

MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MAY 8, 2025 - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The Township Council of the Township of Bridgewater, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, convened in a regular session on Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. in Council Chambers in the Municipal Complex, Bridgewater, New Jersey 08807 & via Live Online Broadcast.

Council 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 10, 2024, 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 Filipe Pedroso
Councilman Timothy Ring (Absent)
Council President Howard V. Norgalis

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

Councilman Kurdyla led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

APRIL 24, 2025 - REGULAR SESSION

The minutes were approved by voice vote following a motion by Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Council President Norgalis. Councilman Kirsh abstained due to his absence from the meeting.

APRIL 24, 2025 – CLOSED SESSIONS

The minutes were distributed for Council approval and signature. Councilman Kirsh abstained from voting as he was absent from the meeting.

Council Reports

Councilman Kurdyla:

- Councilman Kurdyla reported that since the last meeting, there has been significant activity related to the Community Block Grant Program. He noted that the final meeting was held earlier today, and the community block grants have now been issued.

Councilman Kirsh:

- Councilman Kirsh began by acknowledging his absence from the previous meeting, explaining that he was affected by extensive delays at Newark Airport. Although his flight from Atlanta was scheduled for 3:30 p.m., he did not arrive home until 12:15 a.m.
- He reported that the Council received a working draft of the Mayor's budget and noted that, as in previous years, the budget process will be collaborative. Initial discussions involve the Budget Committee, including himself and Councilman Ring, followed by input from the full Council. Several meetings are scheduled to review the budget, with the goal of having it ready for introduction by the Mayor at the May 22 meeting.
- He also referenced Resolution 13A, describing it as a temporary appropriation to cover essential expenses. He emphasized that it includes only the minimum funding needed to maintain operations until the full budget is adopted.

Councilman Pedroso:

- Councilman Pedroso greeted everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He extended warm wishes to all mothers for a happy Mother's Day, expressing appreciation for their importance and hoping they are well taken care of and enjoy the day.
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Council President Norgalis: (*Verbatim*)

- The world's 1.4B Roman Catholics are overjoyed at the election of American-born Pope Leo 14.
- Attended the Monthly Bridgewater Municipal Alliance meeting, where we were introduced to Ruby Arthur, who is the latest Social Worker to join the Bridgewater/ Somerset County Crisis Intervention team. She will be the principal responder for Bridgewater and Bound Brook and will share space with Damien in the office just outside of our court room.
- Also, as part of the Alliance report, High School Counselor April McGrath-Lutsky reported that locked Vaping disposal containers are now being installed in the high school restrooms as a disposal alternative to students trying to flush their vaping items and all too frequently clogging the toilets.
- Sometime during July and August, PSE&G contractors will be repaving, curb to curb, and those streets affected by their gas main installation activity, especially those with intense school traffic. To their credit, PSE&G did undertake an interim fix by grinding down high spots and filling in potholes

over the last month.

- Attended several redevelopment meetings with the Administration and Legal Staff to assess progress on major projects such as 1200 Route 22, the former Ethicon Property and the Peters Brook Innovation Center which will be the subject of a PILOT review in a few minutes.
- For those of our residents of Mexican Ancestry the recent celebration of Cico de Mayo is an annual celebration held on May 5 to celebrate Mexico's victory over the Second French Empire at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.
- Planning work continues as we move toward the selection of a sanitary sewer engineering firm to perform an in-depth analysis of our aging sewerage, and pumping stations one from 1969 and the second from 1985

Mayor's Reports

Mayor Matthew C. Moench

- Mayor Moench provided an update on recent and upcoming events. He noted that several planned events were postponed due to rain. The Township Spring Carnival, co-hosted with the JCC, has been rescheduled for June 22nd. Additionally, the Township Teacher Appreciation event, coordinated with various PTOs, has been moved to Monday, May 12th.
- Mayor Moench also reported on the success of the Township's first annual garage sale, which had 63 registered homes and additional participation beyond those registered. He expressed satisfaction with the event and noted plans to continue it next year.

Proclamation HONORING BRODY NUSSMAN & GOALS4IMAGINE

Mayor Moench recognized Brody Nuzman, a young man who launched a fundraiser called Goals for Imagine, inspired by the legacy of Mike Shambach. He noted that many Bridgewater graduates, particularly those around his age, would remember Mike Shambach for his leadership and impact on the community, especially as an athlete. He acknowledged the ongoing involvement of the Shambach family in the town and expressed how inspiring it is to see Mike Shambach's legacy continue to influence a new generation.

Mayor Moench read the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, Bridgewater-Raritan High School senior Brody Nussman has demonstrated exceptional leadership, compassion, and dedication to community service through multiple impactful initiatives during his high school career, including the founding of Goals4Imagine, a lacrosse-based fundraiser to support grieving children and families; and

WHEREAS, Brody launched Goals4Imagine in 2024 to honor the legacy of the late Mike Schambach—a beloved member of the Bridgewater-Raritan lacrosse community and 1998 state champion—by encouraging donations for each goal scored during the season, ultimately raising over \$7,500 for Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss, a nonprofit offering free grief support for children and families; and

WHEREAS, Brody’s efforts extended beyond the lacrosse field to include the girls’ varsity lacrosse team, as well as teams from Hillsborough and Somerville High Schools, and he plans to expand the initiative, further demonstrating his enduring commitment to empathy, emotional well-being, and community impact; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his work with Goals4Imagine, Brody created a second fundraiser, Threes for Grigal, in memory of Dan Grigal—a cherished Bridgewater-Raritan middle school teacher and basketball coach who passed away from cancer in 2021—raising over \$6,000 for the Dan Grigal Scholarship Fund and involving both boys’ and girls’ varsity basketball teams, further exemplifying his dedication to inclusive and meaningful change; and

WHEREAS, Brody’s character and leadership extend into everyday school life as a three-year varsity athlete in both basketball and lacrosse, a Unified Basketball coach, and a dedicated participant in PE Partners, supporting students with developmental disabilities and autism; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his selflessness, sportsmanship, and service, Brody was awarded the Bob Scott Award in 2024—an honor reserved for student-athletes who best exemplify dedication to their sport and their community; and

WHEREAS, through his drive, generosity, and example, Brody Nussman has shown what it means to turn personal passion into lasting, positive impact—uplifting others, honoring legacies, and inspiring peers throughout Bridgewater and beyond;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Bridgewater do hereby recognize and honor Brody Nussman for his outstanding achievements, including the creation of Goals4Imagine, for his commitment to service, inclusion, and leadership, and for representing the very best of the Bridgewater community.

Let his work stand as a powerful reminder of the strength of character, the value of community, and the incredible difference one young person can make.

Brody Nussman thanked the Mayor and Council for the honor and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to combine sports and community through his fundraiser. He encouraged anyone interested in supporting the initiative to visit the Instagram page [@goals4imagine](#) for more information.

Graduation Ceremony

CITIZEN POLICE ACADEMY GRADUATION

Mayor Moench remarked on the fitting transition from honoring community service through Brody Nussman's recognition to celebrating the graduation of the participants in the Citizens Police Academy. He highlighted the importance of the program, which was launched a few years ago to strengthen communication and relationships between the police department and the community.

Mayor Moench emphasized that the academy offers residents a deeper understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of police officers—beyond what can be conveyed in a single lecture or online post. He noted the value of building lasting bonds through the time spent with officers, which contributes to a safer, more connected community.

Mayor Moench commended the graduates for their commitment, acknowledging that participation in the program reflects dedication to both learning and civic engagement. He then turned the proceedings over to Chief Mitzak to conduct the graduation ceremony and concluded by thanking the police department, command staff, and everyone involved in organizing and running the academy for their outstanding work and representation.

Chief Mitzak made the following statement: (*Verbatim*)

Good evening, everyone.

It's truly an honor to be with you tonight as we recognize the incredible group of individuals who have completed the Bridgewater Township Civilian Police Academy, Class 25-01

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to Mayor Matthew Moench — thank you for your leadership, your presence here tonight, and for your continued commitment to public safety and community engagement in Bridgewater Township. Your support is invaluable to our department and to the work we do every day.

To our instructors, Sgt Jack Kennedy and all the supervisors, officers and detectives, thank you for your time, energy, and dedication. You went above and beyond to give these residents/and interns a true behind-the-scenes look at policing. You didn't just teach classes; you built connections and opened doors to greater understanding.

And now, to our Civilian Police Academy participants — thank you.

You made a choice to step forward. You chose to invest your time to learn not only how this department operates, but also why we do what we do. You've toured our facilities, observed our training, and experienced firsthand the complexity, professionalism, and humanity that define law enforcement here in Bridgewater Township.

Our goal with this program is simple: to create transparency, build trust, and form lasting partnerships with the community. We hope that, through this academy, you've not only learned more about policing—but that you've also seen the heart behind the badge.

You are now ambassadors of this department. You have the knowledge to help others understand what law enforcement truly involves—the challenges, the decision-making, the accountability, and the care we put into protecting this community. Let this not be the end of your involvement, but the beginning. We encourage you to stay engaged, continue asking questions, and work alongside us as we strive to make Bridgewater a safer, more connected place for all.

On behalf of the department, thank you for stepping forward. Thank you for caring enough about your town, your neighbors, and your police department to walk beside us.

Our motto is Ensuring Justice and Harmony through Community Collaboration and Constitutional Policing. Together, we make our community stronger.

Congratulations—and we hope this is just the beginning of your involvement.

Chief Mitzak invited a few members of the Citizens Police Academy class to come forward and share remarks. He noted that there were three speakers and welcomed them to speak one at a time.

Joan Geiger, a participant in the Citizens Police Academy and an attorney, expressed her appreciation for the program. She shared that she was deeply impressed by the police officers' extensive knowledge of criminal law, particularly U.S. constitutional law and New Jersey state law. She highlighted the CPR class as especially valuable, noting it alone made the course worthwhile.

Ms. Geiger also observed that throughout the program, the officers demonstrated total respect for the law while also exercising discretion and showing leniency when appropriate. She found this balance particularly moving. She concluded by thanking the officers and Chief Mitzak for sponsoring the program.

Jerry Black, a participant in the Citizens Police Academy, shared his appreciation for the opportunity to learn firsthand about the many roles police officers fulfill in the Bridgewater community. He noted these include law enforcement, community service, investigations, traffic management, and acting as counselors and problem-solvers.

He emphasized the integrity and justice consistently demonstrated by the Bridgewater Police Department, stating that their standard of excellence should serve as a model for departments nationwide. Mr. Black credited the Citizens Police Academy for giving him the unique chance to "see behind the badge"—experiencing patrol cars, listening to dispatch communications, and observing operations behind bulletproof glass.

He expressed his gratitude for the insights gained and stressed the importance of continued funding to support the department and its programs, which allow citizens to better understand the responsibilities of police officers. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Black identified himself as a Marine submariner and member of the New Jersey Army National Guard, and offered a salute and applause to the department, encouraging the audience to join him in recognition.

Rebecca Hassouna, a long-time Bridgewater resident and member of the Board of Education, expressed her gratitude to the Bridgewater Police Department for hosting the Citizens Police Academy. She acknowledged being surprised by the size of the department and extended special thanks to Sergeant Jack Kennedy and Chief John Mitzak for their leadership, knowledge, and humor, which made the program both meaningful and memorable.

Ms. Hassouna initially joined the academy to better understand the relationship between the school district and the police department but noted that the experience far exceeded her expectations. She highlighted the diversity of the class in terms of age, background, and viewpoints, and how all participants were united by a shared curiosity and growing respect for the complex, constitutionally grounded work of the department.

She identified two particularly impactful experiences: a ride-along that offered insight into the real-time challenges officers face and their care for both the community and one another, and the use-of-force training, including her first experience handling a firearm. These experiences gave her a greater appreciation for the responsibility and discipline involved in policing. On a lighter note, she joked that she now administers field sobriety tests to family members and believes she's quite good at it.

Ms. Hassouna also praised the opportunity to meet the department's community partners, which broadened her perspective on civic engagement and volunteerism. She concluded by encouraging more residents to participate in the program,

emphasizing that it fosters connection, context, and deeper mutual respect. She thanked Sergeant Kennedy and the entire department for their transparency, trust, and commitment to community partnership.

Chief Mitzak announced that it was time to present the certificates to the Citizens Police Academy graduates. He noted that Sergeant Jack Kennedy would be responsible for distributing the certificates.

The following individuals were recognized as graduates of the Citizens Police Academy:

- Stephanie Black
- Jerry Black
- Ayaz Baig
- Deepak Butani
- Rebecca Hassouna
- Brian Hart
- Stephen Fowler
- Loreen White
- Edward White
- Carolyn Gioia
- Ronnie Jones
- Joan Geiger
- Adham Shaban

Additionally, the following interns were acknowledged for their contributions:

- Hadley Moran
- Samantha Russo
- Kevin Ricci Jr.

Chief Mitzak congratulated all graduates and interns, expressing appreciation for their commitment to learning, service, and community engagement.

Presentation

PETER'S BROOK INNOVATION CENTER/ FORMERLY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Mayor Moench offered introductory comments regarding ongoing redevelopment efforts. He stated that the Township is currently evaluating several properties for potential redevelopment, and as part of that process, is also considering the applicability of PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) agreements.

He clarified that a PILOT is not a tax exemption, but rather an alternative method for calculating property payments to the municipality. This financial mechanism can offer flexibility in managing development while also helping the Township to maximize revenue as the host community.

Mayor Moench emphasized that while a PILOT agreement may not be appropriate in every case, it is an important tool in the Township's overall development strategy. He noted that this option is being considered for the current project under discussion, as well as potentially for future projects.

Council President Norgalis provided introductory remarks as part of a two-part presentation on PILOT programs. He emphasized that this was intended as a basic overview—"PILOT 101"—to give a foundational understanding before more detailed insights would be presented by Matt Jessup and Mike Hanley, the township's legal and financial advisors on the topic.

Council President Norgalis explained that a PILOT is a Payment In Lieu Of Taxes—not a tax exemption. It is a negotiated alternative method of tax calculation used to compensate the government for some or all of the property tax revenue potentially lost due to redevelopment or other conditions. PILOTs apply only to properties declared in need of redevelopment, often involving vacant, underutilized, or hazardous land—not prime or Class A properties.

Traditional Property Tax Structure (For Land & Buildings):

- County Tax: 14.9%
- County Library Tax: 2.0%
- County Open Space Tax: 1.5%
- Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education: 67.7%
- Bridgewater Municipal (Township): 12.5%
- Fire Districts: 1.4%

PILOT Program Structure (Building Only):

- Applies only to the building portion of a property's assessed value.
- 5% of the PILOT payment goes to the County (mandated).
- 95% of the PILOT payment is retained by the Township, to be allocated at its discretion (e.g., municipal services, capital improvements).
- Land under PILOT agreements is still taxed traditionally.

Council President Norgalis noted that PILOT agreements are always negotiated, not imposed unilaterally, and can provide mutual benefit to both the municipality and the property developer.

He referenced the property under consideration—the former Center of Excellence site, now known as Peters Brook Innovation, which currently has no buildings. All prior structures have been demolished with appropriate permits, meaning any future development will begin from the ground up.

Norgalis concluded by noting that this meeting was for informational purposes. In two weeks, the Township Council is expected to introduce an ordinance establishing

a PILOT agreement with the developers of the Peters Brook Innovation site. Formal adoption of the ordinance would occur in the weeks following that.

He then turned the discussion over to Matt Jessup and Mike Hanley to provide expert details on the negotiation process and structure of the proposed PILOT agreement.

Matthew Jessup of McManimon, Scotland & Baumann LLC, redevelopment counsel, provided an overview of the PILOT program. He emphasized that PILOTs are essential tools for municipalities to make otherwise financially unviable redevelopment projects feasible. By offering financial benefits, PILOTs help transform vacant or underutilized land into productive, vibrant spaces that benefit the public and taxpayers.

Mr. Jessup explained that PILOTs offer developers financial certainty regarding their tax obligations, which is crucial since real estate taxes are often unpredictable and largely outside the control of both developers and the governing body. While developers can manage other expenses, taxes are influenced by various entities like school districts and counties. PILOT agreements address this uncertainty.

He clarified that PILOTs typically apply only to improvements on the property, not the land itself; land taxes are usually still paid according to the standard distribution, especially for industrial and commercial projects. PILOTs are not granted automatically, each application undergoes a thorough financial analysis to ensure the project genuinely requires this support.

Mr. Jessup noted that, by law, a PILOT cannot be less than 10% of a project's annual gross revenue, which includes all income generated by the project (such as rents, parking fees, and other charges). All terms are formalized in a financial agreement between the municipality and the developer, with a maximum duration of 30 years per project phase. He concluded by inviting further questions about the PILOT program.

Council President Norgalis clarified that the PILOT agreement only takes effect once a certificate of occupancy is issued for the building. This means that the PILOT does not apply during the construction phase; it begins only after the building is completed and ready for use.

Mr. Jessup confirmed that the PILOT is a tax on improvements to the property and cannot be applied until those improvements are completed. Until the certificate of occupancy is issued, the developer continues to pay traditional real estate taxes throughout the construction period.

Councilman Kirsh raised several questions. Drawing on land use board experience, he emphasized the importance of considering the long-term impact of land use

decisions, particularly since PILOT agreements can last up to 30 years. He clarified that after the PILOT period ends, properties revert to regular taxation, which is significant for future municipal revenue.

Councilman Kirsh noted that while properties currently pay taxes, underutilized land generates far less revenue than it could if redeveloped. He asked whether PILOTs provide developers with cost certainty, allowing them to estimate development, operational, and tax expenses over the 30-year period, which in turn helps them secure financing and make projects viable. Without such certainty, financing and development could be difficult, leaving municipalities with underperforming properties. He concluded by suggesting that PILOTs should not be viewed as universally good or bad, but rather as mechanisms to help achieve the full potential and utility of a property.

Mr. Jessup agreed with Councilman Kirsh's perspective, stating that without intervention, underutilized land will likely remain unchanged. He explained that changes such as updated zoning through redevelopment and providing economic incentives like PILOTs can transform an unfeasible project—one that cannot secure financing or does not offer sufficient return to the developer—into a financially viable project that can move forward.

Councilman Kirsh asked whether, despite the remaining uncertainties and risks associated with long-term investments, such as not knowing what the market will look like in 10, 20, or 30 years, the absence of a PILOT would make the project so risky that development would be unlikely or unfeasible.

Mr. Jessup responded that, traditionally, without a PILOT agreement, it is often impossible to secure necessary financing for a project. He explained that both debt financing (typically around 70% of project costs) and equity investment (about 30%) may be unattainable if the financial projections do not add up. Without the economic support provided by a PILOT, the project may not be financially feasible.

Michael Hanley of NW Financial Group LLC, serving as the municipality's financial consultant, summarized the financial aspects of the redevelopment project. He noted that the municipality has worked extensively to ensure the proposed uses including logistics, lab, and office space are appropriate for Bridgewater. The project covers nearly a million square feet and is expected to increase property tax revenue from a few hundred thousand dollars to approximately \$3 million, reducing the tax burden on current residents.

Hanley explained that PILOT payments for logistics space will start at 13.5% of gross revenue, rising to 14% and then 14.5%. For lab and office space, the rates start at 10%, then increase to 12% and 14%. These rates reflect market conditions: logistics space is in high demand, while lab and office space face higher vacancies and

greater competition for tenants.

He highlighted the challenging economic environment, with rising construction and labor costs, higher interest rates, and reduced availability of construction loans. These factors make financial incentives like PILOTs essential for attracting tenants and ensuring the project's viability. Hanley concluded that this structure would make Bridgewater competitive, help secure tenants, and drive the development forward, ultimately benefiting the municipality and its taxpayers.

Mayor Moench discussed the financial impact of the project, noting that under the current tax model, the township receives about 12% of the property's \$600,000 revenue. If the redevelopment increases tax revenue to \$3 million or more, the township would receive 10% of that amount, approximately \$300,000, with the potential for more if the project performs well. He emphasized that, similar to the township's arrangement with the mall, the PILOT structure makes the municipality a partner in the project's success: as the developer's revenue increases, so does the township's share. This arrangement is expected to generate an additional \$2.2 million in revenue, significantly benefiting the township's budget.

Mr. Hanley confirmed that Bridgewater taxpayers will benefit from the increased revenue generated by the project. He noted that the municipality is expected to receive over 70% of the cumulative PILOT payments, which will significantly enhance the municipal budget if the project is successful.

Council President Norgalis referenced the project chart showing six buildings to be constructed over time. He reiterated that each building will have its own separate 30-year PILOT agreement, starting from the year it is completed (e.g., the first in 2027, the next in 2028, etc.). Norgalis emphasized that this arrangement is a win-win for both the township and the developer, and he wanted residents to understand that this is a positive development for the community.

Mayor Moench noted that Bridgewater currently has few PILOT agreements and is considering a few additional properties for potential PILOTs. He asked how common PILOT agreements are in New Jersey and whether they are used frequently or are relatively rare across the state.

Mr. Hanley stated that since 2008, PILOT agreements have become extremely common in New Jersey, with hundreds being established each year across the state. He noted that their use has increased even more since the COVID-19 pandemic due to rising costs from supply chain issues and higher interest rates. Although rents have increased, the costs of development have risen even faster, making PILOTs an important tool for new projects.

Mayor Moench highlighted Bridgewater's strategy to attract biotech and innovation

companies, noting the shift from large campuses to smaller, innovative firms like AnMed and Caltech establishing national headquarters in the area. He emphasized that offering PILOT agreements for biotech office buildings is crucial for attracting and retaining these marquee tenants. Without PILOTs, companies may choose other locations with more favorable tax structures, as the tax burden is ultimately passed on to tenants through rent. Moench concluded that adopting PILOTs is an important step for Bridgewater to remain competitive in the biotech sector.

Mr. Hanley emphasized the competitive nature of attracting biotech companies, noting that Bridgewater is not only competing with other locations in New Jersey but also nationally with cities like Boston, Dallas, and Raleigh. These areas also offer strong universities, educated workforces, and incentive programs. He pointed out that biotech companies have specialized needs and higher costs, especially for lab space, and that without a competitive incentive package like a PILOT, these companies may choose other sites for their operations.

Mayor Moench reiterated that under the proposed PILOT agreement, the developer will continue to pay traditional taxes until a certificate of occupancy is issued for the first phase of the project. He mentioned that there may be opportunities to partner with the developer in ways that could provide additional benefits to the township before the issuance of the certificate of occupancy, though he was careful not to specify legal terms. Moench also emphasized that maintaining the bridge component of the project remains a critical factor in his approval of any proposed agreement, and he intends to ensure it stays part of ongoing discussions.

Mr. Jessup clarified for the council and public that, separate from the PILOT agreement, the township has the authority under redevelopment law to negotiate with the developer for fees to offset municipal costs related to the redevelopment project. Unlike traditional land use applications, there does not need to be a direct connection between the project and the improvements requested. The township's redevelopment plan includes goals such as economic and environmental benefits for Bridgewater, and the township can negotiate fees to cover current or future costs associated with redevelopment until PILOT revenue begins.

Councilman Kirsh followed up on the discussion about Bridgewater's attractiveness to businesses, noting that while the local workforce is a draw, companies may also need to recruit talent from outside the area. He suggested that the township should continue to enhance the positive environment and community it has built, making it easier for companies to attract new employees. This, in turn, would support local property values and maintain Bridgewater as an attractive place to live.

**Public
Comment**

Administrator Pappas addressed concerns raised by a member of the public regarding the township's financial management and bonding strategy. He distributed a report from the township's financial advisor, clarifying interest rate trends and the

rationale behind recent debt service decisions. The report demonstrated that the township's chosen approach resulted in steady and declining debt service, avoiding a significant budget spike that would have occurred under the alternative scenario suggested by the resident. Administrator Pappas emphasized that the public comment reflected an opinion rather than the full facts and confirmed that the financial team's recommendations were based on expert analysis.

Members of the public wishing to address the Council on any matter will be allowed three 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.

- **Cathy Franco: 766 Weemac Road - Martinsville, NJ 08836**

Ms. Franco raised concerns about the transparency and public availability of the bond information distributed by Administrator Pappas. She also addressed the township's use of PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) agreements, emphasizing the need for more detailed public education on how PILOTs impact tax distribution among the township, county, schools, and other services. Ms. Franco expressed dissatisfaction that PILOT agreements may shift the tax burden onto residents and other commercial taxpayers, particularly when new developments are not taxed in the same way as other properties. She urged the administration to ensure that any future PILOT plans are fair and transparent, so all taxpayers understand their implications.

Council President Norgalis clarified that decisions regarding PILOT agreements are made at the township's discretion and that the public does not have input in these decisions.

Councilman Pedroso emphasized that funds generated through PILOT agreements and allocated to the municipal budget ultimately belong to the taxpayers of Bridgewater. He clarified that this money is not for the council's discretionary use but is public money that will be used for the benefit of the community, potentially impacting taxes or municipal services.

Ms. Franco pointed out that agenda item 13A involves a resolution to approve nearly \$3 million in additional spending. She noted that, if this rate of spending continues for the rest of the year, it would annualize to \$76 million, significantly higher than the previous year's budget of \$50.5 million.

Councilman Kirsh assured Ms. Franco that the annual budget would not reach \$76 million, as she had projected based on current spending rates. While he did not provide a specific figure, he stated that the final budget would be much closer to the previous year's \$50.5 million than to \$76 million.

Councilman Kirsh explained that the draft working budget was not yet available for public discussion but confirmed that a clear budget introduction would be provided in two weeks.

- **Jane Gandolfe: 2000 Washington Valley Road – Martinsville, NJ 08836**

Ms. Gandolfe thanked Council President Norgalis for his 21 years of service and acknowledged the dedication of all council members. She also expressed appreciation to Administrator Pappas, the Department of Public Works, and Tom Genova for their support of a recent Friends of Bridgewater History event.

Ms. Gandolfe then addressed concerns about the township's handling of historic properties. She referenced a declined offer from a developer to restore a house for use by the Friends of Bridgewater History and noted the lack of public access to several township-owned historic sites. Ms. Gandolfe urged the council to reconsider the developer's offer and called for greater township support and action regarding historic preservation, expressing disappointment over the inactivity of the Historic Committee and the ongoing deterioration of historic properties.

- **Seth Nix: The Acts Church Global, Located at 60 Cottontail Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873**

During the meeting, Lead Pastor Seth Nix of The Acts Church was present to formally introduce himself to the council. Pastor Nix expressed his desire to build positive relationships with local leadership and emphasized the church's goal to be an active and supportive presence within the community. Council members welcomed Pastor Nix and appreciated his introduction.

- **Robert Albano: 1149 Papen Road- Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Albano, a member of the Martinsville Rescue Squad, raised concerns about the township's financial protection in the event of bankruptcy related to developer agreements and PILOTs, urging the township attorney to ensure safeguards are in place. He then addressed ongoing erosion issues along Peters Brook, describing the history of previous stabilization efforts and the recent destruction of gabions due to storms, particularly Hurricane Ida. Mr. Albano highlighted the increasing erosion, the risk posed to nearby homes and infrastructure, and the imminent danger to a large oak tree that could fall onto a neighbor's house. He requested that the township take action to address the erosion for safety reasons, noting that the county has indicated the stream is the township's responsibility.

Mayor Moench recalled that prior to recent severe storms, such as Hurricane Ida, the area around Peters Brook was stable enough to support local wildlife, referencing a snake that used to sun itself on a rock there. He noted that the

storms have since significantly altered the landscape, underscoring the extent of the disruption and erosion now present.

- **Dan Zolinski: 715 Chimney Rock Road, Bridgewater, NJ 08807**

Mr. Zolinski sought clarification regarding a property on Chimney Rock Road that was intended for senior citizen housing, noting that construction appears to have stopped and inquiring about the status of the development, including whether there are issues such as bankruptcy or if the project is simply stalled. He also commented on the earlier discussion about PILOT programs, clarifying for the public that the concern is not that 95% of PILOT funds go directly to the administration, but rather that, unlike normal taxation, allocation of these funds to entities like the library is at the discretion of the council or mayor.

Administrator Pappas explained that the developer of the Chimney Rock Road property had originally received zoning board approval for eight age-restricted single-family homes. The developer later considered converting the project to higher-density or partially affordable housing, but more recently, another developer has shown interest in proceeding with the original approved plan. There may be a request for minor modifications to the approval, but that is the most current information available.

Mayor Moench noted that some developers are delaying projects, including those already approved, as they wait to see the requirements of the next round of affordable housing obligations. He explained that developers may be holding off in hopes of proposing higher-density developments if additional affordable housing units are needed for the township's plan.

- **Adam Alb: 2002 Washington Valley Road, Martinsville, NJ 08836**

Mr. Alb addressed the council to express concerns about his rights as a farmer under the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the New Jersey Right to Farm Act. He described his long-standing difficulties with local authorities and neighbors over the past 30 years, stating that he has faced persistent harassment while trying to exercise his right to farm and build a home in Bridgewater. Mr. Alb also criticized the township's land preservation practices, alleging that land purchased for preservation is not made accessible to the public and is sometimes later sold to developers. He urged the council to respect and uphold the rights of farmers and ensure transparency and fairness in land use and preservation policies.

Mayor Moench asked Mr. Alb if there was a recent incident that prompted his appearance at the meeting, noting that the individuals Mr. Alb referenced, such as Judge Sasso and George Jones, have not served in Bridgewater for many years.

Mr. Alb invited council members to visit his property to see the ongoing issues he has faced, clarifying that his concerns stem from the same longstanding problem, including a fire from 30 years ago. He reiterated his frustration that zoning officials do not disclose who is filing complaints against him and emphasized that he is protected by the Right to Farm Act.

Council President Norgalis clarified that the Right to Farm Act does not exempt property owners from maintaining their property. He explained that the Act provides specific protection for registered farmers, such as the right to produce crops and manage farm operations, but it does not override other property maintenance requirements.

Mr. Alb explained that disputes regarding farm operations should first be addressed by the county agricultural committee, and if unresolved, escalated to the state level. He noted that while the township's zoning officer has been involved, a state official has inspected his property and found no violations.

Administrator Pappas stated that he had investigated Mr. Alb's situation and had his office reach out to arrange a meeting. He reiterated his willingness to meet with Mr. Alb to review his findings and offered to contact him to schedule a time for further discussion.

Mayor Moench assured Mr. Alb that all council members would be provided with the relevant background information regarding his situation, so any member he speaks with will be informed about the issue.

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

**Public
Hearing &
Final Action
Ordinances**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF PROPERTY KNOWN AS LOT 511 IN BLOCK 3 ON THE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP TAX MAP AND LOCATED AT WHITNEY COURT, BRIDGEWATER, NEW JERSEY 08807 (EAST OF SHASTA DRIVE), TO TRIPLE C HOUSING, INC., 1520 ROUTE 130 N, SUITE 201 NORTH BRUNSWICK, NJ 08902 (BUYER), FOR A NOMINAL CONSIDERATION OF \$100.00 PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40A: 12-21(l) TO CONSTRUCT AFFORDABLE HOUSING. IF THE DEVELOPER IS UNABLE TO MEET CONSTRUCTION COST THROUGH OTHER SOURCES, THE TOWNSHIP MAY CONTRIBUTE UP TO \$150,000.00 FROM THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND

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

- **Cathy Franco: 766 Weemac Road - Martinsville, NJ 08836**
Ms. Franco inquired about the proposed allocation of up to \$150,000 for a

property intended to include five affordable housing units (with double credit for bonus purposes). She questioned whether the developer’s financial projections had been reviewed to ensure the project’s viability, given their apparent difficulty in securing financing, and suggested considering a loan instead of a direct grant.

Council President Norgalis explained that township funds—up to \$150,000—would only be provided to the developer after a thorough process confirming that they are unable to secure financing through other means.

Administrator Pappas noted that the organization seeking funding has a proven track record, with several township professionals familiar with their successful completion of similar projects in other locations.

Mayor Moench explained that, for some projects, municipalities may need to demonstrate that funds are available as a form of assurance to lenders. This municipal backing can help developers secure financing, even if the funds are not ultimately used, by providing lenders with confidence that financial support is available in case of construction delays or cost overruns.

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 Pedroso	Absent
Councilman Ring	Absent
Council President Norgalis	Aye

ORDINANCE #25-04 WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-132](#) is appended to the official minutes

Resolutions

A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR EMERGENCY TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT FUND \$1,421,314.19, WHICH BRINGS THE 2025 YEAR TO DATE TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS TO \$32,269,389.15

Mayor Moench thanked the budget subcommittee and Council President Norgalis for their work on the budget, noting that about \$200,000 was removed from the temporary budget to keep spending focused only on essential payments. He emphasized that the budget process is nearly two months ahead of last year’s timeline, with informal presentations on the draft budget having taken place in late

June and the introduction occurring in early July the previous year. The mayor expressed appreciation for the team's efforts and highlighted the progress made in advancing the budget process this year.

Councilman Kurdyla clarified that, based on his understanding, these are bills that would be included in the budget regardless of the final outcome or specifics of the budget itself.

Councilman Pedroso stated that, consistent with his previous votes on emergency temporary appropriation resolutions, he would vote no. He explained that although he received the budget binder that evening, he had not yet had the opportunity to review it. Councilman Pedroso further expressed concern about the resolution's figures, noting that the \$32.2 million amount, when doubled, totals \$64 million—a budget size he would not support. He acknowledged that some expenditures may be top-heavy but reiterated his concerns about the spending and confirmed he would not support the resolution.

Councilman Kirsh remarked that neither \$75 million nor \$64 million is the correct budget figure unless there are significant changes in the next two weeks. He emphasized that the bills covered by the resolution are absolutely necessary and must be paid to avoid severe negative consequences, such as lapses in group health insurance, facility maintenance, IT infrastructure, senior services, health benefit waivers, street and road repairs (including pothole repair), recycling contracts, county library maintenance, planning board operations, and employee payroll. Councilman Kirsh stated that these are essential government functions, which is why he will vote yes on the resolution. However, he expressed dissatisfaction that the council is still dealing with temporary appropriations in May and suggested that better planning and an earlier start could have prevented this situation. He concluded by noting that, with continued diligence, the council anticipates being able to introduce the budget in two weeks.

Council President Norgalis expressed gratitude to Mr. Pappas and his staff for their exhaustive reanalysis, which made the budget reduction possible.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-133](#) is appended to the official minutes

AUTHORIZING THE MODIFICATION OF RESOLUTION 24-12-19-291 AS IT APPLIES TO THE HOUSING REHABILITATION PROJECT AT 855 BROWN ROAD IN BRIDGEWATER, NJ

Council President Norgalis noted that the change being discussed is relatively de minimis, estimating that it amounts to less than \$700.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-134](#) is appended to the official minutes

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER, COUNTY OF SOMERSET, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CLERK TO EXECUTE A FEDERAL AID AGREEMENT WITH THE NJDOT FOR THE ADAMSVILLE SCHOOL PEDESTRIAN SAFETY PROJECT, WHICH RECEIVED SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FUNDING

Mayor Moench informed the council that they received a federal grant for a comprehensive project in the Adamsville Road area. This grant will fund safety improvements, including creating new sidewalks where none exist, repairing hazardous roadways, and addressing dangerous busing situations. The goal is to enhance the quality of life in the area and make it safer for students to walk to school.

Councilman Pedroso asked for clarification on whether the federal grant for the Adamsville Road area project requires a matching contribution from the municipality.

Administrator Pappas clarified that this is the initial step in the process and explained that the grant is reimbursable. He noted that they will return to the council to request the initial funding amount but emphasized that the grant funds will be reimbursed.

Mayor Moench explained that one of the challenges with the grant-funded Adamsville Road project, as well as one or two other similar projects this year, is that the municipality must spend the money upfront before being reimbursed. This requires

appropriating funds in the budget process or through a capital bond to cover initial costs. He noted that this reimbursement structure also applies to another Safe Routes to School project and possibly a third state project, emphasizing that it is best to complete such projects within the same year

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-135](#) is appended to the official minutes

RESOLUTION OPPOSING LEGISLATION S-1408/A-2757, SPONSORED BY SENATOR TROY SINGLETON AND BENJIE E. WIMBERLY, ALSO ASSEMBLY MEMBERS LOUIS D. GREENWALD, CLINTON CALABRESE, TENNILLE R. MCCOY, AND CO-SPONSORED BY DAN HUTCHISON AND ROBERT J. KARABINCHAK, WHICH WOULD PREEMPT LOCAL PLANNING AND PERMIT CONVERSION OF CERTAIN OFFICE PARKS AND RETAIL CENTERS TO MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Mayor Moench commented that, as a general practice, Bridgewater does not frequently pass resolutions to support or oppose various issues. However, he believes this particular matter warrants an exception. He expressed concern over ongoing efforts from Trenton to impose unwanted development on suburban municipalities like Bridgewater, particularly in the context of affordable housing plans. Mayor Moench explained that the proposed bill would allow the state to override local planning decisions and force large-scale, mixed-use developments that could bring in thousands of new residents, regardless of whether such projects fit the community. He stated that this approach would be detrimental to both Bridgewater and the state, emphasizing the importance of sending a clear message that this is not acceptable for the town.

Councilman Kirsh offered brief comments, noting that this issue had been discussed in detail during conversations about affordable housing and the township's planning efforts. He expressed frustration that the community is already constrained in its planning and that the proposed legislation would further limit local control, or "home rule." Kirsh pointed out that, as he understands it, the bill could allow almost any office building to be converted into housing, which would be an unexpected and potentially unwelcome change for residents living near commercial zones. He raised concerns about the possibility of high-density housing appearing in areas where

neighbors would not anticipate it and questioned how such changes might affect affordable housing requirements, potentially penalizing communities with office buildings. Kirsh concluded that there are too many unknowns and viewed the proposal as additional overreach from Trenton.

Councilman Pedroso expressed his concern that the actions being taken by policymakers in Trenton may negatively impact suburban communities in New Jersey. He suggested that these efforts appear to be part of a broader initiative that could undermine the character of local suburbs.

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

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

THE RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-136](#) 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 contract negotiations and litigation/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 Kirsh, Council convened in closed session at approximately 9:47 p.m.

A copy of resolution [#25-05-08-137](#) is appended to the official minutes.

On the motion of Councilman Kirsh, seconded by Councilman Kurdyla, the meeting reconvened to open session at approximately 10:36 p.m. and adjourned immediately thereafter.

Adjournment

On the motion of Councilman Kurdyla, seconded by Councilman Kirsh, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Njuguna, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Howard Norgalis
Council President