



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

**Happy New Year!**

### **Our 2026 Reorganization Meeting**

The Governing Body's Annual Reorganization meeting will be held on this Monday, **January 5, 2026, starting at 3:00 pm**. Dan Marks will be sworn in to begin his second term and Sharon Carmeli will begin her first term on the Council. Additionally, Frank Visaggio will be sworn in as Police Chief and Brian Talty will be sworn in to begin his tenure as our Deputy Chief.

### **232 County Road Resolution Reached by Council**

I am writing to provide an update on the challenges to the Borough's affordable housing plan and the related legal proceedings. As previously reported to you, the Borough filed its Fourth-Round affordable housing plan on June 6. Under state legislation adopted last year, any objections to that plan were required to be filed by August 31. Two objections were filed on time: one by the contract purchaser of 232 County Road ("232 Development"), and one by the Fair Share Housing Center ("FSHC"). For context, FSHC filed objections to more than 400 municipal housing plans statewide. 232 Development sought Court approval to construct no less than ten townhouses at 232 County Road and for Demarest to amend its zoning restrictions to permit such housing. The Borough participated in compulsory mediation regarding the FSHC and 232 Development objections. FSHC similarly sought the construction of multi-family housing on that site. Both objections needed to be resolved or determined by the newly created affordable housing program ("Program"). The Governing Body opposed the demands made by FSHC and 232 Development but was advised that the Program Judge was likely to recommend the construction of at least ten townhouses on the 1.6-acre site. In the initial filing, 232 Development sought a single building of ten units (side by side) that looked like barracks with all garage doors facing County Road. Contrary to the objections asserted by the Borough, the Program Judge was not limited to the 10 units and could have approved more units in response to both filed objections to the Borough's Housing Plan. Under the advice of our legal counsel and Borough Planner, the Borough Council approved a settlement of both objections, pursuant to which,

the Borough agreed to rezone 232 County Road (Block 63, Lot 5) to permit a 7-unit development consisting of 6 market rate townhouses and 1 affordable unit, with a design consistent with the concept map entitled "232 County Road, Block 63, Lot 5 Borough of Demarest Bergen County, New Jersey" prepared by MCB Engineering Associates, LLC dated, August 13, 2025 and last revised December 16, 2025 that includes 1 affordable unit and requires a 0.4 fractional unit payment-in-lieu of construction.

I have attached a [link to access the concept map](#). As you can see from the concept map, instead of a single barracks-like structure, there are two smaller buildings, one with four units and the other with three units and with most of the garage doors concealed from County Road and Hardenburgh

Avenue. The buildings will remain far back on the property, using much of the footprint of the existing structure, pool and cabana. Pursuant to the settlement, the buildings shall be designed in a manner to blend with the single-family homes in the neighborhood and there will be plantings to help screen the area, as well.

The Council understood that absent a resolution by December 30, the Program Judge would likely order no less than 10 units, including the originally proposed barracks appearance. Given these facts, and upon the advice of the Borough's professionals, the Council agreed to a resolution that reduced the number of units and permitted Demarest to modify the appearance of the townhouses, both in the best interests of Demarest and, which fulfilled Demarest's constitutional obligations. The Council members had to decide whether the smaller project with its input on appearance was better than a decision by the Judge permitting at least ten units where Demarest would not have been able to compel the achieved changes to the proposed building – it was, in actuality, a Hobson's choice! While the members of the Council objected to any townhouses, they needed to make a decision in the best interest of Demarest.

### **The Art School at Old Church**

Celebrate the season with creativity at The Art School at Old Church! Our Winter Semester begins January 4, 2026. Visit [tasoc.org](http://tasoc.org) or call (201) 767-7160 to discover more than 80 inspiring visual arts and craft classes for children, teens, and adults.

### **Board of Health**

The Demarest Board of Health will again host a free **Wellness for Adults Program** in **2026**. Please click [here](#) or reach out to Lee Campbell [lcampbell@demarestnj.gov](mailto:lcampbell@demarestnj.gov) for dates and program information!

Please remember to update your pet license for 2026. Applications are available [here](#) and are included with the Annual Newsletter to be delivered soon! The Borough will also have a **free Rabies Clinic on February 7, 2026, from 10am-11:30am** if your dog or cat needs an updated vaccine, don't miss out!

### **Demarest Library**

Yoga nidra is a guided meditation that helps one to relax all the cells of the body, something which has been attributed to initiating deep healing in the body. Please join instructor Lorig Hamparian on **Wednesday, January 7th from 6:00 - 7:30 PM** for this healing experience! The meditation will be followed by a crystal bowl sound bath, another method of relaxation and healing. Register [here!](#) The New Year means new hobbies, reflecting on the previous year, and setting new intentions. On **Thursday, January 8th from 6:00 - 7:00 PM**, join Anjali Mani with this special journaling workshop to learn how to journal and set goals for 2026! Register [here!](#)

Have a great weekend!

Mayor Brian K. Bernstein

*My Friday emails to the residents are now reaching **1,192 people!** My goal is for every Demarest resident to be up to date on what is going on around town, please help with that goal by forwarding this email to your friends so they can visit [demarestnj.gov](http://demarestnj.gov) and sign up for my weekly emails! The link can be found about halfway down the homepage.*



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