

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA**

**January 27, 2025**

**7:30 PM**

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231, have been satisfied by the inclusion of the date, time and place of this meeting in the annual schedule of meetings of this Governing Body. Such schedule of meetings is posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website and was published in the Record and Star Ledger and filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Bernstein invited those present to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Absent: None

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator  
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney  
Frank Visaggio, Deputy Police Chief  
Brian Talty, Police Captain  
Jason Gangi, DPW Director  
Jeff Geissenheimer, EMS President  
Roberta Hoag, EMS Chief

Mayor Bernstein acknowledged and spoke about the importance of today as it is Holocaust Remembrance Day. He noted that January 27 refers to the date that the Auschwitz Concentration Camp was liberated. He asked those assembled to pause in a moment of silence for remembrance.

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Collins to suspend the regular order of business to consider a resolution concerning Affordable Housing and Present Certificates of Appreciation to the Korean Demarest Parents Association and the Demarest Chinese Families

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Nays:**

**Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to: the Korean Demarest Parents Association (KDPA) and the Demarest Chinese Families**

Mayor Bernstein spoke about the tireless efforts of the KDPA in supporting families and education in the Borough by fostering cultural understanding and planning events including the Annual Lunar New Year celebrations at the Demarest Schools. He invited the board members below to come forward to receive their certificates, joined by Councilmember Jiang

**KDPA**

Lana Jung, President  
MJ Park, Vice President  
Christine Unji Yu, Co-Secretary  
Diane Park, Co-Secretary  
Judy Kim, Treasurer

Mayor Bernstein then spoke of the community service and work of the Demarest Chinese Families. He noted their commitment to promoting diversity, inclusion and education for all the students in Demarest. He then invited board members below to come forward to receive their certificates, joined by Councilmember Jiang.

**Demarest Chinese Families**

Bernice Deng  
Ling Yu  
Lauren Liu

**Resolution No. 035-24 RESOLUTION OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, BERGEN COUNTY, COMMITTING TO THE BOROUGH'S FOURTH ROUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OBLIGATION**

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to approve the resolution.

A motion is made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve resolution 035-24.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Nays:**

**2025 Appointments to Board & Commissions:**

Mayor Bernstein then made the below appointments:

**Shade Tree Commission (Mayor)**

Faye Sloan, Regular Member *filling unexpired term, expiring 12/31/2027*

**Recreation Commission (Mayor)**

Craig Besnoy, Regular Member *term expiring 12/31/2029*

**Board of Health Appointments (Mayor with Council Consent)**

Ilana Mitaliski, Regular Member *filling the unexpired term of Dr. Jae Hon Kim expiring 12/31/2025*

Dr. Jodi Reiss, Regular Member *filling an unexpired term of Dr. Lewis Nelson, expiring 12/31/2025*

Edward Yezeqian, Alternate #2 *filling unexpired term of Ilana Mitiliski expiring 12/31/2026*

A motion is made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Collins to confirm the appointments.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Abstain:** Councilman Reiss *noted his abstention on the appointment of Dr. Jodi Reiss*

**Nays:**

**Golden Seniors Association Board (Mayor with Council Consent)**

Craig Besnoy

*Trustee*

12/31/2025

A motion is made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to confirm the appointment.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Nays:**

**Ordinance (Introduction): (none)**

**Ordinance Public Hearing (Adoption): (none)**

**Consent Agenda**

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to have any resolution removed from the consent agenda and voted on separately. (none)

Mayor Bernstein asks if any member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the consent agenda.(none)

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to accept the consent agenda (with any abstentions noted)

**Consent Agenda:**

Resolution No. 036-25	Authorizing Grant Agreement with BC Open Space
Resolution No. 037-25	Confirming Court Appointments
Resolution No. 038-25	Confirming Judicial Appointment
Resolution No. 039-25	Mutual Aid Plan & Rapid Deployment Interlocal Agreement
Resolution No. 040-25	Renewal BCJIF Membership
Resolution No. 041-25	Appointing Conflict Counsel
Resolution No. 042-25	Payment of Bills
Resolution No. 043-25	Authorizing Application for LRIG FY 2025

A motion is made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to confirm the appointment.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

**Nays:**

**Roll Call:**

**Discussion Item:**

Borough Wide Reassessment

Mayor Bernstein noted that there have been many questions in regard to the reassessment, so he explained that the Reassessment was ordered and required by the County Board of Taxation. He noted that the last Borough wide Reassessment was in 2003. He reviewed the letters and the process and explained the process to the public. He explained that since there were so many questions and not everyone had the opportunity to meet with ASI he asked them to extend the deadline by two weeks. He implored residents to schedule appointments to ask their questions and ensure that the information related to their property is correct. He explained the breakdown of how property taxes are allocated noting that only 21.7% is municipally controlled, but the biggest percentage, 66% goes to the schools.

Councilmember Collins explained that the reassessment is considered tax neutral and the Borough is not gaining any extra funds, it is a redistribution and equalization.

Councilmember Fox then made a motion to open the meeting to the public on this issue only. Them option was seconded by Councilmember Collins and approved by all.

The following residents spoke to express various concerns about the process, the increases in assessments and potential tax increases:

Jodi Brenner  
Henry Hoberman  
John Chergo  
Mahood Ratchmilivitch  
Michael Lee  
Rebecca LaPira  
Chris Marti  
Andrew Glasser  
Sanjay  
Janice Albanese  
Ron Esposito  
Suzanne Chin  
Patricia Abbott  
Todd Brolin  
Sora Lee  
Hae Sun Lee  
Phil Hernandez  
Noah Osher

Many residents spoke about their concerns with the process and disagreement that sales are used as comparisons and the specifics of their increases. They do not believe this is fair and don't agree with the method.

Mayor Bernstein encouraged everyone to reach out to ASI or Jason Laliker, the Borough Tax Assessor to discuss the individual conditions of their homes.

Council President Slowikowski noted that while she agrees with what seems like an unfair process, the Borough is not empowered to intervene and the reassessment was required by the Board of Taxation.

Mayor Bernstein also noted that there are a few programs through the state for property tax relief and he will make sure that information is shared in emails and available on the Borough website.

The public was also informed that the comparative sales were on ASI's website.

Councilmember Fox explained that the information that ASI is asking for is the same information that will be required in the event of an appeal.

One resident asked how ASI was appointed. Ms. Rosendahl explained that it was a fair and open bidding process.

Mr. Glasser noted that not everyone agrees with the concerns expressed and he wanted to speak on behalf of people whose assessments went down because they have been subsidizing their neighbors for years.

Councilmember Collins made a motion to close the meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fox and approved by all.

### **Council Committee Reports**

Finance & Personnel (Slowikowski)  
No Report

Ordinance (Fox)

Councilmember Fox reported that the committee was reviewing the joint board ordinance as requested. Mayor Bernstein asked if they would commit to the work being complete by the next meeting. She responded that it was an extensive report and it takes time but they will try to have it ready by the next meeting.

DPW & Recreation (Marks)

Councilmember Marks deferred to DPW Director Jason Gangi to report on the current business of the DPW.

He then detailed upcoming events from Recreation.

Economic Development (Jiang)

Councilmember Jiang gave updates from the BOE. He then reported that the Redevelopment committee has received interest from several developers and they are continuing to be open in receiving ideas from different potential developers. He noted that all decisions would be made after an open transparent process with public input.

Police and OEM (Reiss)

Councilmember Reiss welcomed the three newest Police Officers into their field training stage. He congratulated Officer Nolasco and his wife on the birth of their baby, Mason.

Fire and EMS (Collins)

Councilmember Collins reviewed the year end activities of the Fire Department and noted that the EMS Chiefs are here to report on the EMS activity.

### **Reports of Borough Officials**

Borough Administrator

Ms. Falkenstern stated that she would cede her time to the young kids who had joined the meeting to discuss Ramadan.

Demarest School students Umar Munawar and Afan Munawar spoke on behalf of the Muslim community to thank the Mayor and Council for their commitment to displaying the crescent and supporting the crescent lighting event in honor of Ramadan.

Borough Attorney

No Report

Ambulance

Chief Hoag detailed the monthly activity and reminded people to keep paths clear to their homes in case of emergency.

Police Chief

Acting Chief Visaggio detailed the monthly activity of the department including training.

Mr. Glaser was invited back up to speak about security issues in his neighborhood. He noted that a group within his neighborhood were planning to hire private security which he does not agree with and is hoping the Police Department can advise what is being done to combat increasing property crime. Acting Chief Visaggio noted that statistically crime is not up but he understands a few well publicized robberies or attempted robberies are scary to residents. He detailed some increased patrols and schedule changes that will help to increase patrols, but asked Mr. Glasser and his neighbors to reach out to him and the Captain directly to set up a private meeting to discuss these issues.

### **Meeting Open to the Public**

Councilmember Fox made a motion to open to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all.

Roberta Hoag

Ms. Hoag reported that some kids have been sledding at NVD and it is dangerous. She is asking for outreach to prevent this from happening since the EMS has at least one injury a year.

Councilmember Jiang will reach out to the school to address.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak, Councilmember Collins made a motion to close to the public. The motion was seconded by Council President Slowikowski and approved by all.

There being no more business before the Council, Councilmember Reiss made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang and approved by all.

The meeting was therefore adjourned at 10:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern  
Acting Borough Clerk