

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 6:04 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 20, 2024.

INVOCATION

Father Thomas Odorizzi – St. Ann’s Parish

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

OATHS OF OFFICE – COUNCIL

The following oaths of office were administered:

Councilman Kenneth DiGraziano

Councilman David Fritzing

ROLL CALL – MAYOR & COUNCIL

Kimberly Mathewson – Acting Borough Clerk

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT & OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Carra asked for a nomination for Council President.

On a motion by Councilman Fritzing, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council voted to Elect Councilman Tozzi to serve as Council President.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: Patente

Motion Carried: 5-0

Former Raritan Borough Council President, County Freeholder and Former State Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli 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 Happy New Year! Thank you for joining us today as Raritan reorganizes for 2025. Like the previous year, 2024 was a year of change for the Borough of Raritan. We expanded the size of our committees to include more volunteers and residents, helping shape the

future of our town by adding seats to the Historical & Cultural Committee and the Board of Health. I'd like to take a moment to thank all those who served Raritan last year on a Board, Commission, or Committee. These volunteers drive significant change and progress year after year for the benefit of the Borough and all its residents. We look forward to working alongside those who will continue in this capacity for 2025. May they have great success in all their endeavors.

At my request and with the council's support, the town created a new Redevelopment Advisory Committee to make initial meetings with developers more public than past practices. No longer will redevelopment projects just appear on our meeting agenda. From start to finish, a public record will exist for each project. When initial discussions take place, residents can know which area of town is being reviewed, what the committee's initial reaction is to a proposed project, and what changes can be made before any action by the governing body. This transparency began with all projects introduced in 2024 and will continue into 2025. While the committee serves solely in an advisory capacity, it remains the responsibility of the Borough council, the elected representatives, to ultimately make decisions on redevelopment within the Borough.

The Redevelopment Advisory Committee also assisted the Borough in advancing the stalled Downtown Sustainable Economic Development plan. In my address last year, this was outlined as a goal and priority for the Borough Council. Having received a \$300,000 grant to complete the work in 2020 and 2021, I wanted to see the plan implemented so that taxpayer dollars do not just sit on a shelf. I am proud to say that the council authorized the committee and the planning board to begin the initial study to implement that plan. I look forward to adopting an ordinance to designate the full study area, from the river to the train station and from Route 206 to First Avenue, as an Area in Need of Rehabilitation. This designation will create a connection between our train station and one of our great assets, access to Duke Farms, and lead to more foot traffic downtown, allowing our small businesses to grow and thrive.

Another aspect of Economic Development that the town has pursued is re-establishing our relationship with the Somerset County Business Partnership and finally connecting with Somerset County's Economic Development Manager. Through these new relationships, we were able to meet with key contacts at the state level: the Business Action Center and the NJ Economic Development Authority. During their respective visits to town, we gained valuable insights into how to improve our downtown with simple ideas, like increasing striped parking on side streets, rotating benches to face our businesses, emphasizing our beautiful historic buildings, and informing business owners about grants available for lease payment assistance and façade improvement reimbursements. The final piece to improving our business climate is creating an organization that will promote our businesses and craft events throughout the year, with the best financing such a group has ever had. I have a meeting scheduled later this week with experts on the subject. Making this our number one goal for 2025, I ask the council to be ready to support this initiative, as it will finally establish a real organization to support our small businesses.

In 2025, we will continue to improve our park facilities. We received a grant in 2024 for design and planning work for Washington School Park. We held a community feedback day to solicit feedback and ideas for that space and look forward to presenting the results within the first half of 2025. Hearing feedback from local neighbors, we will keep the park for passive recreation, with improvements to seating and the addition of a nice walking path for residents to utilize. We authorized rehabbing our tennis court, constructing pickleball courts, repairing our pool for 10% of the original estimate, and installing a splash pad at the site of our non-functional pool.

I believe park facilities are one of the main responsibilities of local government and are a showcase of the town to residents and visitors who may decide to call Raritan home.

Borough finances continue to be strong. Raritan maintains its AA bond rating. Our municipal budget last year kept the tax rate flat, causing no increase to the Borough's portion of resident's property tax bills. We continue to seek grants for funding and look forward to working with our grant writers to secure even more grants in 2025. This year will present a challenging budget, but with the trust I have in our CFO, Auditors, and our Administrator, I am confident we will introduce a budget that continues to provide excellent service with a low impact on taxpayers. Also, I want to remind residents that the county has ordered the Borough to conduct a re-evaluation of all properties, which will begin this year. Also, we continue to save taxpayer dollars by increasing shared services with neighboring towns, helping maintain municipal services while reducing total costs.

I would like to take a moment to thank those who are often unseen but are vital to the continued success of Raritan. The governing body would not be able to accomplish anything without the continued support and knowledge of our employees. A lot goes on behind the scenes between the two weeks that pass during council meetings. Day-to-day business can take up a lot of their time, but they still find a way to help residents with municipal issues or services. They are the backbone of our town, and none of us up here would be successful without their tireless efforts on behalf of us all.

To continue our thanks, we also need to give a big shout out to our public works department. Day after day, they are there to make sure our town continues to look its best. When the council wanted to improve Somerset Street, they were there to help trim our trees, repair our sidewalks, ensure all our streetlights are operational, install our new holiday decorations and tree, maintain our parks, and handle garbage and bulk pickup. As I enter my ninth year of service to the Borough, I have never been more impressed with our Public Works department. We have a great group, and I will continue to support them with whatever they need to get the job done for our residents.

I would also like to thank our Police and Fire departments. The police continue to represent Raritan in the best light. Last year we had some issues with break-ins for cars and homes. The police were quick to respond to resident concerns, deploying all types of technology to keep everyone safe and being ready at a moment's notice if action was required. They put the community of Raritan first, and we must never forget their service to us. I look forward to working with our new police chief and continuing to build trust with residents, as well as growing our community policing efforts. The same goes for the Raritan Fire Department. This group of volunteers also puts their lives on the line in service to the residents of the Borough. For those unaware, the level of training and certification for firefighters continues to grow, and our department embraces these challenges to continue protecting us all. We congratulate the department and their new slate of officers for 2025. I know I speak for everyone when I say we look forward to their annual food truck festival at Washington School Park.

As with 2024, my goals for the Borough in 2025 are ambitious, but I feel it is our duty as elected officials to continue progressing forward. In my opinion, I have seen many councils afraid to act or make changes. As it is said, the only constant is change. We should embrace change, not fear it. But let's focus on positive changes that support residents and our small businesses on Somerset Street, Thompson Street, Anderson Street, and throughout the Borough of Raritan.

Raritan is at a crossroads, and it is time to welcome growth as it will help the Borough financially, which in turn helps taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned dollars. We are part of an emerging center here in Somerset County, and we can shape our future to be the best vision for Raritan.

Lastly, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and successful New Year. I look forward to continuing my service to residents as your mayor and to “Taking Action” for Raritan in 2025.

RARITAN FIRE DEPARTMENT – OATHS OF OFFICE

The following Raritan Fire Department Oaths of Office were administered by Mayor Carra:

Chief – Brian Kredatus
Deputy Chief – Brian Wood
2nd Lieutenant – Fabian Ardila

Unfortunately, Captain Tom DeSantis and 1st Lieutenant Jake Gara were unable to make the swearing in.

COUNCIL REMARKS

Councilman DiGraziano- Councilman DiGraziano thanked all those who voted for him during the November election stating he will do his best to vote for what represent the best interest of the residents of Raritan Borough.

Councilman Fritzingler- Councilman Fritzingler congratulated his fellow Councilmembers on returning and he is looking forward to working with them adding he is hoping to move forward and put any political issues behind them. He also wanted to thank their campaign committee, Adele Goetsch and Debra Thomas and the others that joined them while campaigning. Lastly, he thanked the residents for the opportunity to serve them as it is an honor for all the Councilmembers.

Councilman Agrawal- Councilman Agrawal added his thanks to all the residents for their support and the opportunity to serve the Borough for one more year.

Councilman Armahizer- Councilman Armahizer congratulated all the members that were recently re-elected, and he is looking forward to working them in this new year.

Councilman Patente- Councilman Patente stated that he will continue to listen to resident’s input and try to retain the best quality of life for everyone. He added that he is looking forward to positive, open, and fruitful discussions with residents and Council to make Raritan the best town it can be.

Council President Tozzi- Council President Tozzi thanked his fellow Council members for choosing him as Council President again. He also added that he intends to keep everyone informed and help move our residents into 2025 and make Raritan the best town is can be.

ADOPTION OF 2025 COUNCIL BY-LAWS

Councilman Patente announced that he refused the By-Laws and that there was one paragraph he

had an issue with and asked if this could wait until the next meeting. Mayor Carra asked what paragraph the Councilman had an issue with. Councilman Patente stated it was the paragraph that involved the officers and the fact that they needed to be residents of the town; he asked if that paragraph should be modified. Mayor Carra explained that there are currently Borough Ordinances that waive that requirement. He went on to clarify that they are not going to be removing anyone from their current position.

Mayor Carra called for a motion on the Adoption of the 2025 Council By-Laws, Resolution No. 2025-01-001

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Agrawal, Council voted to Adopt 2025 Council By-Laws, Resolution No. 2025-01-001.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

2025 COUNCIL LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Board of Education</u>	Councilman Umesh Agrawal
<u>Raritan Public Library</u>	
<u>Board of Health</u>	
<u>Veterans Advisory Committee</u>	Councilman Adam Armahizer
<u>Shade Tree Advisory Board</u>	
<u>Environmental Commission</u>	
<u>Solid Waste Advisory Council</u>	Councilman David Fritzingler
<u>Somerset County Wastewater Management</u>	
<u>Historical & Cultural Committee</u>	
<u>Basilone Parade Committee</u>	Councilman Kenneth DiGraziano
<u>Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority</u>	
<u>Recreation Committee</u>	
<u>Shared Municipal Court</u>	Councilman Michael Patente
<u>Raritan Senior Citizens</u>	
<u>Redevelopment Advisory Committee</u>	Councilman Donald Tozzi
<u>Regional Center Partnership</u>	
<u>Joint Land Use Board</u>	

MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS *without Consent of Council*

Environmental Commission

3-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2027

MLUB Member – Christopher Gussman
Alt. No. 2 – 2-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2026 – Benjamin Harris

Historical & Cultural Committee

3-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2027

Member – Karen Eastlund
Member – Jane Fidicaro
Member – Mark Esposito
Alt. No. 1 – 1-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2025 – James Fidacaro
Alt. No. 2 – 1-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Dawn Wilde

Municipal Land Use Board

Terms Vary

Class II Member – 4-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2028 – Christopher Gussman
Class III Member – 1-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Councilman Donald Tozzi
Class IV Member – 4-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2028 – William Cunningham
Class IV Member – 4-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2028 – Tom Brown
Alt. No. 1 – 2-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2026 – Jo-Ann Liptak
Alt. No. 2 – 2-year term – 1/1/2025 to
12/31/2026 – Samypillai Jayaraj
Alt. No. 3 – 2-year term - 1/1/2024 to
12/31/2025 – Michael DeCicco

*unexpired term – 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2025

Redevelopment Advisory Committee

Terms Vary

Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Administrator Eric Colvin
Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Councilman Donald Tozzi
Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Thomas Brown
Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – William Cunningham
Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Lou Gara

Regional Center Executive Board

1-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025

Member – 1-year term – 01/01/2025 to
12/31/2025 – Engineer Joseph Brosnan

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

Solid Waste Advisory Board

1-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025

Member – Councilman Fritzingler
Member – Recycling Coordinator Vincent
LoMedico

Somerset County Municipal Wastewater
Management Plan Committee

1-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025

Elected Official – Councilman Fritzingler
Planning Board – Tony LoPresti
Borough Engineer – Joseph Brosnan
SRSVA Member – Edward Machala
Recycling Coordinator – Vincent LoMedico

MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS *with Consent of Council*

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

Board of Health

3-year term, 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2027

Member – Anna Bongiovi
Member – Constance DelRocco

Library Board of Trustees

5-year term, 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2029

Member – Laura Hnasco
Member – James Foohey
Member – Donald Esposito

Recreation Committee (requires council)

3-year term – 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2027

Member – Janet D’Augustine
Member – Joan Hutzler

On a motion by Councilman Patente, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council moved to
Approve member Anna Bongiovi to the Board of Health.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Fritzingler, Patente

Nay: Armahizer

Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 5-1

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to Approve member Constance DelRocco to the Board of Health.

Recorded Vote

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

On a motion by Councilman Fritzingler, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council moved to Approve member Laura Hnasco to the Library Board of Trustees.

Recorded Vote

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

On a motion by Councilman Armahizer, seconded by Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve member James Foohey to the Library Board of Trustees.

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 Fritzingler, Council moved to Approve member Donald Esposito to the Library Board of Trustees.

Recorded Vote

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

On a motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Councilman Armahizer, Council moved to Approve member Janet D'Augustine to the Recreation Committee.

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 Council President Tozzi, Council moved to Approve member Joan Hutzler to the Recreation Committee.

Recorded Vote

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution No. 2025-01-002	Appointing Borough Attorney
Resolution No. 2025-01-003	Appointing Bond Counsel
Resolution No. 2025-01-004	Appointing Labor Counsel
Resolution No. 2025-01-005	Appointing Special Counsel
Resolution No. 2025-01-006	Appointing Registered Municipal Accountant
Resolution No. 2025-01-007	Appointing Insurance Agent
Resolution No. 2025-01-008	Approving Cash Management Plan
Resolution No. 2025-01-009	Appointing Administrative Officials
Resolution No. 2025-01-010	Appointing Depositories/Financial Institutions
Resolution No. 2025-01-011	Appointing Custodians of Accounts
Resolution No. 2025-01-012	Adopting 2025 Temporary Budget
Resolution No. 2025-01-013	Fixing Interest Rates – Delinquent Taxes and Sewer
Resolution No. 2025-01-014	Canceling 2024 Property Taxes – Open Balances Less Than \$10.00

Resolution No. 2025-01-015	Designating Official Newspapers
Resolution No. 2025-01-016	Designating Paid Holidays
Resolution No. 2025-01-017	Establishing 2025 Calendar of Meetings
Resolution No. 2025-01-018	Appointing Qualified Purchasing Agent
Resolution No. 2025-01-019	Awarding Professional Services Contract – Elevator Services

Councilman Patente requested Resolution No. 2025-01-004 be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman Patente, Council moved to Adopt the Consent Agenda, excluding Resolution No.2025-01-004.

Recorded Vote

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

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

On a motion by Council President Tozzi, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council moved to Adopt Resolution No.2025-01-004.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Tozzi, DiGraziano, Fritzingler

Nay: Patente

Absent: x

Abstain: Agrawal, Armahizer

Motion Carried: 3-2-1

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 Councilman Patente, Council moved to Adjourn the Annual Reorganization Meeting.

Recorded Vote

All in favor

Motion passed 6-0

Regular meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Kimberly Mathewson
Acting Municipal Clerk

Approved: _____
Eric M. Colvin
Borough Administrator

Date: _____