

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
BOROUGH OF DEMAREST  
REGULAR MEETING Minutes  
January 26, 2026  
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 was published as required by law and is posted at Borough Hall, on the Borough website and filed in the office of the Borough Clerk.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mayor Bernstein, Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox (*by phone*), Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Absent: None

Also Present: Julie Falkenstern, Borough Administrator  
Deena Rosendahl, Borough Attorney  
Frank Visaggio, Police Chief  
John McLoughlin, Fire Chief

**Ordinance (Introduction):**

**ORDINANCE NO. 1173-26** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 175 – ZONING TO INCREASE THE SUBSIDY FOR AFFORDABLE ACCESSORY APARTMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2025 HOUSING ELEMENT & FAIR SHARE PLAN

A motion was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Collins to introduce on first reading by title Ordinance No.1173-26 and it be published as required by law with notice of Public Hearing to be held on February 9, 2026.

**ROLL CALL:**

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: None

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

**Resolution 038-26** RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO BOND IN THE EVENT THAT THERE IS A SHORTFALL IN FUNDING TO EFFECTUATE CERTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING MECHANISMS IN ITS HOUSING ELEMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLAN

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Councilmember Marks and seconded by Councilmember Collins.

**ROLL CALL:**

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: None

**Resolution 052-26** RESOLUTION OF THE BOROUGH OF DEMAREST, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN DESIGNATING A CONDITIONAL REDEVELOPER OF A PORTION OF THE DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Marks.

**ROLL CALL:**

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: 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*)

**Consent Agenda:**

Resolution No. 039-26	SSA with Bergen County for Fiber Internet
Resolution No. 040-26	SSA with Bergen County Bloodborne Pathogen Compliance
Resolution No. 041-26	Appointing OEM Coordinator
Resolution No. 042-26	Appointing Deputy OEM Coordinator
Resolution No. 043-26	SSA with Closter for PD use of Range
Resolution No. 044-26	Authorizing Agreement with LEW Environmental Lead Compliance
Resolution No. 045-26	Soil Moving Permit-14 Laurel Rd.
Resolution No. 046-26	Soil Moving Permit- 32 Highland Ave.
Resolution No. 047-26	Release of Escrow
Resolution No. 048-26	Disabled Veteran Tax Exemption – Gallego
Resolution No. 049-26	Disabled Veteran Tax Exemption – Riotto
Resolution No. 050-26	Soil Moving Permit- 67 Central Ave.
Resolution No. 051-26	Authorizing bids for NJDOT FY2025 – Brenner Pl. & Evergreen Pl.

A motion was made by Councilmember Collins and seconded by Councilmember Reiss to approve the consent agenda.

**ROLL CALL:**

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: None

## **Mayor's Report**

Mayor Bernstein thanked the DPW and all Demarest Emergency services for their work during the snowstorm. He noted that the DPW Director was not in attendance due to the prolonged work of his department during the storm. He thanked the Fire Department for the annual dinner they held and apologized for not being able to attend due to a prior commitment.

## **Council Committee Reports**

### **Finance & Personnel (Collins)**

Councilmember Collins reported that budget meetings are ongoing. He stated that the Shade Tree Commission conducted their Reorganization Meeting last week and elected Linda Cetta the Chair and Dimitri Gitanis the Vice Chair for 2026. Mayor Bernstein asked Councilmember Collins if there were any vacancies on the Shade Tree Commission. Councilmember Collins confirmed that there are no open spots on the Commission. Mayor Bernstein then asked if he knew yet when the budget would be ready for introduction. Councilmember Collins said it was too early in the process to give a projected date.

### **Ordinance (Carmeli)**

Councilmember Carmeli reported that the committee met to review the latest memos regarding recommendations for changes for the Zoning Ordinance, one from the Planning Board and one from the Zoning Officer. They will continue their work on the draft so that it can be forwarded to the Borough Attorney for a final draft.

### **DPW & Recreation (Marks)**

Councilmember Marks said he echoed the Mayor's thanks to the DPW. He then reported that Recreation recently held a meeting and discussed fees for different programs. He advised that they will prepare a list of fees to recommend for Governing Body approval by resolution.

### **Economic Development (Slowikowski)**

Council President Slowikowski reported that she is excited that the resolution designating a redeveloper for a portion of the downtown redevelopment area, namely 129 Hardenburgh, was adopted this evening. She gave some history on the long process noting that it began before most of the current governing body was serving. She stated that in 2017 the governing body approved an area in need of redevelopment and then a Redevelopment Plan was approved in 2021. The designation was updated and then again approved in 2024. She noted that the revitalization of Demarest's downtown is the number one issue residents approach her about. She then stated the goals of redevelopment which are improving the aesthetics of downtown while creating a pedestrian friendly environment; expanding retail and services offerings downtown; providing apartments and condominiums downtown to diversify the Borough's housing stock; and to help satisfy the Borough's Affordable Housing obligations. She thanked Councilmembers Marks and Carmeli for serving alongside her on the committee and noted that there will be a lot of work and noted that they have an excellent team including Paul Kaufman, Redevelopment Counsel and Deena Rosendahl, Borough Counsel to assist and advise them through the process.

She then reported that the Environmental Commission held a meeting recently and she thanked Jessica Wang for her years of volunteering on the commission. She then welcomed Noelle Tutujian as the newest member and wished luck to David Lerner who was elected the Chair for 2026. She reported that they spent the first meeting of the year setting future goals which included, community outreach; collaboration with Environmental Commissions in surrounding communities; reinvigorating Borough wide clean ups that used to happen but have fallen off; engaging with the Northern Valley Greenway; growing the neighborhood food composting

program; and lastly investigating increasing the use of solar power. She thanked them for their work.

#### Police and OEM (Reiss)

Councilmember Reiss reported that he will defer to Chief Visaggio for the Police update. He reported that the Board of Health held their reorganization meeting and noted that they would like to assist the Borough in tracking and ensuring that all public AEDs in town are functioning and that volunteers have any necessary training. He then reported that they will be holding a Pre-5K training program and are looking for suggestions for a catchy name. Mayor Bernstein suggested that a map with hearts in the locations of the AEDs be available, perhaps through the website. Councilmember Marks added that he believes the training of coaches is important.

#### Fire and EMS (Fox)

Councilmember Fox stated that she met with the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief in regard to their budget and noted that the Council will have to address a large budget increase should they decide to continue the formerly grant funded stipend program. Additionally, she met with the BOE and has plans to meet the new School Superintendent in the near future.

### **Reports of Borough Officials**

#### **Borough Administrator**

Ms. Falkenstern stated she wanted to follow up on the earlier discussion of the AEDs and stated that following the BOH meeting she met with the Deputy Police Chief to address what she saw as an issue in the past of some confusion on who would ultimately take responsibility for making sure all the AEDs are identified and functioning. She asked the Police to take the lead and reported they were happy to do so, and the Deputy Chief will provide a proposal for any repairs and any other suggested protocols. She thanked Lee Campbell, the Board of Health Secretary, for her quick follow-up after the BOH meeting.

#### **Borough Attorney**

No Report

#### **Borough Treasurer**

Not present at the meeting, no report.

#### **Ambulance**

Not present at the meeting, no report.

#### **Police Chief**

Chief Visaggio detailed the recent activity of the Department and thanked the Fire Department for offering some space to his officers to rest while they worked overtime in response to the recent storm.

#### **Fire Chief**

Chief McLoughlin gave an overview of recent Department activity and said his department would prioritize snow removal around fire hydrants this week. A discussion ensued on whose responsibility it is on whether the Borough has an ordinance requiring residents to remove snow from any hydrants on their property. The Borough Administrator and Attorney will follow up on this. The Mayor noted that many residents do this whether required or not and that he would ask residents to do this if they are able in his next email to residents.

#### **DPW Director**

Not in attendance, no report.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

January 12, 2026 Work Session and Closed Session Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Council President Slowikowski and seconded by Councilmember Reiss.

### **Roll Call:**

Ayes: Council President Slowikowski, Councilmember Carmeli, Councilmember Collins, Councilmember Fox, Councilmember Marks, Councilmember Reiss

Nays: None

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

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

Karen Lee

Ms. Lee asked if the Borough had any plans to deal with the increases in severe weather including flooding and severe heat. Mayor Bernstein answered that while he would defer the more technical answer to our Borough Engineers and Planners, he noted that the Borough has applied for federal grant funds to address flooding from our waterways and that we have adopted all NJDEP required stormwater ordinances. He added that when the Borough does road work, they address known drainage issues as part of infrastructure improvements. Ms. Lee asked what federal grant program the Borough applied to. Ms. Falkenstern answered that it was the Water Resources Development Act through Congressman Gottheimer's office for \$2.5M to perform stream maintenance and assist with flooding. Councilmember Marks noted that one of the goals of the Shade Tree Commission is to preserve trees and ensure mitigation of trees that are removed which assists in water management and provided insulation from severe heat.

Ray Cywinski

Mr. Cywinski asked if residents were required to use the lead inspection service that the Borough engaged. Ms. Falkenstern said while it was a question for the construction official, she believes the answer is yes, but that should be confirmed with the construction official. He then asked if the statute for appointing an OEM Coordinator required a resident be appointed. Ms. Falkenstern said that to the best of her recollection the requirement is for someone within a reasonable distance to respond to the Borough in case of emergency. Mr. Cywinski then asked if new driveway standards would be included in the new Zoning regulations. Ms. Falkenstern stated that yes there are new more stringent requirements for driveways in the current draft.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Council, Councilmember Collins made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Marks and approved by all. The meeting was therefore adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Julie Falkenstern, RMC*  
Borough Clerk