

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST  
WORK SESSION Minutes  
October 14, 2025  
7:30 PM**

Mayor Bernstein read the compliance statement:

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 was filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

Mayor Bernstein then invited Brandon Shore, Deputy Mayor for the Day, to lead those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator  
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney  
Nick Chelius, Borough Engineer

Mayor Bernstein announced that Council President Slowikowski is absent tonight, due to the death of mother-in-law and offered condolences on behalf of the governing body.

**Swearing in the Deputy Mayor for the Day**

Mayor Bernstein administered the oath of office to Brandon Shore as Deputy Mayor for the Day.

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to suspend the regular order of business to issue a Proclamation for Diwali and acknowledge retirement of community member John Canning.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox  
Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Nays:** None  
**Absent:** Council President Slowikowski

Mayor Bernstein invited Sandhya Nankani up to introduce the children of the community who will read the Proclamation.

Ms. Nankani announced that following members of the community would read the proclamation:

Shiv Ganguly  
Shreya Iyer  
Anvi Mehta  
Avya Loveen Kaur Jhooti  
Aarnav Gattani  
Achal Vadlapatla

## ***Diwali Proclamation***

*WHEREAS, Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word 'Deepavali', a row of lights, while the festival is known as 'Festival of Lights', symbolizing the victory of light over darkness, goodness over evil, and knowledge over ignorance, and*

*WHEREAS, Diwali, is celebrated igniting traditional clay lamps 'Diyas', in the autumn of each year, at the end of harvest season, during 'Hindu Heritage' month, beginning on a New Moon, the darkest night of the Hindu calendar ("Panchanga"), Diwali date being determined by the Lunar calendar each year, and*

*WHEREAS, Diwali is celebrated over five days by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and some Buddhists, throughout Bergen County, and around the world; each with its own significance and traditions, the five days of Diwali being "Dhanteras", "Naraka Chaturdashi", "Diwali", "Govardhan Puja" and "Bhai Dooj"; ,and*

*WHEREAS, Diwali includes many traditions, such as charitable giving ("dana"), providing selfless service ("seva"), gathering with friends and family for prayer ("Puja"), exchanging gifts, eating sweets, setting off fireworks and decorating homes with colorful rice, sand, chalk or flower patterns ('rangolis'); and*

*WHEREAS, for Hindus, Diwali marks Lord Rama's return to his home, "Ayodhya", after defeating King Ravana and is therefore a celebration of goodness over evil, and light over darkness; and*

*WHEREAS, for Sikhs, Diwali is the day when the sixth founding Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind, was released from confinement by the Mughal Emperor Jehangir; and*

*WHEREAS, for Jains, Diwali symbolizes the attainment of Self-Realization, ("Nirvana"), by Lord Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, who were the great teachers of Jainism; and*

*WHEREAS, for Buddhists, Diwali represents the day Emperor Ashoka chose the peaceful path of Buddhism over destruction and carnage; and*

*WHEREAS, the holiday is a unifying force, as it is celebrated by the majority of people from India, regardless of their faith and is celebrated by more than one billion people worldwide; and*

*WHEREAS, the Borough of Demarest is the home to many Indian-American residents, who strengthen and enrich our community with their valued history, culture, heritage and vibrant traditions, while diversity represents one of the Borough's greatest strengths, and the Demarest community joins with the people of Asian Indian heritage across New Jersey and those around the world celebrating Diwali; and*

*NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mayor Brian Bernstein, on behalf of the entire Governing Body of the Borough of Demarest, do hereby recognize and proclaim October 18th through October 22nd as 'FIVE DAYS OF DIWALI' with October 20th, 2025 as DIWALI DAY; and we call this observance to the attention of all our residents in the Borough of Demarest, and call upon our residents to learn and recognize the cultural and historical significance of the festival, observing the holiday with appropriate activities and programs.*

Mayor Bernstein then welcomed the Canning family who are in attendance to congratulate John Canning on his retirement. He made the following remarks and presented Mr. Canning with a plaque from the governing body.

*Good evening, everyone. Tonight, this Governing Body wants to recognize and honor John Canning who will soon be retiring after 42 years with the United States Postal Service, almost all of that time with the Demarest Post Office. His last day of work will be Friday, October 17th, 2025, as he heads into a well-earned retirement.*

*Throughout his many years of service, John has been a familiar and friendly face to countless residents and businesses in our community. And, John, make no mistake, you are a part of the Demarest community. John has consistently gone above and beyond for folks, providing not only reliable postal service; but doing so with kindness, patience and a friendly touch. A gold standard for the often-maligned post office.*

*John began his postal career in the 1980s as a letter carrier before finding his long-term home behind the counter as a trusted and beloved postal clerk. Through early mornings, endless packages and mail, and stacks of magazines, John gave his all — ensuring his colleagues started each day ready and supported, and that every customer left with a smile.*

*John has been the friendly constant in the Demarest Post Office through decades of change. Managers and Postmasters have come and gone, but John's steady presence, humor, and kind heart remained.*

*John always understood your urgency and crisis. He was always empathetic and understood your desire to have a package delivered yesterday — and always with a caring smile. John is the guy you saw when you had to get your kid's application in the mail. When you returned from vacation and wanted to retrieve your mail. Or, wanted your mail watched or forwarded if you spent time away in the winter.*

*The oldest of four siblings, John has experienced unimaginable loss, tragically outliving all of them before they reached the age of 50. His mom passed away in 2014 and dad in 2022. Despite all of this, John never lost his smile, his spirit, or his patience with anyone in our community.*

*John shares his strength with his two daughters, **Michelle and Robin**, who adore and admire him for his endless sacrifices and devotion.*

*As John begins this next chapter, he leaves behind a legacy of **hard work, resilience, humor, and kindness**—qualities that have made him a pillar in his workplace, his community, and his family.*

*John, thank you and congratulations on a remarkable 42 years of extraordinary service. We will miss your smile and work ethic; and we will always remember you.*

### **Ordinances (Introduction):**

**ORDINANCE 1169-25** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 175 – ZONING TO INCREASE THE AFFORDABLE SET-ASIDE IN SECTION 175-46E.(1), AND TO CLARIFY AFFORDABLE PAYMENTS-IN-LIEU IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2025 HOUSING ELEMENT & FAIR SHARE PLAN

Mayor Bernstein asked for a motion to introduce on first reading by title Ordinance No. 1169-25, and it published as required by law with notice of Public Hearing to be held on October 27, 2025.

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Jiang.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Absent:** Council President Slowikowski  
**Nays:** None

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**Ordinance Public Hearing (Adoption):**

**ORDINANCE 1166-25** AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS, APPROPRIATING \$249,375 THEREFOR, INCLUDING A \$152,040 DOT GRANT, AND AUTHORIZING \$97,335 IN BONDS OR NOTES TO FINANCE THE SAME

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to open the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 1166-25.

There being no members of the public wishing to speak on the adoption of Ordinance No. 1166-25, Councilmember Reiss made a motion to close the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Absent:** Council President Slowikowski  
**Nays:** None

Councilmember Collins made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1166-25 with notice of final passage to be published as required by law. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fox.

**Roll Call:**

**Ayes:** Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
**Absent:** Council President Slowikowski  
**Nays:** None

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**ORDINANCE 1167-25** AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST AND APPROPRIATING \$1,170,750 THEREFOR, AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$1,115,000 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE THE SAME

A motion was made by Councilmember Reiss and seconded by Councilmember Marks to open the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 1167-25.

There being no members of the public wishing to speak on the adoption of Ordinance No. 1167-25, Councilmember Collins made a motion to close the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

Councilmember Fox made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1167-25 with notice of final passage to be published as required by law. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

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**ORDINANCE 1168-25** AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, NEW JERSEY, PROVIDING FOR VARIOUS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST AND APPROPRIATING \$385,612.50 THEREFOR, AND AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF \$367,250 BONDS OR NOTES OF THE BOROUGH TO FINANCE THE SAME

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Marks to open the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 1168-25.

There being no members of the public wishing to speak on the adoption of Ordinance No. 1168-25, Councilmember Collins made a motion to close the Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jiang.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

Councilmember Reiss made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1168-25 with notice of final passage to be published as required by law. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

**Resolution No. 176-25      Capital Budget Amendment**

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Marks to approve Resolution No. 176-25.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes:            Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
                     Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent:        Council President Slowikowski  
Nays:            None

**Resolution No. 180-25      Corrective Action Plan – 2024**

A motion was made by Councilmember Reiss and seconded by Councilmember Fox to approve Resolution No. 180-25.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes:            Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
                     Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent:        Council President Slowikowski  
Nays:            None

**Work Session Discussion Items:**

Engineer’s Report

Nick Chelius reviewed items from the monthly engineer’s report providing updates on ongoing projects. He noted that the contractor on the Stelfox paving project had been provided a punch list of items that need to be completed.

**Consent Agenda**

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

Mayor Bernstein asked if any member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the consent agenda. Councilmember Fox noted that she would abstain from voting on Resolution 177-25.

**Consent Agenda:**

- Resolution No. 177-25      Release of Escrow
- Resolution No. 178-25      Lein Redemption
- Resolution No. 179-25      Release of Performance Bond
- Resolution No. 181-25      Authorizing Engineering Services
- Resolution No. 182-25      Authorizing Seasonal Hire - DPW
- Resolution No. 183-25      Payment of Bills
- Resolution No. 184-25      Soil Moving Permit – 20 Pine Hill Rd.
- Resolution No. 185-25      Approving Junior Firefighter - Turagam

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve the consent agenda with Councilmember Fox’s abstention from Resolution 177-25 noted.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

**Approval of Minutes:**

July 14, 2025 Work Session Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Jiang and seconded by Councilmember Marks to approve the Minutes of the July 14, 2025 meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

July 14, 2025 Closed Session Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve the Closed Session minutes of the July 14, 2025 meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Jiang,  
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Nays: None

September 19, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Jiang to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2025 Special meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks,  
Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Abstain: Councilmember Fox  
Nays: None

September 19, 2025 Closed Session Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Collins to approve the Closed Session minutes of the September 19, 2025 meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Ayes: Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Jiang, Councilmember Marks,  
Councilmember Reiss  
Absent: Council President Slowikowski  
Abstain: Councilmember Fox  
Nays: None

Mayor Bernstein thanked the Public Works Department and Police Department for their hard work in response to the recent storm.

**Meeting Open to the Public**

Councilmember Fox made a motion to open eh meeting to the public. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins and approved by all present on a voice vote.

Mr. David Baumuller

Mr. Baumuller stated that he is a lifelong resident, and his parents purchased their home in Demarest in 1947. He feels that the character of the town is diminished by the electronic sign and asked what the plan was for 232 County Rd. Mayor Bernstein thanked him for comments and stated that the contract purchaser of 232 County Rd. Has filed an objection to our housing plan. Mr. Baumuller would like the Borough to consider purchasing the home to keep it from being torn down.

Mr. John Lowe

Mr. Lowe stated that he feels if the home at 232 County Rd. is taken down it would be a shame as it is one of the centerpieces of town. He feels that Demarest is losing its charm.

There being no other members of the public wishing to speak Councilmember Fox made a motion to close the meeting to the public. Councilmember Collins seconded the motion, and it was approved by all present on a voice vote.

Ther being no more business before the Council, a motion was made by Councilmember Fox to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins and approved by all on a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

*Julie Falkenstern, RMC*  
Borough Clerk