

CALL TO ORDER

The Annual Reorganization Meeting of the Governing Body of the Borough of Raritan was called to order by Mayor Nicolas Carra at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the second floor Meeting Room of Borough Hall, Borough of Raritan, 22 First Street, Raritan, NJ 08869.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Carra read the following statement:

This Annual Reorganization Meeting was called pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of this meeting was posted in Borough Hall, made available on the Borough website and communicated to *The Courier News*, *The Star Ledger* and *The Breeze* on December 28, 2023.

INVOCATION

Father Thomas Odorizzi – The Catholic Church of St. Ann

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Father Thomas Odorizzi

OATH OF OFFICE – MAYOR & COUNCIL

The following oaths of office were administered:

Mayor Nicolas J. Carra
Councilman Michael Patente
Councilman Donald Tozzi

NOMINATION TO FILL COUNCIL VACANCY & OATH OF OFFICE

In accordance with the State Law, Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin read aloud the nominations from the Raritan Republican Party to fill the vacant Council seat:

John Murphy
Ken DeGrasiano
Umesh Agrawal

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Councilman Tozzi, Council voted to Appoint Umesh Agrawal.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Armahizer, Fritzing, Melitsky, Patente, Tozzi
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 5-0

Mayor Carra administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Councilman Agrawal.

ROLL CALL – MAYOR & COUNCIL

Borough Administrator/Clerk Colvin called following names for Roll Call:

Present: Mayor Carra, Councilman Armahizer, Councilman Agrawal, Councilman Fritzingler, Councilwoman Melitsky, Councilman Patente, Councilman Tozzi
Absent: x
Also Present: Borough Administrator/Borough Clerk Colvin, Borough Attorney William Robertson and Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT & OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Carra asked for a nomination for Council President.

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council voted to Elect Councilman Tozzi to serve as Council President.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente, Tozzi
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

Mayor Carra administered the Oath of Office to newly elected Council President Tozzi.

STATE OF THE BOROUGH

Mayor Nicolas J. Carra delivered the following address:

Good evening and welcome to the Borough of Raritan. I would like to begin by thanking the voters for electing me as their mayor. The margin of victory was greater than I expected; The data shows my running mates, and I won over 85 percent of the independent vote. It provides myself and the governing body with a mandate to do exactly what we campaigned on. I would like to thank my mom, dad, sisters, grandfather and the rest of my extended family and friends who are here today and who supported me throughout the many months of this campaign. It takes a lot of time and effort, and they made it easy to bounce ideas around and provide a nice break from the campaign trail when things became overwhelming. Also, to my campaign team, Adele and Debbie, thank you for all that you do to make our campaigns successful, year after year. I would also like to thank former Raritan Mayors Joann Liptak, Tony Huac and Zackary Bray, Senator Bateman, Somerville Mayor Brian Gallagher, former Warren Committeeman Dan Crozen, Bridgewater Councilman Michael Kirsch, former Raritan Council members Denise Carra, Jim Foohey and Craig Yesh.

This past year was a year full of change for the Borough of Raritan. The governing body, led by my efforts, created a new expansion plan for the town. We purchased the former PNC Bank on Somerset Street to house the new municipal offices for residential services. This property will also include a community room and a meeting room. The purchase of the bank created 40 additional parking spots for residents and visitors to utilize when dining and shopping in Raritan's

small businesses. With this move, we will be able to provide our police department with more space at our current municipal building. This expansion will in part be paid for with a Congressional grant of \$2.275 million thanks to Congressman Tom Kean Jr. We thank him for including us in this project in his fiscal year 2024 community project funding. Both projects are at various stages, and we hope to have the new municipal building done this year.

Speaking of grants, we have been increasing grant use in 2023 and that will only get more aggressive in 2024. Projects that use grants can be larger, like our drainage improvements up in the Richard Street, Columbus, and Riverside Avenues area. There, we secured over \$350,000 to improve flooding during heavy rain events. Even smaller projects funded by grants can have a large impact. This past year Recreation partnered with RideWise to obtain pedestrian safety flags that were installed along Somerset Street to increase visibility for those using crosswalks. For 2024, the governing body plans to hire a grant writer so we can continue to do more in Raritan for residents without having to fund or spend 100 percent of the costs with taxpayer dollars. This includes funding for a possible museum at the old Raritan Fire House on Anderson Street for our Historical and Cultural Committee to display many unique artifacts that make Raritan special and to share our rich cultural history.

For 2024, I would like to finalize and adopt our Recreation Strategic Master plan. We will continue our investments in our parks. In 2023, we were able to rebuild Frelinghuysen Park Basketball Court and started funding repairs to the tennis court. In 2024, we will focus on completing that court as well as building pickleball courts, a splash pad which will be funded in part by a county Open Space Grant. Our big project for Recreation is to overhaul Washington School Park. Since the school was demolished some years ago, the land has been underutilized by the Borough. More on this front to come in March, so please stay tuned as community involvement will play a big role in this project.

With my professional background in the non-profit assistance sector and after some issues which have come to the attention of the governing body in recent years, I would like to establish a social services day for the borough. I ask the council to allow myself and in partnership with the Board of Health to set up an event for residents to come and see which type of assistance they are eligible for from non-profit organizations and from government agencies.

For our downtown, we are looking to create a special improvement district for Somerset Street, as well as some others. This will be studied by our new standing committee, "Downtown Development." When working on committee assignments this year, I knew we needed to have a new standing committee for council to conduct research into things we can do to continue developing our downtown and promoting economic growth. I would also like to see this committee continue the work done by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority on their Sustainable Economic Development Plan.

The Borough of Raritan sought out assistance with creating a Sustainable Economic Development Plan to help maintain and expand existing employment and economic activity downtown. This project resulted in the creation of the Downtown Raritan Vision Plan, Downtown Redevelopment Plan, and an Implementation Toolbox. The Plan is a 10-year economic, land-use and multi-modal vision for Downtown Raritan. The documents were created through extensive community engagement. The Vision Plan presents a people-centered approach to economic development, with the goal of advancing projects that support both existing and new residents. It calls for creating inclusive public spaces that welcome people of all ages and abilities; for new development that respects the community's character; and strengthens the Borough's relations with existing and future businesses. The Redevelopment Plan provides the regulatory framework

necessary to implement many of the Vision Plan's recommendations. The Implementation Toolbox will help guide the Borough and partners in implementing the Vision Plan. It includes specific action items and steps for completing them.

Pedestrian Safety is a top concern of this governing body. Throughout the year I will ask the council to continue investigating potential roads and intersections that need to be designated as one-way streets or should disallow left-hand turns. We will continue to work with our partners in the county and state to make all roadways with heavy pedestrian traffic twenty-five miles per hour.

I will ask the governing body to establish a new Redevelopment Advisory Committee. This committee will be responsible for evaluating potential redevelopment projects that are pending in the Borough. I will also ask the committee to re-evaluate any previous redevelopment determinations to make sure they are in line with our vision to maintain Raritan's character and that such zones are sustainable for long-term economic growth as well as the impact on municipal services and systems.

We will also designate Somerset Street, from the Basilone Statue to the Post office, north and south sides as a redevelopment zone. Also looking at some of the side streets like Anderson, Thompson and Nevius. The North side of Orlando Drive needs to be reconsidered; possibly an area to foster new single-family homes. The Raritan Mall redevelopment is also underway. Talks with the owner and the incoming governing body will explore what has potential for that location to become a successful property once again.

I would also like to investigate a new Two-Family Tax classification. The governing body needs to capture the increased costs of sewer and trash that these properties create. Tax assessments indicate that two versus one family homes have virtually the same assessed values despite the impact they place on municipal services and systems.

I still believe our riverfront should be a greenway where possible. The Somerset County Green Acres program is the best way to achieve this goal. We can continue to purchase and demolish buildings on Orlando Drive to create a continuous greenway from Route 206 to the Duke Island Park Canal path. This is also in line with the redevelopment plan conducted and produced by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. This will create a distinctive downtown for Raritan, from our Train Station to Somerset Street and along the Raritan River.

Lastly, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and successful New Year. I look forward to serving as your mayor and working alongside the governing body to make Raritan grow, solve our problems collectively, and to bring the requested changes from residents to fruition. We are ready to continue "Taking Action" for you!

MAYOR & COUNCIL REMARKS

Council President Donald Tozzi proclaimed that he is glad to be back on Council. The Council President stated that the major campaign point was "take action", he declared that Council will take action by doing everything they can for the Borough because they care about Raritan, adding that he wants to make Raritan the best it can be. Council President Tozzi stated that if anyone needs anything, to please contact him and they will have his 100 percent attention. He ended by saying: "Take action, move ahead".

Councilman Michael Patente stated that Council has a very aggressive agenda of things to do this year and he is excited to get started on all of them. The Councilman thanked his family for supporting him in coming back to the Council and he also thanked all the people who voted for

him and the ones that did not because he is going to do his best to work for Raritan – everybody, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, so that residents can have the community he had when he grew up here. Councilman Patente voiced that Council has a difficult task to keep finance flat, adding that there was a slight tax increase due to schools, but he is going to work really hard to try and keep taxes down. He added that hopefully the new municipal building will have some new technology and changes, perhaps even monitors for presentations and meetings.

Councilman Umesh Agrawal thanked Mayor Carra for considering him for the open Council seat, he thanked Councilwoman Melitsky and several others for their encouragement and support. The Councilman stated that he is thankful to the Council members for appointing him the open seat, thankful to his wife and his family for their support. Councilman Agrawal stated that he is truly humbled and honored by this opportunity, adding that it is a privilege to represent all of Raritan’s residents on the Council and he will do his best to bring everyone along while taking actions for the betterment of the Borough. He expressed that his focus will always be on doing what is right for Raritan and he is committed to fostering an inclusive and transparent government that values the voices of its residents. Councilman Agrawal pledged that he will always be available whenever someone may need him, is committed to holding himself accountable and will encourage everyone to actively share their ideas, because all input is vital. Lastly, Councilman Agrawal emphasized that he is here to listen, adding that he is ready to forge ahead, unified in the shared vision for a thriving and harmonious Borough. The Councilman ended by saying, together we can work towards a better and brighter future for Raritan.

Councilwoman Joyce Melitsky congratulated Councilman Patente and Council President Tozzi on being elected and stated how proud she is to have Councilman Agrawal on Council, adding that she worked on one of his campaigns. Councilwoman Melitsky voiced that she is excited to work with Council this year and she is available 24-hours a day to everyone, adding that she willingly hands out her cell number. The Councilwoman thanked everyone and wished all a happy and healthy new year.

Councilman Adam Armahizer congratulated all three new Councilmembers and stated he was looking forward to working with them in the new year.

Councilman David Fritzing wished everyone a happy and prosperous new year, he welcomed Council President Tozzi, Councilman Patente and Councilman Agrawal. Councilman Fritzing echoed the Mayor’s comments by stating that Council is excited about the opening of the new municipal building in 2024, which is a big project that they are excited to work on. The Councilman assured everybody that Council is looking to do the most for Raritan’s residents and businesses, adding that if anybody needs anything to reach out to him. Lastly, he thanked everyone for their time.

Councilwoman Joyce Melitsky also congratulated Mayor Carra, adding that under his direction Council will have a great year.

ADOPTION OF 2024 GENERAL RULES OF ORDER

Mayor Carra called for a motion on the Adoption of the 2024 General Rules of Order, Resolution No. 2024-01-001

On motion by Councilman President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Adopt Resolution No. 2024-01-001.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

2024 COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEES

Mayor Carra acknowledged the following 2024 Standing Committees:

<u>Administration, Personnel & Technology</u>	Chair – Councilman Michael Patente Councilman Umesh Agrawal
<u>Public Works, Public & Private Properties</u>	Chair – Councilman David Fritzingler Councilman Donald Tozzi
<u>Finance</u>	Chair – Councilman Umesh Agrawal Councilwoman Joyce Melitsky
<u>Public Safety</u>	Commissioner – Councilwoman Joyce Melitsky Councilman Donald Tozzi
<u>Downtown Development</u>	Chair – Councilman Donald Tozzi Councilman David Fritzingler
<u>Regional & Shared Services</u>	Chair – Councilman Adam Armahizer Councilman Michael Patente

2024 COUNCIL LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS

Mayor Carra acknowledged the following 2024 Council Liaison Assignments:

<u>Board of Education</u> <u>Raritan Public Library</u> <u>Finance Department</u>	Councilman Umesh Agrawal
<u>Solid Waste Advisory Committee</u> <u>Somerset County Wastewater Management</u> <u>Environmental Commission</u> <u>Somerset Valley Sewage Authority</u>	Councilman Adam Armahizer

Building Department
Department of Public Works
Engineering Department
Historical & Cultural Committee

Councilman David Fritzing

Office of Emergency Management
Police Department
Raritan Borough Fire Department
Basilone Parade Committee

Councilwoman Joyce Melitsky

Municipal Court
Health Department/Vital Statistics
Board of Health
Raritan Senior Citizens

Councilman Michael Patente

Regional Center Partnership
Property Maintenance Department
Recreation Committee
Redevelopment Advisory Committee
Raritan Municipal Land Use Board

Councilman Donald Tozzi

MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS *without Consent of Council*

Mayor Carra announced the following appointments that do not require consent of Council:

Environmental Commission

3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026

Member – Emilee Stander

Member – Olga Metaxes

Member – Heath Hoffmeister

*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025

Member – Tony Sacino

Historical & Cultural Committee

3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026

Member – Edward Ruzbarsky

Member – Joyce Tronolone

Member – Gail Ostapczuk

*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025

Alt. No. 1 – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – Mark Esposito

Alt. No. 2 – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – James Fidacaro

Alt. No. 3 – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – Frank Del Rocco

Alt. No. 4 – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – Dawn Wilde

Municipal Land Use Board

Terms Vary

Class I Member – 4-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2027 – Mayor Nicolas J. Carra
Class II Member – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – Borough Administrator Colvin
Class III Member – 1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024 – Councilman Donald Tozzi
Class IV Member – 3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026 – Charles McMullin
Class IV Member – 3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026 – Thomas Brown
*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025
*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025
*unexpired term – 1/1/2022 to 12/31/2024
Class IV Member – Barrett Windrem
Class IV Member – Denise Carra
Class IV Member – Michael DeCicco
Alt. No. 1 – 2-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2025 – Tony LoPresti
Alt. No. 2 – 2-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2025 – John Murphy
*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2024
Alt. No. 4 – 2-year term - 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2024 – Jo-Ann Liptak

Regional Center Executive Board

1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Member – Mayor Nicolas J. Carra
Member – Councilman Donald Tozzi
Member – Engineer Joseph Brosnan
Member – Nick Zamora

Solid Waste Advisory Board

1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Member – Councilman Armahizer
Member – Recycling Coordinator Vincent LoMedico

Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority

*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2027

Commissioner – John Murphy

Somerset County Municipal Wastewater Management Plan Committee

1-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Elected Official – Councilman Armahizer
Planning Board – Charles McMullin
Borough Engineer – Joseph Brosnan
SRSVA Member – Edward Machala
Recycling Coordinator – Vincent LoMedico

Economic Development Committee

3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026

Member – Sherri Strauss
Member – Fabiana LoPiccolo-Stewart

*unexpired term – 1/1/2022 to 12/31/2024 Member – David Marder
*unexpired term – 1/1/2022 to 12/31/2024 Member – Jennifer Marder
Alt. No. 1 – 1/1/2024 to
12/31/2026 – Cathy DeBellis

MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS with Consent of Council

Mayor Carra announced the following appointments requiring the consent of Council:

Board of Health

3-year term, 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026 Member – Nina Dorey
Member – Ginnifer Hoffmeister

Library Board of Trustees

5-year term, 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2028 Member – Ann Marie Mead
*unexpired term - 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2027 Member – Zachary R. Bray

Recreation Committee (requires council)

3-year term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2026 Member – Robert Carducci
Member – Barbara Pellechio
Member – Lauren Christie
*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025 Member – John Collonello
*unexpired term – 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2025 Member – Alex Windrem
*unexpired term – 1/1/2022 to 12/31/2024 Member – Joan Hutzler

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Approve member Nina Dorey to the Board of Health.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve member Ginnifer Hoffmeister to the Board of Health.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Councilwoman Melitsky, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve members Ann Marie Mead and Zachary Bray to the Library Board of Trustees.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve members Robert Carducci, Barbara Pellechio, Lauren Christie, John Collonello, Alex Windrem and Joan Hutzler to the Recreation Committee.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente
Nay: x
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2024-01-002 – Resolution No. 2024-01-019)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Resolution No. 2024-01-002 | Appointing Borough Attorney |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-003 | Appointing Bond Counsel |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-004 | Appointing Labor Counsel |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-005 | Appointing Special Counsel |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-006 | Appointing Registered Municipal Accountant |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-007 | Appointing Insurance Agent |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-008 | Appointing Public Defender |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-009 | Appointing Administrative Officials |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-010 | Appointing Depositories/Financial Institutions |
| Resolution No. 2024-01-011 | Appointing Custodians of Accounts |

Resolution No. 2024-01-012	Adopting 2024 Temporary Budget
Resolution No. 2024-01-013	Fixing Interest Rates – Delinquent Taxes and Sewer
Resolution No. 2024-01-014	Canceling 2023 Property Taxes – Open Balances Less Than \$10.00
Resolution No. 2024-01-015	Designating Official Newspapers
Resolution No. 2024-01-016	Designating Paid Holidays
Resolution No. 2024-01-017	Establishing 2024 Calendar of Meetings
Resolution No. 2024-01-018	Appointing Alternate Public Defender
Resolution No. 2024-01-019	Appointing Qualified Purchasing Agent

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to Adopt the Consent Agenda.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, Fritzingler, Melitsky, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

PUBLIC COMMENT

In accordance with the Code of the Borough of Raritan, there shall be a five-minute time limit per speaker.

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

Seeing and hearing no members of the public, Mayor Carra closed Public Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Carra entertained a motion to Adjourn the Annual Reorganization Meeting.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilwoman Melitsky, Council moved to Adjourn the Annual Reorganization Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion Passed: 6-0

Regular Meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Alyssa Cornella
Deputy Clerk/Assistant to the Borough Administrator
Deputy Registrar/BOH Representative

Approved: _____
Eric M. Colvin
Borough Clerk/Administrator

Date: _____