

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN
SPECIAL MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024

6:30 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 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 12, 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 Regular 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 Fritzingler, 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 DiGraziano

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2024-11-184

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 Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-184.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:33 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT

Council moved to reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

Council exited Executive Session, and resumed Regular Session at 7:20 p.m.

PROCLAMATION

Honoring Barbara Rymer Upon Retirement

Proclamation

**HONORING BARBARA RYMER
ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE BOROUGH OF RARITAN**

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer was born in Newark, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer grew up in Scotch Plains, also lived in Clark and raised her two children. Briefly lived in New Providence before moving to Raritan Borough in 2012, where she currently resides with husband, Wayne and their fur boy, Trapper; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer's hobbies include gardening, reading, cooking, baking and enjoying time with her family, especially her twin granddaughters; and

WHEREAS, Barbara started her career with the Borough of Raritan in February 2017 as the Technical Assistant to the Construction Official and Assistant to the Tax Assessor; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer feels that her biggest accomplishment was learning the many complex aspects of Construction, including zoning, planning, permitting and coordinating work with the various subcode officials; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer's most memorable experience during her time with the Borough was making long-lasting friends with coworkers and getting to know so many of the Borough's residents and contractors; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Rymer retired from Raritan Borough on August 30, 2024 and although working in the Borough has been a memorable experience and she has appreciated working alongside people that made her job enjoyable and rewarding, she is looking forward to traveling, hobbies and catching up with friends.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Nicolas J. Carra, Mayor of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey do hereby honor Barbara Rymer for her hard work, dedication and commitment to the Borough she served for many years and wish her a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Honoring Timothy Hardgrove for Exceptional Duty

Proclamation

RECOGNIZING TIMOTHY HARDGROVE FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL DUTY

WHEREAS, Timothy Hardgrove has been with the Borough of Raritan Department of Public Works for 18 years; and

WHEREAS, last month on October 23, 2024, Timothy Hardgrove noticed black smoke billowing from the backyard of 71 Anderson Street while working; and

WHEREAS, due to his actions and quick thinking to utilize a garden hose to extinguish patio furniture that had caught fire and was less than five feet from the residence averted a near tragedy, as there were occupants in the residence that were unaware of the fire; and

WHEREAS, Timothy Hardgrove's professionalism and dedication to the residents within the Borough highly reflect upon himself, and Raritan Department of Public Works, and the community you serve; and

WHEREAS, the Raritan Borough Police Department, the Borough of Raritan, and its residents are grateful to you for your actions in preventing the destruction of property and possibly the loss of human life; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Nicolas J. Carra, Mayor of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, am proud of Timothy Hardgrove for having shown bravery and commitment to the Borough and do hereby recognize him on this act of heroism.

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.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty St: Ms. DeBellis reminded Council that she previously made it known that the boards on the Nevius Street bridge were not safe and asked for an update. Borough Administrator Colvin responded that DPW was made aware of the issue and have been working on them. Ms. DeBellis then stated she was asked by a business owner to make a complaint about Property Maintenance and how rude Mr. Blute is. Ms. DeBellis then suggested that Executive Session should be in the conference room to allow members of the public to sit in the Court room and wait comfortably, instead of having everyone stay out in the hallway until the doors open.

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr: Requesting help from Council regarding the NJ Transit Train Yard. He stated that within the last few months the trains are idling 24/7 and that the noise and fumes are an issue again. Mayor Carra stated they would be looking into this issue.

Zongqi Hu, 106 Anderson St: Mr. Hu asked for any updates relating to the issues he has brought before Council regarding problems with people parking and smoking marijuana outside his residence. Council

discussed options for signage and that they would need to look further into this. It was also suggested that residents call the Police to advise them of the issues while they are occurring.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King stated that the problem is consistent on Anderson Street and that the owner of Valley Wellness has been doing all she can to help alleviate the parking/smoking issues for the residents. He went on to suggest that the owner and Council should meet and come up with a way to fix the problem.

Bruce Taggart, 255 Weiss Terr: Mr. Taggart wanted Council to know about the Train Yard issues and bring attention to a blinding light that has been put up within the last month or so behind Ortho. He stated it shines directly towards all the homes on Johnson and Wiess.

Vince Casola, 267 Weiss Terr: Mr. Casola also wanted to make Council aware of the issues with the trains, he believes that the issues are caused by changes in management. Mayor Carra responded, stating that our state representatives would need to be contacted and get involved, same as they did the last time there were issues with the Train Yard. Mr. Casola also brought up issues regarding his driveway and parking in the summer. Many cars park on the street during the warmer months, which does not leave enough room for the traffic that uses Johnson Drive. He is fearful an accident is inevitable. Mayor Carra stated that Council would be looking into the issues.

Glenn Marton, 253 Weiss Terr (letter read by Victor Laggini): Mr. Marton wanted Council to be aware of the on-going issues from the Rail Yard. His letter mentioned that 10-15 years ago the same issues were a problem and at that time there was an agreement with NJ Transit which alleviated the issues. Unfortunately, the problems have returned with constant idling, loud lengthy horn blowing, and the fumes from the trains. He is asking Council to initiate talks with NJ Transit to eliminate the issues as best they can to allow the effected residents to live without the stress and frustration these problems have caused.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King reiterated the on-going issues with the trains and included that he can hear the train horns in the middle of the night on Vones Lane. He stressed to Council that something needs to be done.

Tom Brown, 18 Elmer St: Mr. Brown asked the Mayor about the proposed Ordinance and what is in the plan. Borough Attorney Robertson responded, stating the plan is a part of the Ordinance and it was drafted by Borough Engineer, Joe Brosnan. Mr. Brown asked if this plan was the same version that was associated with previous ordinances that were previously voted down. Mr. Robertson responded confirming the plan is the same. He went on to state that the Borough is facing pending litigation and does have to consider the town's unmet requirement regarding affordable housing. Mr. Robertson stressed to the public that the Ordinance listed on the agenda is for introduction only, a public hearing will be at the following meeting.

Joyce Fritchie, 445 Vanderveer Rd: Ms. Fritchie suggested to Council to include an update on the next agenda regarding the parking and smoking issues on Anderson Street.

Bonnie Allen, 11 Granitz Pl: Ms. Allen asked Mayor Carra for the status of pending litigation regarding the property owner of the Raritan Mall. Borough Attorney Robertson responded, stating that the issues were regarding certificates of occupancy. He went on to state that a temporary CO was issued within the last month.

Chris Allen, 11 Granitz Pl: Mr. Allen asked Council why the Borough of Raritan has allowed an illegal business to continue to operate. He went on to express his frustration over the last several months asking for documents and getting nowhere. Recently he received a copy of the temporary CO that Mr. Gara

issued. He stressed his concerns about the business that has been operating for more than a year as well as the current structure of the Raritan Mall.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty St: Ms. DeBellis stressed that Council needs to come together and do their jobs as elected officials for the residents of Raritan.

Patrick Dinsmore, 523 Victoria St: Mr. Dinsmore wanted to address the comments made by Mayor Carra at the June 25th meeting as well as the July 16th meeting regarding litigation against the owner of the Raritan Mall. Mr. Dinsmore asked how Borough Attorney Robertson has been able to advise Council about the Raritan Mall if there was a conflict with him, as previously stated. Mayor Carra confirmed that Mr. Robertson has not been involved with any deliberations or advisements regarding the Raritan Mall property. Mr. Dinsmore asked Mayor Carra if there was ever a case in Superior Court to which the Mayor responded that there is a process that needs to be followed with any pending litigation and that with a recent temporary CO being issued, they may be in compliance at this time.

Joyce Fritchie, 445 Vanderveer Rd: Ms. Fritchie wanted to follow up on a previous request made for addresses of other developments the Raritan Mall Developer has done to see how those properties have been maintained. Mayor Carra responded that the information is public record.

Dilette Patente, 30 Glazer Ave: Mrs. Patente stated that she is concerned for the current state of Council. She asked what the people of Raritan are supposed to do when concerns have been raised, and no one has any answers.

MINUTES

1. October 22, 2024 – Special

Mayor Carra asked for a motion to Approve the October 22, 2024 Minutes.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve the October 22, 2024 Minutes.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Armahizer- No report. Congratulations to the victors of the election.

Councilman Agrawal- Recognizing our veterans and thanking them for their service. Thank you to the Borough Clerk's Office and Administration for organizing the election, great job done. Mr. Pepe wanted me to share that the Board of Education Business Administrator, Peter Stars, is retiring and Kevin Lomski will be returning to serve as the new Business Administrator. Also a thank you to all those that attended the unveiling of the Basilone Monument at Basilone Memorial Field. The standardized test report was given at the Boards last meeting and shows overall growth; the presentation from the October 29th meeting can be watched on YouTube. Mr. Pepe also asked that I share the graduation rate has risen by 2.5 percent; things are moving in the right direction.

Councilman DiGraziano- Truck or Treat event went very well back on October 27th; a big thank you to our Recreation Director. The meeting at Washington School was on November 7th with a great turnout by residents with ideas and input. The process has begun to figure out how and when the tennis courts will be getting re-done. Lastly, on December 14th, Santa will be at Frelinghuysen Park from 12-2 p.m. We hope everyone comes out to see Santa.

Council President Tozzi- October's Police report consisted of 1,239 call-ins, 242 motor vehicle stops, 188 violations, along with 1 DUI. Property Maintenance has everything looking great. The dog park was recently re-done as part of an Eagle Scout project; Paul did a great job adding obstacles and updating the park for all the dogs in Raritan. Also, our DPW employees will be putting up holiday decorations around town in the next couple of weeks, snowflakes as well as banners will be displayed.

Councilman Fritzing- Leaf pick-up will continue until mid-December; they are on a revolving basis. Contact DPW with any questions. The last bulk pick-up of the year will be this Thursday, November 14th. The Historic Committee has ornaments for sale at the library for anyone interested. Their next meeting will be November 20th at 6:30 p.m. at Borough Hall.

Councilman Patente- Received my certificate from the webinar I attended last month, The Powers and Duties of the Municipal Governing Body. There was an alert that woke many of us up today about 7 a.m. notifying of a road closure, which was a mistake. I spoke with our Administrator about the alerts having more information included to fully advise the residents of what or why the alert is being sent. Thank you to all the veterans who have served, as well as a big thank you to the Eagle Scout for the upgrades to the dog park.

Mayor Carra- I attended the Veteran's Day event at Veteran's Park yesterday and want to thank all vets for their service who are here in Raritan and throughout the country. John Basilone was inducted to the Hall of Fame 13 years ago and on Monday November 18th from 12-2 p.m., at the American Dream Mall, they will be doing an exposé on him.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Christmas Tree Lighting (DT)

Council President Tozzi stated that the Borough purchased a 12-foot tree that will be displayed on the Nevius Street Bridge. The tree will be put up early in December over by the bridge, Dukes will be providing electrical outlets so it can be lit, and there will be cameras on the tree as well. With help from Councilman Armahizer, we are trying to get an orchestra to play during the tree lighting event. A company donated 1000 ribbons that will be handed out at the Municipal Building for anyone to decorate and then return. They will be displayed on the tree for the ceremony. The tree lighting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 11th from 6-8 p.m. with the lighting of the tree at 7 p.m. Hot chocolate and coffee will be offered at the event as well. We are trying to make this a big event. I am also working on trying to display old Christmas cards in Mr. Van Note's corner gas station on Nevius Street that were mailed to Orlandos Tavern from the troops he supported.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ORDINANCES – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

None

ORDINANCES – INTRODUCTION

Councilman Patente asked the Mayor if he could address the meeting; he stated that he would be recusing

himself from the introduction of the following ordinance and will be leaving the room prior to any discussion.

Ordinance No. 2024-25

An ordinance of the Borough Council of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, adopting a redevelopment plan for an area in need of redevelopment consisting of approximately 12.2 acres known as block 116.01, lot 11.01 as shown on the tax map of the Borough of Raritan as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” under the New Jersey local redevelopment and housing law (N.J.S.A. 40a:12a-1 et seq.)

The purpose of this Ordinance is to provide for the redevelopment of the site of the former Raritan Mall.

Councilman Patente announced that he would be recusing himself from participating in the vote.

On motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance No. 2024-25.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, DiGraziano, Fritzingler

Nay: Agrawal, Armahizer

Absent: x

Abstain: Patente

Motion Carried: 3-2

Mayor Carra stated that the second reading and public hearing for Ordinance No. 2024-25 is set for November 26, 2024.

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2024-11-185 through No. 2024-11-192)

Resolution No. 2024-11-185

Resolution No. 2024-11-186

Resolution No. 2024-11-187

Resolution No. 2024-11-188

Resolution No. 2024-11-189

Resolution No. 2024-11-190

Resolution No. 2024-11-191

Resolution No. 2024-11-192

Approving Budget Transfer

Appointing Office of Emergency Management Coordinator – Griffin

Authorizing Execution – Contract between the Borough and A.F.S.C.M.E., AFL-CIO

Authorizing Profession Service Contract – Michels and Waldron, LLC

Authorizing Profession Service Contract – Crane Associates, PC

Authorizing the Execution of a Discharge of Affordable Housing Agreement and Repayment Mortgage for 19 Cardinal Way

Award of Contract – NJDOT Stormwater Improvements to Richard Street

Hiring Patrol Officer – Jacob Sniscak

Councilman Agrawal asked to pull Resolution No. 2024-11-188 and Resolution No. 2024-11-189 to be voted on separately.

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-185 through Resolution No. 2024-11-187 and Resolution No. 2024-11-190 through Resolution No. 2024-11-192 – Consent Agenda, excluding Resolution No. 2024-11-188 and 2024-11-189.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Councilman Agrawal expressed his concern regarding Resolution No. 2024-11-188. He stated that he is aware this resolution is related to 9 West Somerset Street. He went on to express his concerns about the project cost continually rising. Councilman stressed the importance of having a meeting to discuss the total cost of the 9 West building as well as the other projects that will be happening in town. He went on to explain the importance of being fiscally responsible and fully transparent with the public. Councilman Agrawal added that Raritan needs to make sure our procurement practices are run.

Mayor Carra added that Resolution No. 2024-11-188, awarding \$20,000.00 to Michels and Waldron is for the remaining project management through the end of the contract.

Councilman Patente inquired about Resolution No. 2024-11-189, for Crane Associates. Administrator Colvin confirmed that this resolution is to keep the Instructional Engineer on the project until the end of the contract.

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilman Fritzingler, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-188 - Authorizing Profession Service Contract – Michels and Waldron, LLC

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Councilman Agrawal, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-189 - Authorizing Profession Service Contract – Crane Associates, PC

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

BILL LIST

Resolution No. 2024-11-193

Approving Bill List

On a motion by Councilman Agrawal, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to approve Resolution No. 2024-11-193 - 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. All Traffic Solutions – Radar Message and Traffic Suite Signs - \$18,565.65
2. NCL Government Capital – Lease payment on 2022 Ford Explorer (PD) - \$15,708.54
3. NV5 – TAP Grant Riverfront May-September - \$61,724.62

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

On a motion by Councilman Agrawal, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to approve the Certification of Funds – Radar Message and Traffic Suite Signs, Lease payment on 2022 Ford Explorer, and TAP Grant Riverfront May-September.

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.

Patrick Dinsmore 523 Victoria St: Mr. Dinsmore addressed concerns about minutes missing from the website from Council meetings and the Redevelopment Advisory Committee meetings. Mr. Dinsmore also asked Mr. Brosnan if the introduced ordinance for the redevelopment of the mall is just a zoning change, Mr. Brosnan responded, stating he would refer Mr. Dinsmore to the plan that he drafted for specifics.

Kathy Memoli, 806 Lynwood St: Ms. Memoli addressed concerns for the residents and their cars when the Raritan Mall location floods.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King raised concerns about any handicapped resident or senior citizen and where would they go in an emergency, an evacuation plan needs to incorporate all of these concerns.

Cathy DeBellis, 17 Doughty St: Ms. DeBellis stated she is looking forward to Council President Tozzi's Christmas project.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln: Mr. King added what a great job was done on the mural by the Quick Check. He also suggested that the Eagle Scout who did the wonderful job with renovating the dog park should get a certificate from the Borough of recognition. Mr. King also added that if the Borough needs to build a new

Fire and EMS Headquarters, there is a location by the jughandle on Route 202, on Eileen Court and Danbury, there is a piece of property that could accommodate that type of building. Council President Tozzi responded stating that the Fire Department has already requested the lower portion of the Washington School property.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

On a motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to adjourn the Special Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion passed: 6-0

Special Meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Kimberly Mathewson
Acting Municipal Clerk

Approved:

Eric M. Colvin
Borough Administrator

Date: _____

Next Regular Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 26, 2024

6:30 p.m. – Executive Session

7 p.m. – Regular Session