

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST**

**AGENDA – ANNUAL REORGANIZATION MEETING Minutes
JANUARY 5, 2026
3:15 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 publication of the date, time and place of this annual Reorganization meeting in in the Record on December 4, 2025, notice posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website was filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

Mayor Bernstein asked Bergen County Commissioners Tracy Zur, Mary Amoroso, and Germaine Ortiz to lead all assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

COUNCILMEMBER SHARON CARMELI SWORN IN

Mayor Bernstein advised that according to the official results of the 2025 election as published by the County Board of Elections that **Councilmember Sharon Carmeli** has been duly elected, said term expiring 12/31/2028

Mayor Bernstein then administered the Oath of Office and Councilmember Carmeli took her seat on the dais.

COUNCILMEMBER DAN MARKS SWORN IN

Mayor Bernstein advises that according to the official results of the 2025 election as published by the County Board of Elections that **Councilmember Daniel Marks** has been duly elected, said term expiring 12/31/2028.

Bergen County Commissioner Steve Tanelli administered the Oath of Office and Councilmember Marks took his seat on the dais.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk calls the roll as follows:

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss, Councilmember Slowikowski

Absent: None

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney
Nick Chelius, Borough Engineer
Frank Visaggio, Police Chief and members of the Police Department

Mayor Bernstein acknowledges the loss of two public servants in 2025

Bergen County Surrogate Michael Dressler
Cresskill Mayor Ben Romeo

*Today, I would like to take a moment to honor and remember two extraordinary public servants, whose lives were defined by service, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to their community—Bergen County Surrogate **Michael Dressler**, who passed away on December 4, 2025, and **Cresskill Mayor Ben Romeo**, who passed away on February 21, 2025 – exactly one month after his wife Alice, to whom he was married for 57 years passed away. One might say that Ben died of a broken heart.*

Both men dedicated their lives to serving others, and both leave behind legacies that will long endure in Bergen County and beyond.

Surrogate Michael Dressler's life was a testament to resilience and purpose. After overcoming a spinal injury that left him wheelchair-bound, he did not retreat from public life—he leaned into it. His injury never defined him; his service did. He served Bergen County for decades, including as Mayor of Cresskill, and as our Bergen County Surrogate since 1997.

I had the privilege of appearing before Surrogate Dressler in court and meeting with him outside the courthouse. In every interaction, he exemplified kindness, intelligence, and dedication. He was thoughtful, compassionate, and deeply committed to the people he served. Surrogate Dressler only knew one way to live—by serving the public with dignity, fairness, and care. His leadership reminded us that public office is not about power, but about responsibility.

Mayor Ben Romeo shared that same devotion to service. As Mayor of Cresskill, he worked tirelessly on behalf of his community, guided by a genuine desire to improve the lives of those he represented. Ben was the longest serving Mayor in Cresskill history having served from 1999 until his passing last year – that's more than 25 years. His leadership was rooted in accessibility, sincerity, and a deep love for his town. Mayor Romeo understood that local government matters, because it touches people's daily lives, and he embraced that role with humility and resolve.

Together, these two men represent the very best of public service. They served not for recognition, but because they believed in giving back. They believed in community. And they believed that leadership is measured by how well you serve others.

Though they are no longer with us, their legacies live on—in the institutions they strengthened, in the people they helped, and by the example they set for future generations of public servants.

May we honor Michael Dressler and Ben Romeo not only with our words today, but by continuing their commitment to service, compassion, and integrity. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Mayor Bernstein asks for nominations for **President of the Council** for the year 2026. Councilmember Reiss nominated Councilmember Slowikowski. Councilmember Fox seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations Councilmember Fox made a motion to close nominations and elect Councilmember Slowikowski Council President for 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox,
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss, Councilmember Slowikowski
Nays: None

Mayor Bernstein declares **Councilmember Slowikowski Council President** for the year 2026.

Mayor Bernstein noted the seating on the dais for 2026 (from Mayor's left to right)
Marks, Fox, Collins, MAYOR, Slowikowski, Carmeli, Reiss

SWEARING IN POLICE CHIEF

Mayor Bernstein administered the Oath of Office to Frank Visaggio as Police Chief effective January 1, 2026

SWEARING IN DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF

Mayor Bernstein administered the Oath of Office to Brian Talty as Deputy Police Chief effective January 1, 2026

2026 FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

Mayor Bernstein announced the below 2026 Officers for the Demarest Fire Department and reported that they will be sworn in at their Annual Installation Dinner on 1/23/26.

Chief John McLoughlin
Assistant Chief Carl Pavlik
Captain John Young
Lieutenant Matthew Carey
Lieutenant Matthew Mayer

BOROUGH OFFICIALS

MAYOR’S ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS WITH THE ADVICE & CONSENT OF COUNCIL

Municipal Housing Liaison	Julie Falkenstern	expires 12/31/2026
Shade Tree Advisory Member	Owen Fox	expires 12/31/2026
JIF Safety Committee Coordinator	Julie Falkenstern	expires 12/31/2026
ADA Coordinator	Daniel Marks	expires 12/31/2026
Zoning Officer	Michael Greco	expires 12/31/2026
Police Surgeons	Dr. Christopher Weiss, Dr. Zahid Farooki, Dr. Stephen Silver, Dr. Aaron Brisman, Dr. Gil Altman, Dr. Christopher Shaari	expires 12/31/2026
Special Police Officers	Louis Buonomo, Kyoung Lee, Matthew Mayer	expires 12/31/2026
Deputy OEM Coordinator	Michael Krynicky	expires 12/31/2026
Fire Official	Alan Silverman	expires 13/31/2027

Council President Slowikowski made a motion to confirm the above appointments. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all on a voice vote.

MAYOR’S APPOINTMENTS WITH THE ADVICE & CONSENT OF COUNCIL

BOARD OF HEALTH

Dr. Nisha Gandhi	12/31/2028
Dr. Jodi Reiss	12/31/2028
Dr. Umesh Gidwani	12/31/2027
Ilana Mitaliski	12/31/2026
Roberta Hoag, Alt. #1	12/31/2028

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to accept the said Appointees to the Board of Health

A motion was made by Councilmember Fox and seconded by Councilmember Collins to confirm the Mayor’s appointments to the Board of Health.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox,
Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss, Councilmember Slowikowski
Nays: None

Mayor Bernstein advises that there is a **Class III** member of the **Planning Board** (a member of the Governing Body) to be chosen by the Governing Body.

Council President Slowikowski nominated Councilmember Fox to serve as the Class III member of the Planning Board for the year 2026.

The nomination was seconded by Councilmember Collins. There being no further nominations Council President Slowikowski made a motion to close the nominations and elect Councilmember Fox to serve as the Class III member of the Planning Board. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Collins.

ROLL CALL:

ROLL CALL:

- Ayes: Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss, Councilmember Slowikowski
- Nays: None
- Abstain: Councilmember Fox

Mayor Bernstein declared **Councilmember Fox, Class III** member of the **Planning Board** for the year 2026.

2026 STANDING COMMITTEES AND LIAISONS:

Mayor Bernstein announced the following appointments for Standing Committees and Liaisons for 2026:

STANDING COMMITTEES – 2026

Police and OEM

Chair Councilmember Reiss
Members Councilmembers Slowikowski and Carmeli

Fire and EMS

Chair Councilmember Fox
Members Councilmembers Collins and Marks

DPW and Recreation

Chair Councilmember Marks
Members Councilmembers Reiss and Collins

Finance and Personnel

Chair Councilmember Collins
Members Councilmembers Fox and Slowikowski

Economic Development

Chair Councilmember Slowikowski
Members Councilmembers Carmeli and Marks

Ordinances

Chair Councilmember Carmeli
Members Councilmembers Fox and Reiss

2026 LIAISON APPOINTMENTS

Board of Education	Daryl Fox
Board of Health	Jonathan Reiss
Environmental Commission	Andrea Slowikowski
Nature Center	Sharon Carmeli
Shade Tree Commission	Adam Collins
Library Board	Dan Marks
Demarest Athletic Association (DAA)	Dan Marks
Construction / Code Enforcement	Andrea Slowikowski
Golden Seniors Board	Sharon Carmeli

CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Bernstein asks if any Councilmember would like to have any resolution removed from the Consent Agenda and voted on separately. (none)

Mayor Bernstein asks if any Council member would like to abstain from voting on any resolution on the Consent Agenda. (none)

Mayor Bernstein asks for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda (with the abstentions so noted).

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution No. 001-26	Annual Schedule of Meetings
Resolution No. 002-26	Adopting Borough Holiday Schedule
Resolution No. 003-26	Designation of Official Newspapers
Resolution No. 004-26	Designation of Legal Depositories
Resolution No. 005-26	Establishment of Interest Rates on Delinquent Taxes & Assessments
Resolution No. 006-26	2026 Cash Management Plan for the Borough
Resolution No. 007-26	Petty Cash Policy
Resolution No. 008-26	Designating Official Tax Search Officer
Resolution No. 009-26	Appointing Fund Commissioners
Resolution No. 010-26	Appointing Assessment Search Officer
Resolution No. 011-26	Appointing Public Agency Compliance Officer
Resolution No. 012-26	Authorizing LESO 1033 Program

Resolution No. 013-26	Authorizing Valley Health CDL Drug and Alcohol Testing Program
Resolution No. 014-26	Temporary Budget Appropriations
Resolution No. 015-26	Approving Tax Receiving Agency
Resolution No. 016-26	Appointing Borough Engineer
Resolution No. 017-26	Appointing Borough Attorney
Resolution No. 018-26	Appointing Special Projects Engineer
Resolution No. 019-26	Appointing Risk Manager
Resolution No. 020-26	Appointing Auditor
Resolution No. 021-26	Appointing Financial Advisor -Phoenix
Resolution No. 022-22	Appointing Bond Counsel
Resolution No. 023-26	Appointing Tax Appeal Attorney
Resolution No. 024-26	Appointing Grant Consultant
Resolution No. 025-26	Appointing Borough Planner
Resolution No. 026-26	Appointing Affordable Housing Planner
Resolution No. 027-26	Appointing Affordable Housing Counsel
Resolution No. 028-26	Appointing Conflict Counsel
Resolution No. 029-26	Appointing Redevelopment Counsel
Resolution No. 030-26	Shared Service with BC for EAP
Resolution No. 031-26	Support for Northern Valley Greenway

A motion was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Fox to approve the consent agenda.

ROLL CALL:

Ayes: Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss, Councilmember Slowikowski
 Nays: None

Open to the Public

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

Speaker(s):

Ray Cwyniski

Mr. Cwyniski asked for clarification on a few of the expiration of terms for those appointed to board and commissions. Ms. Falkenstern explained that some terms were incorrectly assigned in the past when people were appointed to fill a vacancy and the terms have been adjusted to ensure the proper staggering of terms going forward.

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

Mayor's Address

I would like to welcome Sharon Carmeli to the council and welcome back Dan Marks to the council. Congratulations to you both and I look forward to working you. Thank you both for your commitment to our community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Julie and Michael, our Borough Administrator and Deputy Clerk. I also want to extend my appreciation and gratitude to our council members, Board Members, Commissions, volunteers, Police Department, Fire Department, Ambulance Corps, DPW, Department Heads, and the extraordinary professionals at Borough Hall. Also, my thanks to Deena Rosendahl, Wendy Quiroga and Danielle Federico – our attorneys – Nick Chellius and Darlene Green (our engineer and Borough Planner) from Colliers Engineering.

Let me take a moment to again thank David Jiang for his service to the Borough as a Councilmember for the past three years and his contributions to the Council and our town. I appreciate his leadership regarding our downtown revitalization and willingness to accept my appointment to the Planning Board.

In our Annual Newsletter, which you should have received at the end of December, I outlined many of the accomplishments of this Governing Body.

Since then, I can report that the train station lease has been signed and the Economic Development Committee will report to the Council and public during the next 2 meetings in January regarding the lengthy vetting process and recommendation for the Bank Building. Looking ahead, we are in discussions with Cresskill regarding shared service for bus transportation for our seniors, discussions regarding use of the Baptist Church, including its use as a senior community facility. The renovation on our Gazebo will commence, we will finalize a new zoning ordinance, the train station restaurant will open, we will advance the repurposing of the Bank building so it provides revenue and a service to our community and to ensure funding is in place to complete paving and drainage improvements for unimproved roads like Pine Terrace and Demarest Avenue. The revenue streams created, and to be created by, the acquisition of the Baptist Church property, the lease of the Train Station and sale and repurposing of the Bank building, will produce not only substantial revenue but generate taxes [or a payment in lieu of taxes – called a PILOT] and reduce the tax burden on residential taxpayers. David, I appreciate your willingness to assist the Economic Development Committee, that you chaired, to make the transition of the Bank Building into a reality.

I would like to invite members of the Council to address the public at this time, if they would like. I will start with Andrea, our Council President and then alphabetically.

There being no other business before the Council, Councilmember Marks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Reiss and approved by all on a voice vote.

The meeting was therefore adjourned at 4:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Falkenstern, RMC
Borough Clerk