Officer.

Please come up to be sworn in as a Bridgewater Police Officer. Adam Ruiz was sworn in alongside his Fiancé, Nicole

Council President Ring acknowledged he has known Adam for a long time since he was 16 and joined the Green Knoll Rescue Squad. Adam has always aspired to be a police officer in Bridgewater. Council President Ring expressed that he is honored to administer the oath of office to Adam and looks forward to seeing him serve the community.

Presentation National Health Educational Week "Public Health Update"

Presented by Bridgewater Health Officer- Kevin Sumner

The speaker, Kevin Sumner, is the Health Officer for the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, where Bridgewater is a member. He has worked in public health for nearly 40 years and has extensive experience in various roles within the field. He introduced Patricia Timko-Parker, who joined the department during the COVID-19 pandemic with the environmental health portion of the health department and is working on improving communication and collaboration between different departments within the township.

Patricia Timko-Parker, a Health Inspector for Bridgewater Township, presented on the various services provided by the Health Department. These services include:

- **Food Safety:** Restaurant inspections, food service establishments in assisted living facilities, and mobile food vendors.
- **Water Quality:** Septic and well inspections, and recreational bathing facility inspections.

- **Public Health:** Body art establishments, youth camp inspections, animal control, and communicable disease investigations.
- **Community Health:** Well water testing clinics, rabies clinics, and flu clinics.

The goal of her project was to improve communication and collaboration between the Health Department and other township departments.

Kevin Sumner, the Director for the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, provided an overview of the public health services offered by the department, with a specific focus on Bridgewater Township.

- **Community Health Assessment:** The department works with the Healthier Somerset Coalition to assess community health needs and develop strategies to address them, with a focus on mental health, substance abuse, obesity, and access to care.
- **Environmental Health:** The department conducts inspections of restaurants, septic systems, pools, and other facilities to ensure public health and safety.
- **Infectious Disease Control:** The department investigates and controls outbreaks of infectious diseases, including foodborne illnesses, waterborne illnesses, and vaccine-preventable diseases.
- **Clinical Services:** The department offers various clinical services, such as vaccinations, blood pressure screenings, and well-baby clinics.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The department works closely with other agencies, such as the police department, fire department, and local hospitals, to address public health issues.

Mr. Sumner emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration between different departments and agencies to effectively address public health challenges.

Councilman Norgalis thanked Kevin for his presentation and noted that Bridgewater is the largest municipality in the Middle-Brook Township Health Commission, comprising about 60% of the population and landmass. Mr. Sumner was questioned by Councilman Norgalis regarding his hours in the Bridgewater Township building. Mr. Sumner indicated he has no formal office hours in Bridgewater but stated that he is in the office about a half day a week generally on Wednesday.

Councilman Kurdyla asked about the impact of mobile food trucks on the Health Department's work. He inquired whether these food trucks pose a problem for inspections and regulations.

Mr. Sumner explained that mobile food trucks that operate regularly in Bridgewater are not a significant issue as they typically obtain annual licenses and inspections.

However, temporary food trucks that only operate at specific events pose a greater challenge. To address this, health departments often accept inspection reports from other jurisdictions, provided they are recent and satisfactory. If not, the department may require an inspection before the event or inspect the truck during the event itself.

Administrator Pappas raised a question about the responsibility of mobile food trucks operating in Bridgewater Township. The speaker clarified that while the department prefers to review inspection reports from other jurisdictions, it is ultimately the responsibility of the food truck operator to ensure compliance with local health regulations. This may involve obtaining a local permit or undergoing an inspection by the Bridgewater Health Department.

Mr. Sumner confirmed that mobile food trucks operating in Bridgewater Township must obtain a license from the local health department. To receive a license, they must either undergo an inspection by the Bridgewater Health Department or provide a satisfactory inspection report from another recognized health department.

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 Kirsh, the meeting was opened to the public for comment.

- **Jennifer Loughran, 716 Falcon Court – Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Ms. Loughran expressed gratitude to the administration and council members for supporting the "Skate for Paws" event and prioritizing animal care. She highlighted the importance of the Somerset County Regional Animal Shelter and encouraged the community to continue supporting it, especially during the holiday season. She also thanked various sponsors and volunteers who contributed to the event's success, including local businesses, organizations, and individuals.

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

Ms. Franco expressed gratitude for the live streaming of the meeting and clarified the process for addressing concerns with the Middlebrook Health Commission. She also thanked the Bridgewater Police Department for their public statement regarding property theft and inquired about the specific allocation of a safety and security grant.

Ms. Franco acknowledged the Clerk's Office as being always gracious and helpful to the extent permitted and expressed concerns about the accessibility of public information. She emphasized the importance of open

communication and urged the council to refrain from making inappropriate comments about the Board of Education in public forums.

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

Resolutions

RESOLUTION REQUESTING APPROVAL OF ITEMS OF REVENUE AND APPROPRIATION NJS 40A:4:87 – BUDGET CHAPTER 159 FOR THE SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$12,750.00

Township Administrator Pappas offered that the grant funds for safety and security are typically sought and received annually, and they are specifically allocated to the Traffic Safety Unit.

On motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Norgalis, 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	Aye

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-10-24-254](#) is appended to the official minutes

RESOLUTION APPOINTING JERRY BLACK OF 5 ANN PLACE TO THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Council President Ring announced the appointment of Jerry Black to the Bridgewater Township Veterans Advisory Committee. He highlighted Mr. Black's family's history of military service, including his great-grandfather, his father, and his own service in the US Navy and New Jersey Army National Guard.

On motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Norgalis, 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	Aye

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-10-24-255](#) is appended to the official minutes

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF FIRE PERMIT FEE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$100.00 FOR THE SOMERSET COUNTY VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL (SCVTHS) PTO IN CONNECTION WITH A VENDOR FAIR EVENT SCHEDULED TO BE HELD AT 14 VOGT DRIVE ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2024, FROM 10 AM TO 3 PM

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, 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	Aye

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-10-24-256](#) is appended to the official minutes

AUTHORIZING THE 2025 FIREWORKS DISPLAY SCHEDULE FOR SOMERSET PATRIOT'S GAMES AT TD BANK BALLPARK

On motion of Councilman Norgalis, 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	Aye

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#24-10-24-257](#) is appended to the official minutes

Adjournment

On the motion of Councilman Norgalis, seconded by Councilman Ring, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Timothy Ring
Council President