

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

BOROUGH OF DEMAREST

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 28, 2022 7:30 PM

Mayor Iannuzzi opened the meeting at 7:35 pm with the following announcement: The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time and place of this regular meeting in the annual schedule and notice of regular meetings of this Governing Body. Such annual schedule and notice of regular meetings is posted at Borough Hall, was mailed to the Record and Star Ledger and was filed with the Borough Clerk of Demarest on November 22, 2021.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Roll Call

Mr. Carroll-present Mrs. Slowikowski-present
Mrs. Fox-present Mr. Connelly-present at 7:37
Mrs. Hamilton-present Mrs. LaPira-present
Mayor Iannuzzi-present

3. Mr. Carroll moved to Adopt the Agenda seconded by Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes Mrs. Slowikowski-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes Mrs. LaPira-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes

Carried.

4. Bridget DiMartini and Demarest Middle School /Green Team STEM students presented a proposal concerning sustainability. They suggested installing a solar tube in the Wakelee Field boys' bathroom; they described the research they undertook. Mrs. DiMartini reported on her vendor research. The 10-inch kit is \$290; the extension kit is \$215. The maximizer lens would be needed, and installation would also be needed. It is possible that Federal funding could be obtained. Benefits include that solar tubes are environmentally friendly and save money in the long run. The Mayor suggested that Mrs. DiMartini speak with the DPW Committee to see what can be done.
5. **The Borough Clerk read the following: Review of Consent Agenda Items:** All items with an asterisk are considered to be non-controversial by the Council and will be approved by one motion. There may be further discussion prior to the vote upon request of a member of the public or a Council member. Also,

any item may be removed for further discussion or for roll call vote in which case the item will be removed and considered in its normal sequence as part of the general order of business.

Resolutions

- 6. Resolution approving authorizing claims in the amount of \$ 3,389,258.37*
- 7. Resolution approving Northwest BCUA shared services for sanitary sewer cleaning and TV inspections*
- 8. Resolution approving budget transfers*
- 9. Resolution approving release of escrows*
- 10. Resolution approving a dedication by rider for a shade tree replacement program*
- 11. Motion approving Spectrum for Living 50/50 raffle #RA-22-69*

There was no request to remove items from Consent Agenda and no discussion.
Mr. Carroll moved to open the meeting to the Public, second Mrs. Fox.

Mr. Carroll-yes Mrs. Slowikowski-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes Mrs. LaPira-yes

Carried.

Mr. Carroll moved to close meeting to Public on Consent Agenda items only, second Mrs. Fox. All in favor. Carried.

Mr. Carroll moved to approve Consent Agenda items 6-11, second Mrs. Fox.

Mr. Carroll-yes Mrs. Slowikowski-yes
Mrs. Fox-yes Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes Mrs. LaPira-yes

Carried.

New Business

Mr. Carroll moved to approve the minutes of Mayor and Council meeting of February 28, 2022 (JC, DF, MH, BC, RL), second Mrs. Hamilton.

Mr. Carroll-yes Mrs. Slowikowski-yes
Mrs. Fox-abstain Mr. Connelly-yes
Mrs. Hamilton-yes Mrs. LaPira-yes

Carried.

Mayor's Report: On March 12th the Borough honored Mrs. Nancy Woods by renaming the Peace Gazebo in her honor. It was well attended despite the weather. The plaque was donated by her family. Next month the Council will vote on a resolution to accept the donation. The Library has had a lot of good programs. A guided nature walk took place on Saturday. Heather Shimokawa has been appointed to finish the unexpired term of Jennifer Choi which expires on December 31,2024.

Council Committee Reports

Police, Fire, and Public Events: Mr. Carroll reported that the DPW has installed many signs intended to slow down traffic; two LED radar signs have been purchased and many warnings, summonses and tickets have been issued. He thanked the Fire Department for their dinner and the great job they do. There is a personnel item for Closed Session and Memorial Day plans are under discussion.

Ambulance and Recreation: Mrs.LaPira thanked and showed appreciation for the Ambulance Corps who saved an infant. She welcomed Dan Nyfenger as the new Demarest Rec Camp director. Registration will start right after spring break. The camp will run June 27-August 5. The cost is \$625.00. A second pool day has been added. Field trips will be Thursday.

Management, Administrative & Communication Committee: Mr. Connelly reported that the Construction fees are almost finished. Purchase orders are now required for purchases and payment. The newsletter went out.

Finance & Insurance Committee: Mrs. Fox reported that the annual financial statement is in progress due to changes in auditing standards. Waiting for the annual financial statement is delaying the budget. It should be introduced in April and approved in May. This is the year for Demarest to be audited by the state.

DPW, Public Buildings, Public Utilities & Recycling Committee: Mrs. Hamilton reported that the DPW is working on the fields. There is a clothing/shoe bin for donations. The Shade Tree Commission is doing a great job and got Demarest named as "Tree City USA" again.

Real Estate & Ordinance Committee Mrs. Slowikowski reported that three ordinances are in progress: a short-term lease ordinance, a vacant storefront ordinance and the construction fee ordinance. The Swim Club's annual meeting was postponed. They are working on the renewal of their lease. There is a clean communities program that provides money for litter abatement. On May 4 the plastic bag ban goes into effect. A resident suggested using some of the clean communities money for creating reusable bags. Mrs. Slowikowski is looking into it. The cost would be \$2500 for 5000 bags. The Commission is looking into how many would be needed.

Reports of Borough Officials

Borough Administrator: Mr. Powderley reported that he met with the architect for the Borough Hall addition and asked him to revise some areas, including one having to do with the safety of the judge. He also took the architect to review the bank. Dart Computers feels the server can be reached from the bank. Re FEMA, he walked a large part of the Cresskill Brook and suggested cleaning of some sections. FEMA will reimburse 90%. He also stated that he is looking at grants to restore and improve the cemetery and involved the historian as well as creating a parklike area behind the Borough Hall. He spoke about researching heating systems for the RR Depot. One vendor suggested a gas-fired radiant heat system. The cost would be approximately \$7,000, and there is already a gas line outside the depot. The Construction Department issued 42 permits, 7 updates, and 6 COs. Total fees brought in \$32,939. They are working on a new fee structure. There is a personnel issue for Closed Session.

Borough Clerk: Ms. Crosman reported that drainage piping is being stored on the adjacent property on Serpentine Rd. for the Stelfox Road improvement project.

Borough Attorney: Mr. Paster reported that he had a conference call with the planner and affordable housing liaison about using the bank for offices and moving affordable housing elsewhere. It will simply require an ordinance.

Borough Engineer: Mr. Zimmerman reported that he prepared a report; he highlighted several issues, including the bocce ball court with seating areas is on track; the letter of intent to apply for a grant is due April 8. The letter of intent for the cemetery is also due April 8. Several road projects are in process. He thanked the Borough Clerk for helping to alert residents about roadwork in their areas. He spoke about cleaning the stream and easements and that he will look into DEP permits required. It is a trout-producing stream, which will affect the dates of work. Tax maps will be completed next month. He spoke about the Riverside Cooperative.

Borough Treasurer no additional report

Police Chief – No one was in attendance.

Fire Chief Chief McLoughlin thanked everyone for support. He reported on the calls. Mr. Carroll asked him to recap the tribute he gave to Ray DePietro, which he did. He spoke about the fact that Mr. De Pietro floated for three days in the Pacific Ocean during World War I and thanked him for playing taps for the Borough. Mr. DePietro happened to be in the audience and received a round of applause. He will return next month to receive a plaque.

Ambulance – No one was in attendance.

Mr. Carroll moved to Open the meeting to the Public, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Carried.

Marvin Chudnoff (62 Pine Terrace) asked if he was to assume that Mr. Powderley was to remain the Borough Administrator. The Mayor said that he was. He restated that he bears no ill will toward Mr. Powderley but that he takes issue with the process. Concerning the Railroad Depot he suggested a split system for environmental and appearance. Discussion. He referred to the minutes concerning the move of some departments to the Bank. The minutes stated that the Council and attorney agree with the idea. He asked whether the attorney was asked to comment on this capital expense. He did not feel that attorneys should be asked about non-legal issues. He asked that the insurance expense be researched. He spoke about EV stations. He stated that when he looks at the stats and comparables, something is wrong. Demarest is the 5th highest in taxes of all municipalities. He said that this is a disaster. He said that he will come to monthly meetings. Mrs. Fox asked him to look at the municipal portion of the tax bill. Mr. Carroll asked him where he would like to cut. Mr. Chudnoff asked for more information.

Noelle Tuntunjian (8 John Street) thanked everyone who volunteers their time. She followed up on the petition from last month. She reminded the Council that she had asked for a special Town Hall meeting. The Mayor stated that there was a meeting every month and that she did not entertain a designated Town Hall meeting. Mrs. Slowikowski suggested that a designated meeting might help. The Mayor stated that concerns should be heard at the regularly scheduled meetings. Ms. Tuntunjian agreed that people should come to the meeting but asked what the resistance was to letting people ask questions at a Town Hall. Several Councilmembers spoke about the fact that they come to many meetings. Ms. Tuntunjian asked what the surplus currently is. The Mayor stated that the number was being determined. Ms. Tuntunjian asked at what point in the process of something like moving departments to the Bank building the community is informed. The Mayor explained the process to her. The Mayor and Council reassured her that all matters that affect the community will come to the meetings for discussion.

Mike Clarke (Donnybrook) asked what the speed limit is coming down Hardenburgh and stated that the speed limit is not posted. The Administrator stated that there is an electronic sign, but Mr. Clarke said that it only says how fast someone is traveling. Mr. Clarke asked about plans for the Borough Hall and bank. Discussion. Mr. Clarke said that it sounds like there is no master plan. The Borough Administrator said that the utilities are now off. They will be put back on and minor alterations done for short-term use. Mr. Clarke said that he felt that if so many people were concerned with a particular issue a Town Hall meeting might help get more people involved and that a Town Hall meeting might be a more relaxed atmosphere.

Lynn Paulison (Lois Avenue) said that what troubled her about the recent Mayor and Council meeting was that she did not feel heard at it and that she felt the decision had already been made and that the Council was not really open to listening. She said that she loved the idea of bocce but felt that it belonged better at Wakelee. The Council said that the space had been purchased with Open Space funds and couldn't be used for anything other than Open Space. She asked who paid for United Way housing. The Mayor stated that there was money in the Developers fund. Discussion. Ms. Paulison spoke about the air traffic noise and traffic over her house. Mr. Carroll spoke about contacting

Congressmen and senators. The Mayor spoke about a meeting she had attended about air traffic. She gave the air noise abatement numbers: 800-225-1071 201-288-8828. The Mayor said that she believed the bridge would be started soon.

Stacy Findanis read a letter from her neighbor about the traffic on Woodland Road. She also stated for herself that she appreciated the signs and the presence of the police officers but that once the officers leave people speed again. She asked what the next step is. The Mayor suggested putting in sidewalks to get people out of the way. Ms. Findanis asked what she can do to get one-way signs put up. The Mayor spoke about when Leonia did that and then was sued and had to take them down. The Borough Administrator spoke about the process. Ms. Findanis said that she left the Fort Lee area for a small town feel and is getting discouraged and wanting to leave. Mrs. LaPira spoke with her about the importance of coming to the meeting and voicing concerns.

Stella Davis spoke about the desire for a Town Hall meeting.

Gregg Longest (Brook Way) asked about the bocce courts. He asked whether there was any possibility of using that space for expansion of the Borough Hall or parking. The Mayor stated that exploration showed that wasn't possible. He also voiced a desire to have all recreation together and that he would prefer pickleball. The Mayor agreed that pickleball is a wonderful sport. She also discussed the process of transferring the low-income housing to another location and the possibility of Borough offices in the bank. Discussion of renovations necessary to be ADA compliant and police requirements. He asked whether there had in the last 5 years been a petition signed by 600 people. He asked again that there be a meeting dedicated to discussing the master plan and transparency or create the master plan and put it on display to allow people to submit their questions.

Jill Besnoy (17 John Street) stated that concerning public comments it doesn't feel that they are heard but are reprimanded. She asked who placed the Borough Administrator matter on the Consent Agenda and when. She was told that it was placed on it in August and placed by one of the Mayor and Council members. She then asked what material was circulated to the Council. She was told that because they knew Mr. Powderley there was no material circulated. She then stated that she had heard that Marti Francis had been let go and that she had heard about a hostile work environment. She said that many residents had worked with her and wondered why she had been let go. She was told by the Borough Attorney that there was an ongoing investigation and that it was not prudent to discuss it. Ms. Besnoy said that it felt that there were a lot of closed-door meetings and then matters were presented at meetings at which public comments had no impact.

Noel Pugh spoke about unpermitted work done at 9 Donnybrook Drive in April 2020. The work made runoff go into the sensitive Donnybrook. He spoke about documents he had prepared and a call he had made to the Borough Clerk, which resulted in the DPW Supervisor's visit to the property. The Borough Engineer offered to review the application for the permit and explore whether there was a seepage pit planned. Mr. Pugh said that

he had not heard from anyone. Mr. Carroll stated that engineers had been sent to the property. The engineer stated that he will devote time to research the issue.

Dan Marks (14 Van Horn Street) stated that he had noticed a nepotism clause removed from the manual. The Mayor stated that no clause was removed. The Administrator stated that the nepotism clause was updated but not removed.

Ms. Verna (113 Anderson) asked about the bridge. The Mayor stated that it was actually a culvert and that it would be replaced and paved over. A contractor has been named. Once materials arrive it should be done in short order.

Mr. Carroll moved to close the meeting to the public, second Mrs. Fox. All in favor. Carried.

Closed Session for two personnel issues; the Administrator stated that there probably would be no action taken. Closed Session began at 10:10 pm. Mr. Carroll moved to close Closed Session, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Closed Session ended at 10:42. Mr. Carroll moved to go into Open Session, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Carried.

Adjournment Mr. Carroll moved to adjourn, second Mrs. Hamilton. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Crosman,
Borough Clerk