

## MINUTES

### **BOROUGH OF RARITAN SPECIAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024**

**6 P.M. – EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**7 P.M. – REGULAR SESSION**

This Special Meeting of the Governing Body of the Borough of Raritan was called to order by Mayor Carra in the Meeting Room of the Raritan Municipal Building, 22 First Street, Raritan, NJ 08869 at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Mayor Carra announced the Special Meeting of the Governing Body was called pursuant to applicable portions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate Notice of this Special Meeting was posted in Borough Hall, on the Borough website and communicated to *The Courier News*, *The Star Ledger* and *The Breeze* on August 27, 2024.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Present: Council President Tozzi, Councilman Agrawal, Councilman Armahizer, Councilman DiGraziano, Councilman Fritzinger, Councilman Patente

Also Present: Borough Administrator Colvin, Acting Borough Clerk Mathewson, Borough Attorney William Robertson and Borough Engineer Joseph Brosnan

Absent:

#### **INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE**

Councilman Armahizer

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Resolution No. 2024-10-177

Entering Executive Session

1. Contract Negotiations  
Habitat for Humanity
2. Attorney Client  
Alpine Way
3. Personnel  
Police, Administration
4. Litigation  
Raritan Mall

On motion by Councilman Fritzinger, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-10-177.

#### **Recorded Vote**

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, DiGraziano, Fritzinger, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:02 p.m.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT**

Council moved to reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

Council exited Executive Session, and resumed Regular Session at 7:13 p.m.

Mayor Carra stated that he was going to move the agenda around to allow the Borough's Affordable Housing Planner, Jim Kyle, to speak and explain the obligation for the fourth round of Affordable Housing obligations. Mr. Kyle started off by explaining that the Department of Community Affairs recently released the fourth-round housing obligation which starts on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. He continued to state that in the third round there was a settlement between Fair Share Housing and the Borough that set our obligation at 293 units. Council and the Planning Board adopted a plan that addressed some of the obligation. As the residents are aware, there is not enough vacant land to build all that was required in the third round and unfortunately, we will be facing a similar situation with our fourth-round obligation. Mr. Kyle then stated that the number calculated for Raritan's fourth round obligation is 100 units. He continued to explain that by January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Council will need to adopt a resolution accepting the obligation of 100 units. Once that is adopted the planning process can start and adopt a plan by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. He went on to explain that the plan must be on file with the DCA by that time. Discussion ensued between members of Mr. Kyle, Council, and members of the public. Mr. Kyle explained that the affordable housing mandates require towns to make difficult choices but that this is a constitutional mandate. The Supreme Court of New Jersey has said we are legally obligated to meet this requirement. If the Borough does not handle this the right way, it could face potential litigation that would eliminate any control over the process. Mr. Kyle suggested the Borough take a more proactive approach through the planning process so the outcome may not be the most ideal however, it would be better than having no control. Discussion continued. Concerns about an increase of residents in the Borough could force us to expand our Police Force, Fire Department, etc. Mr. Kyle encourages those residents who want to provide input and comments to attend the public hearing that will be scheduled for a time in 2025 (possibly April). There will be a plan drafted for the Borough that will be a public document and available prior to the public hearing.

**PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)**

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

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

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

**MINUTES**

1. October 8, 2024 - Special

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to Approve the October 8, 2024 Minutes.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve the October 8, 2024 Minutes.

**Recorded Vote**

Yea: Tozzi, Armahizer, DiGraziano, Fritzinger, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: Agrawal

Motion Carried: 5-0

**COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS**

Councilman Patente- Report provided by the new Shared Service Court states 203 tickets were issued and 212 cases disposed of. The Court took in a total of \$19,285.00 with \$9,581.00 going to the Borough. Councilman Patente wanted the public to be aware that the Borough pays approximately \$2 million

dollars to the school system each month. Lastly, the Councilman mentioned that he attended a webinar recently on the Powers and Duties of Municipal Officers that was instructed by the Branchburg Township Administrator.

Councilman Fritzing- Councilman started off by reporting leaf pick-up has begun and will run through December, weather permitting. DPW will be going through the Borough multiple times over the next several weeks. If anyone has any concerns, please reach out to Public Works directly. A tree hazard was removed over on Bell Avenue. Bulk pick-up was on October 10<sup>th</sup>, the next bulk pick-up is scheduled for November 24<sup>th</sup>. Councilman Fritzing reminded residents that a mattress and or any other upholstered furniture must be wrapped in plastic otherwise it will not be taken. Councilman continued with the Building Department's activity from October 8<sup>th</sup> through October 18<sup>th</sup>. There were 4 building, 3 plumbing, 6 electrical, 3 fire, and one mechanical totaling \$49,545.00 in fees were collected by the Borough. The Historical Committee met last Wednesday reporting that their budget is \$2,801.98 and the Trust Fund totaling \$1,190.15. He added that they are trying to plan a library program called the Tea Party on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, starting at 12:30 pm. There is a sign-up sheet available in the library and check them out on Facebook.

Council President Tozzi- Council President Tozzi started off stating that Property Maintenance is doing full inspections with no money reportedly taken in during this period. He continued by stating after several months of dealing with PSE&G, all the lights on Main Street are now working. Council President then added that he and Councilman Armahizer are working on the tree for the Nevius Street Bridge. The tree will be set up on December 1<sup>st</sup> and taken down on January 4<sup>th</sup>. He continued by stating the tree lighting event will be set for December 11<sup>th</sup> and should be a great event.

Councilman DiGraziano- Councilman DiGraziano mentioned the Trunk-or-Treat event that will be held at JFK School on October 27<sup>th</sup>. He reminded residents that trunks were still needed to make the event a great success for the kids. He added that prizes will be awarded to participants throughout the event to get everyone involved. On November 7<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm, the Borough will be hosting a Washington School Park Open-House. This will be a public forum for residents to attend and give ideas and input regarding the property as well as voice any concerns you may have. Also on November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Basilone Committee will be hosting a dedication at the statute before the actual dedication of the USS Basilone Naval Destroyer; a time has not yet been confirmed for this event.

Councilman Agrawal- Councilman Agrawal reported from the Finance Committee that after the close of quarter three, the Borough is tracking well on our appropriations. He then went on to state that our CFO has done a great job dealing with the banks to get us a better interest rate. Also, the Councilman mentioned the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; every time there is a non-residential development they put in 2.5 percent of the apartment fee into this trust fund. He went on to state that money can be used to pay for things such as affordable housing consultants, affordable housing attorneys, as well as rehabilitating any low-income home. Councilman Agrawal added that there are strict requirements when applying for the money. If you need any further information, please go to the Borough's website. Continuing with updates from the School Board; Mr. Pepe notified that the district will be holding a rededication of the renovated Basilone Field as well as a newly moved monument on Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at the athletic fields starting at 5 pm. Councilman continued by stating JFK's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary party has been moved to the Spring with more information to come at a later date. If anyone has any JFK or Raritan items they would be willing to donate or loan, please contact Mr. Pepe.

Councilman Armahizer- Councilman Armahizer started off by mentioning that the Environmental Commission has been working with the Borough's grant writers on applying for this year's Green Communities grant that would provide \$5,000.00 toward the development of the Community Reforesting Management Plan as well as \$20,000.00 of a Community Reforesting Management Plan and additional tree inventory. The Councilman the asked Borough Attorney Robertson for an update regarding the

Environmental Commissions By-Laws. Mr. Robertson responded, stating he has reviewed them and has had conversations with the Borough Administrator.

Councilman Fritzingler asked the Mayor if he could add one more update from the Department of Public Works. This year DPW completed a large project resurfacing and road rehab program; any road that was not completed will be picked up in the Springtime when the project continues.

Mayor Carra- Mayor Carra shared that there will be early voting starting on October 26<sup>th</sup> through November 3<sup>rd</sup> at six locations throughout the County. Unfortunately, Raritan is not one of them. Early Voting will be open from 10 am until 8 pm, except for Sundays as the polls will close at 6 pm. The Mayor continued stating that votes cast during early voting are considered complete. The closest location is Bridgewater's Municipal building, located at 100 Commons Way with the second closest location being Hillsborough at their Municipal Building, located at 379 South Branch Road. For more information, please check our website as all the early voting locations have been posted there. The Mayor went on to address some complaints about road closure notifications during the resurfacing projects. He stated he had a discussion with Vince and the Chief of Police to do a better job with sending notices out in the future. Mayor Carra continued on to mention a discussion he and Borough Engineer, Joe Brosnan, had about adding Handicapped parking spaces on the main street. As most residents are aware, the main street is a County Road, and the County would have to authorize the same ordinance as that is the only way to get that into effect. Lastly, the Mayor mentioned that the Redevelopment Advisory Committee will be meeting this Thursday at 9:30 am in the community room downstairs in Borough Hall.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

None

### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. First Avenue Tennis Courts – ADA Accessibility (AA)  
Councilman Armahizer reported that he and Council President Tozzi have been working closely with Dan Hayes from the Somerset County Park Commission to ensure the First Ave Tennis Courts can become ADA accessible. Collaborating with the County to make this location ADA accessible could potentially open the property up to portions of State and County Parks Rehab funding as well as other grant opportunities that could help the property's rehabilitation. He continued by stating the Environmental Commission is very interested in utilizing the location for a community garden. Adding that he recently confirmed with Mr. Hayes that the finalized ADA accessibility plans will be made available next week. Further collaboration is required however, Councilman Armahizer wanted to thank everyone involved in bringing this to the County's attention, specifically Council President Tozzi and Mayor Carra. Mayor Carra announced that in addition to Councilman Armahizer's Environmental Commission appointment, the Mayor will be appointing two members to the Recreation Committee.
2. Alternate Member – Environmental Commission – Benjamin Harris (AA)  
Mr. Harris came up to the front of the meeting room and took his oath of office for the appointment to the Environmental Commission. The Mayor then appointed Joyce Melitsky as alternate member 1 to the Recreation Committee, with a 3 year term expiring in December of 2025. Next, he appointed Jeff King as alternate member 2 to the Recreation Committee, with a term expiring on 12/31/2024.
3. Affordable Housing – 4<sup>th</sup> Round Obligation Discussion (NC)  
Mayor Carra stated that the discussion earlier with Jim Kyle addressed what he was going to speak about.
4. Best Practices Inventory (EC)

Borough Administrator Colvin stated that the Clerk, CFO and himself completed the Best Practices report that is due to the State later this week. He continued by stating for those who are unfamiliar this is part of a formula the State uses to calculate financial aid a Municipality could receive. Based on our score for Raritan, we should receive the maximum of whatever the aid calculation comes out to.

**ORDINANCES – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING**

None

**ORDINANCES – INTRODUCTION**

None

**CONSENT AGENDA**

*(Resolution No. 2024-10-178 through No. 2024-10-182)*

Resolution No. 2024-10-178

Resolution No. 2024-10-179

Resolution No. 2024-10-180

Resolution No. 2024-10-181

Resolution No. 2024-10-182

Approving Change Order – 9 West Somerset  
Approving Chapter 159 - DOT Phase II Richard  
St

Authorizing Refund of Erroneous Tax Payment  
Authorizing Professional Service Contract–  
Atlas

Authorizing Professional Service Contract –  
Biennial Certification

Councilman Patente asked for clarification on Resolution No. 2024-10-179 – Approving Chapter 159 – DOT Phase II Richard Street. Borough Engineer, Joe Brosnan, addressed the Councilman and stated that the Borough is receiving two separate grants, and this resolution just re-establishes that the proper processes are being followed.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-10-178 through Resolution No. 2024-10-182 - Consent Agenda.

**Recorded Vote**

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, DiGraziano, Fritzing Patent

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

**BILL LIST**

Resolution No. 2024-10-183

Approving Bill List

On a motion by Councilman Agrawal, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-183 - Approving Bill List.

**Recorded Vote**

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, DiGraziano, Fritzing, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

**CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS**

1. Edmunds and Associates – 2025 Software Maintenance - \$14,664.38

2. First Choice Automotive Parts – Mobile Column Lift - \$44,716.83
3. Pharos Enterprises LLC – 9 West Somerset Street Renovations - \$241,852.12
4. Van Cleef Engineering – Work on Colby, Berwick, & Arnold - \$ 11,591.50

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to approve the Certification of Funds together.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilman Agrawal, Council moved to approve the Certification of Funds – 2025 Software Maintenance, Mobile Column Lift, 9 West Somerset Street Renovations, Work on Colby, Berwick, & Arnold.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, Armahizer, DiGraziano, Fritzing, Patente

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

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

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd.: Mr. Foohey announced that the library is having a book sale on November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Currently the library is accepting donations of used books, fiction, non-fiction, hardcover, soft cover, children’s books, and DVDs. They will not accept textbooks, magazines, paperback books, or CDs.

George Hu, 106 Anderson St: Mr. Hu wanted to bring up the parking issues over on Anderson Street. He mentioned that even though Valley Wellness has its own parking lot, people are not using that lot and are parking on Anderson Street and walking over there. He also voiced concerns about people smoking outside of his residence. He and his wife have tried to ask the people not to smoke outside of their home, however, they have been met with resistance and on some occasion have been verbally abused. He went on to state that he has lived in the town for many years and is looking for help to alleviate the problems. Mayor Carra along with the rest of Council discussed possible options for signage however, a solution for this issue may not be that simple. The mayor added that he would also be reaching out to the Police Department for input on possible solutions.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King reiterated what Mr. Hu had reported and stated that something needs to be done, however, enforcement may be more difficult. He suggested ‘no loitering’ signs.

Sarah Trent, Valley Wellness Owner: Ms. Trent advised Council that she is aware of the issues on Anderson Street and has spoken with the Hu’s on numerous occasions. Ms. Trent went on to confirm that she does have a sign on her property prohibiting smoking on premises. She is willing to do whatever she can to help alleviate the issues on Anderson Street.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty St: Ms. DeBellis advised Council that on Face Book she noticed that Bridgewater Raritan High School had a petition to support keeping the number of AI courses they currently offer, adding that they are also asking for a small donation if you can. Ms. DeBellis asked Council if they were made aware of this. She suggested Council support the high school as it is important to keep those classes available. Councilman Agrawal responded stating he will be reaching out to Mr. Pepe who is Raritan’s representative on the board of Education.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King wanted to thank Councilman Patente who facilitated new First Aid kits being supplied to the Municipal Buildings that may not have had any. He stressed the importance and safety of having First Aid kits readily available. Secondly Mr. King reiterated Councilman DiGraziano's announcement about Recreations Trunk-or-Treat event coming up. Lastly, he wanted to acknowledge Vince and the DPW staff for all their hard work throughout the town.

Roger Copt, 1120 Rt. 202: Mr. Copt reminded the public that the election is coming up and this is your opportunity to change things. He encouraged everyone to go out and vote no matter who you would be voting for.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty St: Ms. DeBellis asked Council if there were defibrillators in all the buildings? Mayor Carra responded, stating he could not confirm if the schools have them but did confirm that the Municipal Building does have one down in the lobby area.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to adjourn the Special Meeting.

**Recorded Vote:**

All in favor

Motion passed: 6-0

Special Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

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Kimberly Mathewson  
Acting Municipal Clerk

Approved:

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Eric M. Colvin  
Borough Administrator

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Next Regular Council Meeting**

Tuesday, November 12, 2024  
6:30 p.m. – Executive Session  
7 p.m. – Regular Session