

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST  
Work Session**

**MEETING Minutes  
September 11, 2023**

This meeting was called to order at 7:32 at the Council Chambers of the Borough of Demarest, 118 Serpentine Rd. Demarest, NJ.

Mayor Bernstein read the compliance statement and invited all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance, led by resident Howard Rifkind

**Present:** Mayor Bernstein, Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember LaPira, Councilmember Jiang

**Absent:** Councilmember Marks

**Also Present:** Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney  
Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator  
Jason Gangi, Public Works Manager  
Anthony Dimitriadis, Police Chief  
Jason Laliker, Tax Assessor

Mayor Bernstein announced the following appointment, noted that the appointment was discussed with the Environmental Commission Chair and welcomed David to the Commission.

David Lerner Alternate #2 filling unexpired term ending 12/31/23

**Ordinance (Introduction):**

**Ordinance No. 1126-23**

ORDINANCE AMENDING AND MODIFYING CHAPTER 166. VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC

A motion was made by Councilmember Hamilton and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to introduce on first reading by title Ordinance No. 1126-23 and it published in the Bergen Record with notice of Public Hearing to be held on September 26, 2023

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember LaPira, Councilmember Jiang

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Marks

Abstention: None

**Resolution:**

Resolution No. 124-23      Appointing Acting CFO

A motion was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Fox to approve the resolution appointing Peter Suh Acting Chief Financial Officer effective October 16, 2023

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember LaPira, Councilmember Jiang

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Marks

Abstention: None

**Work Session Discussion Items:**

Jason Laliker, Borough Tax Assessor explained to the Governing Body that the Borough has been ordered by the County Tax Board to conduct a Borough wide reassessment in 2024 to set 2025 taxes. This is due to the drastic change in the housing market and is required of many municipalities. The Borough has not had a reassessment in 20 years. The next step will be for Mr. Laliker to prepare a bid spec for a state approved firm to conduct the reassessment which entails a physical inspection of every property in the Borough in 2024. Exterior and interiors of all properties will need to be inspected. Mr. Laliker further explained that the Borough can consider an additional contract award for a 4-year contract from 2025-2028 to inspect 25% of the properties each year to keep on top of market forces and stop the need for a whole town reassessment in the future. He will include all options in the bid so the Borough can make that determination later. Mr. Laliker expects that when the reassessment is complete approximately 1/3 of the properties will see an increase in their assessments which will result in higher taxes, 1/3 will remain the same and 1/3 will go down. The council will defer the decision on the multi-year reassessment until bids are received. Additionally, the council would like a public presentation to the residents on the process. Mr. Laliker assured the council that the successful bidding company will conduct that presentation as well as meet with any homeowners individually that have questions.

**Consent Agenda:**

Resolution No. 121-23	Certification of 2022 Audit
Resolution No. 122-23	Adoption of Corrective Action Plan
Resolution No. 123-23	Appointing Casual Labor – Finance Department
Resolution No. 125-23	Authorizing Agreement for Leaf Disposal ORI
Resolution No. 126-23	Bills List
Resolution No. 127-23	Appointing Part Time Payroll Specialist

There being no requests from the council to remove any items from the consent agenda or any council member requesting to abstain from anything on the consent agenda a

motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the consent agenda.

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember LaPira, Councilmember Jiang

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Marks

Abstention: None

**Approval of Minutes:**

August 28, 2023 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve the minutes of the 8/28/23 meeting.

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Jiang

Nays: None

Absent: Councilmember Marks

Abstention: Councilmember Fox, Councilmember LaPira

Before opening the meeting to the public the Mayor shared the contents of an email he received from a builder complimenting the entire staff of the building department for their dedication and professionalism as he completes a large construction project in town. The Mayor thanked the construction office staff for their hard work.

Councilmember LaPira stated that the EMS has inquired into whether the Ford Explorer used by the former Borough Administrator was in use because they are looking into another command vehicle. The matter was discussed and decided that the Explorer is used as backup vehicle for several Borough employees and not the right car for the EMS emergency use.

A motion was made by Councilmember Hamilton, seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all to open the meeting to the public.

Howard Rifkind  
350 County Rd.

Mr. Rifkind asked if the reassessment discussed earlier is mandated by the State. He was told it is mandated by the County. Additionally, Mr. Rifkind believes the Borough should sell the bank building. Mr. Rifkind also asked about procedure for police interactions regarding body cameras. Chief Dimitriadis explained that officers should identify themselves as officers and inform anyone being recorded that the camera is on. Mayor Bernstein interjected and asked Mr. Rifkind if his concern for these rules was a result of an interaction he had with officers in the Borough Hall. Mr. Rifkind said it was, but he did not want to "get into" specifics. Lastly, Mr. Rifkind brought up a concern about whether or not rules are followed appropriately for the issuance of COs by the building department. A discussion ensued and Mr. Rifkind was told that a public meeting is not the appropriate forum to discuss individual transaction his neighbor has with the Borough.

Noel Pugh  
64 Prospect

Mr. Pugh asked about a drainage issue and what he believes is a violation by a neighbor on Donnybrook that arose in 2020.

Mr. Pugh was told that they have his earlier reports on the issue and that it is being evaluated.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak, the meeting was closed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Hamilton, seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern, in the absence of the Borough Clerk