

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN REGULAR MEETING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2023
6:30 P.M. – EXECUTIVE SESSION
7 P.M. – REGULAR SESSION

This Regular Meeting of the Governing Body of the Borough of Raritan was called to order by Mayor Bray in the Meeting Room of the Raritan Municipal Building, 22 First Street, Raritan, NJ 08869 at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 19, 2023.

Mayor Bray announced the Regular Meeting was called to order by pursuant to applicable portions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate Notice of this Regular Meeting was posted in Borough Hall, on the Borough website and communicated to *The Courier News*, *The Star Ledger* and *The Breeze* on January 5, 2023.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President Carra, Councilman Armahizer, Councilman Fritzing, Councilwoman Hutzler, Councilwoman Melitsky, Councilman Orozco

Also Present: Administrator/Clerk Colvin, Borough Attorney William Robertson, Engineer Schrek

Absent: x

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Councilman Orozco

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2023-12-180

Entering Executive Session

1. Personnel
Administration, Police, DPW
2. Contract Negotiations
Hidden Pond, Stone Bridge
3. Attorney Client
Orlando Drive, Tillman Street
4. Potential Shared Services
Fire Prevention

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilman Fritzing, Council moved to Enter Executive Session.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Carra, Armahizer, Fritzing, Hutzler, Melitsky, Orozco

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:32 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT

Council moved to Reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

Council exited Executive Session, and resumed Regular Session at 7:03 p.m.

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Bray read aloud the following proclamation:

**PROCLAMATION
HONORING EVAN BERRY – EAGLE SCOUT**

WHEREAS, Troop 185 of the Scouts of America, announced on September 13, 2023 with great pleasure and honor that Evan Berry of Raritan, New Jersey attained the rank of Eagle Scout; and

WHEREAS, an Eagle Scout Court of Honor will be held on December 27, 2023 at 6 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, Evan’s years of scouting activities began as a bobcat in Pack 95; after earning his Arrow of Light, he continued to Troop 185 and remained active; and

WHEREAS, Evan has attended summer camps and numerous camping trip – his most memorable trip was to Florida National High Adventure Sea Base; and

WHEREAS, Evan served as Senior Patrol Leader; Assistant Senior Patrol Leader; Troop Guide; and in other roles; and

WHEREAS, Evan was an integral part of developing Troop 185 G, the girl troop in Branchburg; and

WHEREAS, Evan is a senior at Bridgewater High School, a member of the National Honor Society, and plans to pursue a degree in business; and

WHEREAS, Evan’s Eagle Scout project consisted of building and installing two feral cat boxes at St. Huberts to help control the population and give shelter to outdoor cats; and

WHEREAS, Evan has participated in community service events service projects at St. Ann’s Church in Raritan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Mayor Zachory Bray, Mayor of the Borough of Raritan, am proud of Evan Berry for having shown the perseverance, commitment, and knowledge necessary to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, and do hereby honor Evan and his parents, Wayne and Maria Berry, on this outstanding achievement as an Eagle Scout in Raritan.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my Hand and Affixed the Seal of the Borough of Raritan this Nineteenth Day of December, in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three.

Attest:

ERIC M. COLVIN
BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK

ZACHARY R. BRAY
MAYOR

OATHS OF OFFICE

Mayor Bray administered the Oath of Office to Officers and Junior Officers of the Raritan Fire Department in unison.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(In accordance with Section 29-1 of the Code of the Borough of Raritan, there shall be a five-minute limit per speaker)

Mayor Bray opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Boulevard: Congratulated Council President Carra on becoming Mayor Elect, adding that he has grown a lot since they were on Council together and wishing him luck. Mr. Foohey then thanked Mayor Bray for serving for four years, adding that he did a good job. Mr. Foohey also thanked Councilman Orozco for his service of six years on Council.

Mike Patente, 30 Glaser Avenue: Thanked the Mayor, Councilwoman Hutzler and Councilman Orozco for their time on Council and all the hours they put into the town.

Carey Marago, 618 Thompson Street: Stated that she is the Economic Development Committee Chairperson and expressed her frustrations with Council and Council Elect, Don Tozzi, regarding defunding of the EDC and how that decision was made. Mrs. Marago went on to state all the progress EDC has made in the town over the last five years and raised her concerns about the likely setback in progress for the Raritan businesses and the lack of trust others may have in the Governing Body going forward.

A brief conversation ensued amongst Mayor Bray, Councilman Orozco, Councilman Armahizer and Administrator/Clerk Colvin, which resulted in Mayor Bray stating that all conversation regarding the EDC's budget should take place come January 2, 2024, when the new Council members take their seats.

Fabiana LoPiccolo-Stewart, 707 Rhine Boulevard: Stated that she is the Secretary of the Economic Development Committee and expressed her concerns about the fate of the EDC, adding that Council's main points are funding concerns and wanting a new approach to the revitalization of downtown. Ms. LoPiccolo-Stewart shared that EDC is made up of seven volunteers who dedicate their time to Raritan with a requested 2024 budget of \$36,000.00, in contrast to Somerville, who operates with a similar goal, and has The Somerville Downtown Alliance, which is made up of five committees, a board of trustees, staffers, volunteers and a 2023 budget of \$971,000.00. Ms. LoPiccolo-Stewart went on to list the EDC's plans for 2024 and expressed her opinion that Council should be focused on empowering, supporting, and assisting in the expansion of the EDC, not defunding it, adding her dissatisfaction with how Council has treated Carrie Marago, EDC's Chairperson. Ms. LoPiccolo-Stewart ended by stating that she looks forward to hearing Council's feedback in January.

Neither seeing nor hearing any additional member of the Public, Mayor Bray closed Public Comment.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Fifth Street/Farrand Street/First Avenue Safety (JM)
Councilwoman Melitsky stated that since last meeting, another accident occurred at the intersection of Fifth Street and First Avenue, she spoke with Chief of Police Nolte and County, who are both in agreement with removing the ability for cars to turn west onto First

Avenue from Fifth Street. Councilwoman Melitsky authorized Borough Attorney William Robertson to draft an Ordinance.

2. Sub-Committee for Building Projects (NC)

Council President Carra stated that Council authorized a Committee under the Finance Committee for the new municipal building back in February and he would like to reconvene that committee and also add Lou Gara, adding that some final work needs to be done prior to the Borough placing the bid in early January. Council unanimously agreed.

3. Nevius Street Bridge – Bench Plaques (NC)

Council President Carra stated some of the plaques on the benches on the Nevius Street bridge are still damaged and asked for an update from Councilman Orozco. Council and Administrator/Clerk Colvin agreed to have the damaged plaques replaced in the first quarter of 2024.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ANNUAL REORGANIZATION

Council President Carra stated that the Reorganization meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at 6:30 p.m., which is Council’s usual meeting time. All of Council was in agreeance.

ORDINANCE – INTRODUCTION

None

ORDINANCE – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

None

RESOLUTION

None

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution Nos. 2023-12-181 – 2023-12-186 & 2023-12-188)

Resolution No. 2023-12-181 Authorizing the Execution of CGP&H Agreement 2024

Resolution No. 2023-12-182 Approving 2023 Municipal Budget Transfers

Resolution No. 2023-12-183 Approving Extension for LA-2022 MA Raritan Borough – Improvements to Colby Avenue, Berwick Street and Arnold Avenue

Resolution No. 2023-12-184 Approving Chapter 159 – Storm Recovery Reserve Fund

Resolution No. 2023-12-185 Approving Continued Contribution to School Environmental Program

Resolution No. 2023-12-186 Authorizing Discharge – Housing Rehabilitation Mortgage – 711 Brooklyn Avenue

Mayor Bray stated that Resolution No. 2023-12-188, Approving Municipal Service Agreement Between Raritan Borough and Hidden Pond, is being added to the Consent Agenda

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to Approve the Consent Agenda, Resolution Nos. 2023-12-181 – 2023-12-186 & 2023-12-188.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Carra, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Hutzler, Melitsky, Orozco

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTIONS:

Mayor Bray asked for a motion to Authorize the of Hiring a DPW Truck Driver and a Police Officer.

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Authorize the of Hiring a DPW Truck Driver and a Police Officer.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Carra, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Hutzler, Melitsky, Orozco

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

BILL LIST

Resolution No. 2023-12-187

Approving Bill List

Mayor Bray asked for a motion to Approve Resolution No. 2023-12-187 - Approving Bill List.

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2023-12-187- Approving Bill List.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Carra, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Hutzler, Melitsky, Orozco

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Bridgewater Resources, Inc. – November Dumping Fees – \$23,934.66
2. Edmunds & Assoc. – Tax & Finance Software and Cloud Migration – \$14,171.04
3. Fire-Dec, LLC. – 4 Firefighter Uniform Sets – \$18,780.65
4. Servpro – 9 W Somerset Remediation – \$26,196.29
5. SLA Heating – Plumbing Repairs & Boiler Replacement – \$17,020.00
6. Van Cleef Engineers – Engineering Services – \$30,517.75
7. DiFrancesco, Bateman et al. – Attorney Fees – \$39,929.66

Mayor Bray asked for a motion to Approve Certification of Funds in Unison.

On a motion by Council President Carra, seconded by Councilwoman Hutzler, Council moved to Approve the Certification of Funds in Unison.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Carra, Armahizer, Fritzinger, Hutzler, Melitsky, Orozco

Nay: x

Abstain: x

Absent: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Armahizer – Stated that he provided Mayor and Council copies the proposal for the rehabilitation of the Anderson Street Firehouse and the relocation of the Fire Department, which he wants Council to keep on their radar for 2024. Councilman Armahizer thanked Councilwoman Hutzler, Mayor Bray and Councilman Orozco for their service and stated it was an honor and a privilege working with them, wishing them the best in the future.

Councilman Orozco – Reported that the Basilone Parade Committee held their “Thank You” lunch last week and their meetings will begin again in January. He didn’t have anything to report for the Board of Education. Councilman Orozco announced that this is his last council meeting and thanked the following people, Raritan Borough Residents, Jim Foohey, Administrator/Clerk Colvin, Engineer Stan Schrek and his wife, Jen.

Councilman Fritzinger – Read aloud the Building Department report for November 22, 2023 through December 18, 2023, which consisted of 66 permits being issued, with a dollar value of \$60,320.00 to the Borough. Councilman Fritzinger reported that the Historic and Cultural Committee met on December 13, 2024, regarding their budget which is ready for submittal to the Borough, Public Works has completed routine maintenance. The Councilman thanked DPW for their action during the last bad weather event and extended his gratitude to Councilman Orozco, Mayor Bray and Councilwoman Hutzler for their time on Council, adding that it was a great pleasure working with them.

Mayor Bray – Nothing to report.

Council President Carra – Had nothing to report on Finance, he did not get to attend the November Municipal Land Use Board meeting but there was no business due to improper notice, their next meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2024, at 6:30 p.m., at the municipal building.

Council President Carra stated that the Regional Center discussed a draft of their 2024 budget, work plan and service contracts, their next meeting is January 17, 2024, at 5 p.m. in person at the County Administration Building.

Council President Carra thanked DPW, Police, Fire and OEM for helping with the flooding, he also thanked Mayor Bray for his eight years of service and leadership, adding that it was wonderful working with him and looks forward to working with him in 2024 on the Library Board of Trustees. Council President Carra thanked Councilwoman Hutzler and Councilman Orozco for their time and input on Council, congratulating Councilman Orozco for being Executive Director for the Somerset County Governing Officials Association in 2024. Council

December 19, 2023

Regular Meeting

President Carra ended by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

Councilwoman Melitsky – Read aloud the Property Maintenance report for November 20, 2023 through December 18, 2023, which consisted of 31 inspections, 18 violations and one \$250 fine was issued. Councilwoman Melitsky thanked the Office of Emergency Management for doing a great job with the flooding activating the Emergency Operations Center which worked remotely, adding that OEM is looking for volunteers to join the CERT team (Community Emergency Response Team), which she has been a member of for the past ten years.

Councilwoman Melitsky reported that during the month of November, the Fire Department responded to 22 calls, year-to-date they have responded to 247 calls, adding that they participated in the 2023 Somerville Holidays Lights Parade, where they took home two trophies. The Fire Department participated in the Santa Run and put lights up at the train station, the Councilwoman stated, adding congratulations to Drew Lipkey for being sworn in as a Junior Member tonight. Councilwoman Melitsky directed anyone who would like to volunteer for the Fire Department to visit the Fire House any Thursday after 6:30 p.m. or go online – www.raritanfire.com

Councilwoman Melitsky announced that Officer Alyssa Myrnyj graduated from the Morristown Police Academy on November 30, 2023, upon completion of the Raritan Police Department field training program, she will be assigned to a patrol squad. The Councilwoman reminded everyone that Somerset Street is limited to two-hour parking, Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Councilwoman Melitsky thanked Mayor Bray, Councilwoman Hutzler and Councilman Orozco for doing a great job, adding that it's been a pleasure working with them and wishing all a happy holiday.

Councilwoman Hutzler – Stated that Recreation's Christmas event at Frelinghuysen Park had a great turnout, adding that Director, Andy Sibilia, asked her to give a big shout-out to all the volunteers, Santa, the Raritan Fire Department, Bagelicious, Italian Bakery and Randazzos for their donations, adding her personal thanks to Andy Sibilia and his family on their hard work and time.

Councilwoman Hutzler read aloud the Municipal Court report for November 20, 2023, which consisted of 153 total cases filed, 138 total cases disposed, total amount collected was \$14,804.87, with a total of \$8,718.97 to the Borough.

Councilwoman Hutzler announced that this is her last meeting on Council and thanked the residents for the privilege of representing them for the last two years, adding that it has been a pleasure and very rewarding. The Councilwoman thanked Mayor Bray, Council President Carra and fellow Councilmembers for all their hard work, providing assistance and lending an ear when needed. Councilwoman Hutzler also acknowledged the great employees at Raritan Borough, the Committee members and volunteers, as they're all willing to assist whenever they can, from answering simple questions to a request for work to be done. Councilwoman Hutzler wished the incoming Mayor and Council the very best in 2024.

Councilman Fritzinger – Announced that the first Historic and Cultural meeting for 2024 will be on January 17, at 6:30 p.m. at the Raritan Library, adding that there are still ornaments for sale at the library and wishing everyone in the Borough a Happy Holiday.

Mayor Bray – Stated that this is his last council meeting and thanked everyone who has made the last four years as Mayor and the four before that as Councilman, an absolute delight, adding thanks

to all the Borough employees and professionals, past and present, for all their hard work and dedication.

Mayor Bray thanked Dan Jaxel for being a wealth of knowledge and an encyclopedia of municipal government, he thanked Eric Colvin, who has been with him almost every step of the way and without him, nothing would be possible. Mayor Bray stated that Eric Colvin has flourished into a fantastic administrator, adding that their working relationship has been wonderful, but more importantly, their personal friendship is something he looks forward to continuing. Mayor Bray gave thanks to all of the amazing volunteers across all of the Boards and Committees, adding that they are the heartbeat of this community.

The Mayor thanked the Governing Body, past and present, for standing alongside him doing thankless work for the best of Raritan and he congratulated Mayor Elect Carra, Councilman Elect Patente and Councilman Elect Tozzi, encouraging them to continue to put Raritan first in the years to come. Mayor Bray thanked Councilman Orozco and Councilwoman Hutzler, adding that it has been wonderful serving with them, he also thanked the citizens of Raritan for giving him the opportunity to serve a town he loves, its something he can never repay and it is something he appreciates more than anyone will ever know.

Lastly, the Mayor thanked his friends and family for their support from day one to day 2,920, adding that without a strong foundation, no person could do this job effectively. He also thanked Adele Goetsch, for being his political rock and confidant for the last eight years, former Mayor Liptak for inspiring him in the classroom, sharing that she was his kindergarten and third grade teacher, and she inspired him to become a government official by putting him on the Planning Board nine years ago. The Mayor thanked his father and sister for being his support system and biggest cheerleaders and thanked his late mother, who inspired a love of community service in him, adding that he carries her with him every day.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(In accordance with Section 29-1 of the Code of the Borough of Raritan, there shall be a five-minute limit per speaker)

Mayor Bray opened the Public Comment portion of the meeting for members of the public wishing to speak.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Boulevard: Stated that was one of the best last speeches I've ever heard and thanked Councilwoman Hutzler for her service on Council. Mr. Foohey wished everyone present and watching from home a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year, and as John Lennon sang, "let's hope it's a good one, without any fear".

Sammy Sherwin, 23 Hidden Pond Court: Stated that she is the president and is speaking for the Hidden Pond Court Condominium Association, she extended her thanks to the Governing Body for passing Resolution 188 adding that the 28 families of their association greatly appreciate it. Ms. Sherwin also thanked Mayor Bray, Borough Clerk/Administrator Eric Colvin and Borough Attorney William Robertson for all of their support and help in accommodating all of their requests.

Mike Pepe, 810 Old York Road, Apt. 2: Stated that he is on the Board of Education and on behalf of the Board he wanted to wish everyone a Happy New Year, Merry Christmas and for the schools, happy winter break. Mr. Pepe thanked the entire Council and all the employees of the Borough for supporting the schools all year and aiding in getting the word out about the referendum and the public for weighing in. Mr. Pepe thanked Councilwoman Hutzler for her work on the Recreation Committee and he is happy she will be continuing to volunteer on that Committee, he thanked

December 19, 2023

Regular Meeting

Mayor Bray for being in his role and for inspiring others, especially for educating kids as a teacher at BRHS and coaching varsity soccer, lastly he thanked Councilman Orozco for being the Board of Education liaison for the last six years and his support of the schools and in himself, adding that it has been steadfast the entire time and has meant a lot to him personally. Mr. Pepe thanked everyone again as a whole and wished everyone a wonderful Christmas, New Years and winter break, adding that the Board of Education is reorganizing on January 2, 2024.

David Marder, 830 Old York Road: Stated that he is a member of the Raritan EDC and he doesn't want to inundate everyone with more of what his colleagues have said tonight but he appreciates hearing that the decision to defund the EDC is not a done deal, adding that he emailed Council last week and thanked them for their responses, specially thanking incoming Mayor Carra for explaining procedurally what should be happening, adding that it was enlightening. Mr. Marder asked when this topic will come under discussion in the new year, Council President Carra responded with January 16, 2024, the first regular Council Meeting.

Joyce Fritchie, 445 Vanderver Road: Stated that she overheard that there was supposed to be a special meeting about the break-ins in the Cardinal Woods area over the past three-weeks, Council let her know that was not true. The resident asked if the police found who was responsible for the break-ins. Borough Clerk/Administrator Colvin stated that they are unsure at this time, to which the resident asked if the patrols were going to continue to be frequent in that area, Council confirmed that with a unanimous yes. The resident asked if there was a place residents could find out about recent burglaries in town, Council President Carra stated that there is an app that the Somerset County Sheriff's Department utilizes. The resident then thanked Mayor Bray for his service, adding that she was very touched by his exiting speech.

Neither seeing nor hearing any additional members of the Public, Mayor Bray closed Public Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Bray entertained for a motion to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

On a motion by Councilman Orozco, seconded by Councilwoman Hutzler, the Council moved to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion Passed: 6-0

Regular Meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Mayor Bray wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Alyssa Cornella

Administrative Assistant/Deputy Registrar/BOH Representative

Approved: _____
Eric M. Colvin
Borough Clerk/Administrator

Date: _____