

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN
SPECIAL MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026
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 Tozzi in the Meeting Room of the Raritan Municipal Building, 9 West Somerset Street, Raritan, NJ 08869 at 6:34 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

Council President Tozzi announced the Regular 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 February 26, 2026.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President Fritzingler, Councilman Agrawal, Councilman DiGraziano, Councilman Giraldi, Councilman Harwood, Councilman Martinez

Also Present: Borough Administrator Colvin, Acting Borough Clerk Mathewson, Borough Attorney Richard Wenner, and Borough Engineer Brosnan

Absent:

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Councilman Harwood

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2026-03-065

Entering Executive Session

1. Personnel

Administration, Finance

2. Attorney Client

Affordable Housing

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Council President Fritzingler, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-03-064.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzingler, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:35 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT

Council moved to reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council exited Executive Session and resumed Regular Session at 7:02 p.m.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Tozzi stated that the PBA presentation would be presented after the Environmental Commission's Rain Garden Proposal as the PBA representative is running a few minutes late.

1. Rain Garden Proposal (Environmental Commission)

Emilie Standar and Heath Hofmeister, on behalf of the Environmental Commission, presented a proposal for a new shaded seating area and rain garden at Frelinghuysen Park. They explained that the project was developed in response to limited shaded seating options at the park and ongoing borough-wide stormwater runoff concerns. The proposed rain garden would help manage stormwater, improve water quality, reduce strain on the stormwater system, and provide environmental benefits through native plantings and pollinator support. The presenters outlined three primary project goals: installing additional shaded seating with benches that include backs, creating a rain garden and tree plantings to capture runoff from Sherman Avenue, and engaging volunteers in planting and long-term maintenance efforts. The proposed location would be near the tennis and pickleball courts, utilizing an existing curb cut and nearby stormwater infrastructure. They noted that an infiltration test would need to be completed to confirm the suitability of the site. Mr. Hofmeister stated that the project would provide a new community gathering space while complementing recent park improvements. He explained that the Environmental Commission had coordinated with the Recreation Department and Department of Public Works, both of which expressed support for the initiative. The Environmental Commission submitted an application for an AARP grant that could provide up to \$15,000 in funding, with no anticipated cost to the Borough. The presenters also reviewed a tentative project timeline that included planning, material purchases, volunteer installation efforts, educational signage, and long-term maintenance. The presenters additionally discussed a potential opportunity to apply for a separate Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions open space stewardship grant of up to \$1,500 for additional tree planting projects within Borough parks and greenway areas.

Councilman Agrawal thanked Emilie Standar, Heath Hofmeister, and the Environmental Commission for their presentation and expressed support for the proposed rain garden and seating area project. He noted his appreciation for gardening and environmental initiatives and suggested that future park and recreation improvements also be expanded to other Borough parks, including Elizabeth Park and Cardinal Woods Park. He commented positively on the

success of recent tree plantings at Cardinal Woods Park and encouraged continued environmental enhancements throughout the Borough.

Council President Fritzingler expressed strong support for the proposed rain garden and seating area project and thanked the Environmental Commission for leading the initiative. He noted that, based on his engineering experience in Hillsborough Township, green infrastructure projects are becoming more common and suggested reaching out to Dr. Christopher Obropta of Rutgers University for additional guidance and expertise. The presenters responded that members of the Environmental Commission and residents involved in the project had already participated in Dr. Obropta's Green Infrastructure Champions program and that he had agreed to professionally review the project design at no cost.

2. PBA Fundraiser Request (Members of PBA Local #82)

Sgt. Griffin presented a proposal for a Raritan Borough street fair to be hosted by the Raritan Borough PBA. The event would serve as a community and vendor fair aimed at promoting local businesses, nonprofits, and civic organizations while encouraging economic activity and community engagement within the Borough. The proposed event location would be West Somerset Street between Lyman Street and Thompson Street. Sgt. Griffin explained that the fair would include local retailers, food vendors, artisans, entertainment, and community groups, with planning coordinated alongside the Police Department and Department of Public Works. He stated that the event would also serve as a fundraiser for PBA Local 82 through vendor registration fees, with local businesses receiving priority registration opportunities and discounted fees. Participating Somerset Street businesses would also be highlighted in front of their establishments. The proposed event date is Saturday, July 25, with a rain date of Sunday, July 26, from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., with vendor setup beginning at 11:00 a.m.

Councilman Agrawal expressed support for the proposed street fair and stated that the Borough would benefit from hosting more community events. He commented that, aside from the John Basilone Parade, there have been fewer community events in recent years and noted that additional events, including the previously discussed Filipino fair and the proposed PBA fundraiser, would help bring more activity and engagement to the Borough.

On motion by Council President Fritzingler, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council Approved the PBA Fundraiser.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzingler, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

3. 2026 Municipal Budget (Raritan Borough CMFO)

Raritan Borough CMFO Paige Elster presented the Borough's 2026 municipal budget and reviewed the primary financial factors contributing to the proposed tax increase. She explained

that the Borough is experiencing declining surplus funds, lower construction code revenues, and increasing operational expenses, while continuing to rely heavily on surplus to support the budget. Ms. Elster noted that anticipated revenues total approximately \$16.1 million and emphasized the importance of maintaining surplus funds as a municipal “savings account” for financial stability and bond ratings. Ms. Elster stated that major cost drivers in the budget include significant increases in insurance premiums, employee health benefits, debt service, utilities, contractual salary obligations, sewerage authority costs, and other operational expenses. She noted that insurance costs alone increased substantially and explained that many of these expenses are outside the Borough’s control. She also highlighted the Borough’s strong tax collection rate and ongoing efforts to reduce costs through shared services, workforce attrition, and limiting nonessential spending and capital projects. Ms. Elster explained that the proposed budget results in a municipal tax increase of approximately 12%, which she described as significant but necessary due to years of maintaining relatively flat tax rates and using surplus funds to offset increases. She stated that future strategies to reduce large tax increases include expanding shared services, strengthening long-term financial planning, increasing revenue sources, evaluating redevelopment opportunities, and continuing efforts to control spending. She also advised that budget documents are available on the Borough website and through the Clerk’s Office.

INTRODUCTION OF THE 2026 MUNICIPAL & USER-FRIENDLY BUDGETS

Resolution No. 2026-03-065

Introducing the 2026 Municipal Budget

Councilman Agrawal stated that his comments regarding the proposed budget were directed at prior policy decisions made by the governing body rather than Borough staff or the CFO, whom he said was responsible for presenting the financial realities created by those decisions. He expressed significant concern over the proposed 12% municipal tax increase, describing it as the largest in the Borough’s history, and warned that continued reliance on surplus funds could lead to even larger tax increases in future years. Councilman Agrawal discussed the Borough’s increasing debt levels, noting that authorized and issued debt had grown substantially since 2020. He advocated for a “zero-based budgeting” approach that would reevaluate previously authorized projects and spending commitments before moving forward. He also called for greater efficiency in Borough operations, more competitive bidding practices, reduced reliance on consultants, and closer review of capital spending and infrastructure costs. Additionally, Councilman Agrawal stated that the Borough should explore more equitable and creative revenue sources, including revisiting sewer fee structures and requiring developers to contribute more toward infrastructure impacts. He emphasized the importance of engaging residents in financial discussions and decision-making, comparing the budget process to a “kitchen table discussion” with the community. He concluded by stating that he could not support the proposed budget without meaningful corrective actions and voted against the tax increase.

On motion by Councilman Harwood, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council Approved
Resolution No. 2026-03-065 – Introducing the 2026 Municipal Budget.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: Agrawal

Absent: x

Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 5-1

A Public Hearing on the Municipal Budget is scheduled to take place in the Meeting Room of the Municipal Building, 9 West Somerset Street, Raritan, New Jersey, on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

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 Tozzi stated that there was a letter submitted by Raritan Resident JennieRose, that was read by the Clerk.

Jennie Rose, Letter submitted read by Clerk - Raritan resident JennieRose submitted comments expressing concerns regarding redevelopment and affordable housing planning within the Borough. She questioned the accuracy of population, housing, and growth projections contained in the Borough's housing and planning reports, arguing that outdated or inconsistent data was being used to justify additional development. Ms. JennieRose cited concerns about housing permit and population figures, stating that current development and population trends appeared to exceed the projections referenced in the reports. Ms. JennieRose also urged the governing body to slow the pace of redevelopment decisions and reconsider the Borough's approach to density and growth. She emphasized the importance of public interest, environmental protection, public health, transparency, and community engagement in local government decision-making. Additionally, she stated that transparency requires government entities to make information readily accessible to residents and allow meaningful public participation in the decision-making process.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln – Mr. King expressed concerns regarding statements made by the Planning Board attorney during a recent Planning Board meeting, alleging that inaccurate information had been provided about redevelopment procedures and the Borough's ability to obtain an extension related to the Agway property. He stated that the Borough later successfully obtained a 30-day extension and questioned the guidance that had been given to the Planning Board and Council regarding the redevelopment ordinance process. Mr. King also advocated for additional services and housing opportunities for seniors and veterans within the Borough. He proposed that the Agway property instead be developed as a three-story, 30-unit low-income senior and veterans housing project with commercial space on the ground floor, including a café, convenience store, or food pantry. He argued that such a development could provide additional affordable housing credits due to its proximity to the train station while also addressing affordability, land use, and tax concerns within the community.

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr – Mr. Laggini expressed concern regarding the Borough's financial condition, grant funding, and the proposed tax increases. He questioned the amount of grant funding reflected in the budget, asked about the Borough's grant writing efforts, and encouraged the Borough to pursue additional grant opportunities to help offset expenses and reduce the burden on taxpayers. Mr. Laggini also requested information regarding the tax contributions of major commercial properties, including Johnson & Johnson and Labcorp, and voiced concern over the possibility of continued annual tax increases. He urged the governing body to reduce spending and identify additional cost-saving measures, comparing the Borough's budgeting challenges to residents having to tighten their own household budgets. Additionally, Mr. Laggini discussed concerns about redevelopment, infrastructure capacity, sewer and stormwater issues, and the long-term impacts of additional development within the Borough. He stated that developers should contribute more toward infrastructure improvements and

expressed concern that the Borough's existing sewer and stormwater systems may not be able to support additional residential growth.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd – Mr. Foohey spoke in support of exploring senior housing as part of the proposed Agway redevelopment project. He suggested a three-story mixed-use development with senior housing on the upper floors and a restaurant, coffee shop, or similar business on the ground floor to serve both residents and train commuters. Mr. Foohey stated that senior housing could provide several benefits, including additional affordable housing credits, reduced parking demand, and less impact on the local school system. He also commented that a well-designed senior housing development could become a positive and attractive project for the Borough. Additionally, he reminded attendees that the introduction of an ordinance is primarily procedural and that more detailed public discussion and debate would occur during the second hearing and final consideration process.

Adrienne Schwall, 14 Obert Dr – Ms. Schwall asked if there would be a Train Committee formed to which Mayor Tozzi stated, yes.

Kathy Kolvites, 63 Vones Ln – Ms. Kolvites expressed opposition to the proposed Agway redevelopment project, stating that the proposed four-story apartment building and associated variance requests would negatively impact the character of the surrounding neighborhood. She stated that zoning regulations are intended to preserve neighborhood character, aesthetics, and property values, and argued that the proposed development would not be consistent with the existing residential character of Raritan. Ms. Kolvites also raised concerns regarding potential impacts on surrounding homes, including blocked sunlight, disrupted views, increased traffic congestion, parking issues, and public safety concerns. She urged the governing body to prioritize the well-being of existing residents and stated that the concerns repeatedly raised by residents at public meetings should be carefully considered.

Tyson Intile, 37 Gaston Ave – Mr. Intile expressed concern regarding housing affordability, redevelopment, and the Borough's proposed budget increase. He stated that rising housing costs are making it increasingly difficult for younger generations to remain in the community and emphasized the importance of affordable housing initiatives. However, Mr. Intile also expressed concern that many residents do not fully understand the details, impacts, or flexibility surrounding the proposed Agway redevelopment project and stated that there appears to be a disconnect between the governing body and the public regarding redevelopment discussions. Mr. Intile urged the Borough to improve transparency, communication, and public engagement related to redevelopment planning and affordable housing decisions. He also encouraged the governing body to clearly explain alternative options, trade-offs, and future plans if the current redevelopment proposal is modified or does not proceed. Additionally, Mr. Intile commented on the proposed tax increase and the need for fiscal responsibility, while suggesting that the Borough explore the use of artificial intelligence and technology tools to improve efficiency, reduce consultant and operational costs, and enhance municipal services and communication with residents.

Brittany Eriksson, 1 LaGrange St – Ms. Eriksson provided comments regarding the history and process surrounding the proposed Agway redevelopment ordinance and expressed opposition to the project. She reviewed prior redevelopment ordinance introductions and stated that earlier versions of the ordinance had failed or required correction due to issues involving planning documents, resolutions, and consistency findings. She also raised concerns regarding alleged conflicts of interest related to prior redevelopment resolutions and participation by certain public officials and committee members. Ms. Eriksson argued that the proposed redevelopment project would create excessive density compared to other developments within the Borough and surrounding residential neighborhoods. She stated that the proposed 75-unit development would exceed the density of nearby projects and raised concerns regarding parking shortages, traffic impacts, insufficient setbacks, and the lack of completed parking or traffic studies. She also expressed concern that the proposed development could negatively impact emergency vehicle access,

neighborhood character, and nearby residential properties. Additionally, Ms. Eriksson expressed concerns regarding aging sewer infrastructure, stormwater capacity, and the long-term impacts of redevelopment on surrounding residents. She stated that developers should contribute toward infrastructure improvements and commented that the height and scale of the proposed building could negatively affect neighboring homes, including sunlight and outdoor spaces. She concluded by emphasizing concerns about transparency, redevelopment priorities, and the overall public benefit of the proposed project.

Sam Timms, 1 LaGrange St – Mr. Timms expressed concerns regarding the proposed Agway redevelopment project and stated that, while revisions to the redevelopment plan represented progress, he believed the proposal still did not sufficiently address the interests of Borough residents. He argued that redevelopment plans should prioritize public health, safety, welfare, environmental protection, and minimizing impacts on surrounding properties and municipal infrastructure. Mr. Timms raised concerns regarding the proposed project's density, height, parking demand, traffic impacts, stormwater runoff, and impervious coverage. He stated that the proposed development would be significantly denser and taller than surrounding neighborhoods and argued that the current design could create issues related to emergency vehicle access, neighborhood traffic congestion, parking shortages, flooding, and infrastructure strain. He also disputed claims that the site should be considered transit-oriented development, citing observations of commuter and parking activity near the train station. Additionally, Mr. Timms discussed concerns regarding the financial impacts of PILOT agreements and the potential effect of additional residential development on school funding and municipal services. He recommended reducing the project density to approximately 51 units, increasing commercial space, requiring additional environmental and infrastructure studies, and ensuring that developers contribute toward sewer and water system improvements. He also called for increased accountability, improved planning processes, and more frequent Planning Board meetings. Mr. Timms concluded by urging the governing body to prioritize residents' interests when considering the redevelopment proposal.

Jim Werner, 407 Victoria St – Mr. Werner expressed opposition to the proposed Agway redevelopment project, stating that after visiting the area and observing the surrounding neighborhood firsthand, he believed the proposed development would not fit the character or scale of the neighborhood. He urged the governing body to take the compatibility of the project with the existing community into consideration.

Maggi Filoramo, 53 Anderson St – Ms. Filoramo spoke regarding the proposed redevelopment of Block 61, Lot 3.01, and encouraged the governing body to view the project as an opportunity to create a long-term community asset rather than a development focused primarily on residential apartments. She advocated for a redevelopment approach that would better harmonize with the surrounding neighborhood while promoting economic growth, community engagement, and social equity. Ms. Filoramo proposed incorporating a privately owned public space into the redevelopment plan, suggesting features such as gathering spaces, farmers markets, festivals, community events, performances, art activities, and public plazas that could support local businesses and encourage greater community activity within the downtown area. She also emphasized the importance of seeking additional public input regarding the future of the property and stated that the current proposal for a four-story apartment complex would not achieve the type of transformative community space she envisioned. Additionally, Ms. Filoramo referenced conceptual renderings and design ideas she prepared to illustrate how the site could become a community-centered destination connected to the train station and downtown area, while helping strengthen community identity and local economic activity.

Roger Copt, 1120 Rt. 202 – Mr. Copt expressed concerns regarding the proposed Agway redevelopment project, alleging conflicts of interest involving members of the governing body and Planning Board. He questioned whether certain individuals involved in the redevelopment process should have recused themselves and stated that the matter should be reviewed further. Mr. Copt also raised concerns regarding Borough spending and professional service contracts, specifically questioning engineering costs and

whether additional competitive bidding should be pursued for engineering services and other expenditures. Additionally, Mr. Copt discussed parking and zoning concerns related to the proposed Agway redevelopment project, referencing other developments where he believed parking shortages created problems for nearby businesses and residents. He argued that the Agway project should not receive parking or setback variances if the proposed development cannot adequately fit on the property and stated that the project should instead be reduced in scale. He also expressed opposition to the use of PILOT agreements associated with redevelopment projects.

Greg Natale, 63 Thompson St – Mr. Natale questioned the Borough’s procedures regarding professional service contracts, engineering fees, and competitive bidding requirements. He raised concerns about engineering invoices that were not competitively bid and questioned how additional costs and billing overages are reviewed and approved by the Borough. Mr. Natale also expressed concern about potential conflicts of interest involving residents who may have projects requiring review or approval from the same Borough engineer being criticized during public meetings. He questioned whether residents could freely voice criticism while also relying on engineering approvals related to their own projects and suggested the Borough consider alternative engineering review options for residents in such situations. During the discussion, Borough Attorney Wenner clarified the distinction between professional service contracts and public bidding requirements, explained how engineering invoices are reviewed and approved, and noted that certificates of occupancy are generally issued by the Construction Official, although engineering review may be required for projects involving site work or variances.

MINUTES

None

COUNCIL COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Martinez - Councilman Martinez reported that the Municipal Court collected a total of approximately \$37,691 in January from traffic, disorderly persons, and Borough ordinance fines, with approximately \$20,000 allocated to the Borough and the remaining funds distributed to the County and State. Councilman Martinez also reported on a recent Environmental Commission meeting, highlighting the Commission’s presentation regarding the proposed rain garden project as well as discussions concerning a potential Green Communities grant related to forestry and the maintenance of trees on public property. He expressed support for the Environmental Commission’s initiatives and stated that the projects appeared to have strong Council support.

Councilman Harwood - Councilman Harwood reported that the Borough’s hiring freeze remains in effect and stated that new hires will only be considered when necessary to replace existing personnel.

Council President Fritzing - Council President Fritzing reported that seasonal tree trimming on Somerset Street had been completed and that pothole repair work had been ongoing throughout the Borough. He also provided a summary of recent construction activity, noting permit fee collections totaling approximately \$17,095 from building, electrical, fire, mechanical, and plumbing permits, while acknowledging that construction-related revenues remain below projections. Additionally, Council President Fritzing reported that the Historical Committee recently met and continues to operate within its temporary budget and trust account balances. He announced that the Committee has scheduled a Battle of Bound Brook presentation by David

Lang at the library on April 11 and stated that discussions are underway regarding a possible Fourth of July celebration in coordination with the Historical Committee.

Councilman DiGraziano - Councilman DiGraziano reported that the Borough's recent Easter egg hunt was a successful community event with a strong turnout of children and families. He thanked the volunteers who assisted with organizing and running the event and noted that participation appeared higher than in previous years. Councilman DiGraziano also announced that Community Cleanup Day is scheduled for April 18 and expressed hope for another strong community turnout. He added that the Recreation Committee's next meeting will be held on April 14 to discuss additional upcoming programs and activities.

Councilman Agrawal - Councilman Agrawal reported on recent activities involving the Senior Citizens Group and the Board of Health, for which he serves as liaison. He explained that the Senior Citizens Group has experienced increased membership and, due to space limitations in the Community Room, has limited membership capacity and increased the eligibility age requirement to 65, with additional applicants being placed on a waiting list. Councilman Agrawal also discussed attending a recent Board of Health meeting and expressed concerns regarding the meeting setup in the Community Room, stating that quasi-judicial boards such as the Board of Health should be afforded the same meeting accommodations and level of formality as the Planning Board and governing body meetings. Additionally, Councilman Agrawal reported receiving a resident complaint regarding potential health concerns at restaurants located within the Stop & Shop shopping center. He stated that he forwarded the concerns to the County Health Department for review and indicated that he plans to follow up on the matter at a future Board of Health meeting.

Councilman Giraldi - Councilman Giraldi announced that the next Basilone Parade Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday and stated that the Police Department report and summary will be presented at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Tozzi - Mayor Tozzi provided updates on several new businesses and community events within the Borough. He announced the upcoming opening of Catcetera Cat Lounge on March 26, noting that the business is operated by an experienced Philadelphia-based organization and will feature approximately 31 cats. He also discussed additional business activity in the Borough, including the planned opening of Sprouts at the former Christmas Tree Shops location and a new Italian deli expected to open in the former Filipino market space in early April. Mayor Tozzi also thanked several major sponsors and volunteers who supported the Borough's Easter egg hunt, describing it as one of the largest and most successful events held in recent years. He specifically acknowledged contributions from local businesses and organizations, including Tim Hortons, Waterfront Rehabilitation, and the Basilone Memorial Foundation. Additionally, Mayor Tozzi emphasized his continued focus on supporting local businesses and downtown economic activity. He stated that he regularly walks through the downtown area to monitor business activity and encouraged residents to help identify available storefronts and opportunities to attract additional businesses to the Borough.

OLD BUSINESS

1. NJ Transit Subcommittee (DT)

Mayor Tozzi announced the formation of a New Jersey Transit Subcommittee to address ongoing concerns related to train activity and traffic impacts within the Borough. He stated that the initial committee members would include residents Adrian Schwall, Victor Laggini, along with Councilmembers Paul Giraldi and Jake Martinez. He explained that the subcommittee will meet to discuss issues, coordinate information, and continue updating the public as discussions progress.

Borough Administrator Colvin reminded the governing body about a previously presented proposal for a Filipino street fair in downtown Raritan and advised that the organizing nonprofit group was seeking direction from the Borough in order to continue planning the proposed October event. A discussion followed among members of the governing body regarding the proposed location, street closures, parking, impacts on downtown businesses, and the overall structure of the event. Mayor Tozzi expressed concerns about closing Somerset Street for an extended period and suggested that events may be better suited for centralized locations such as the Washington School property, which offers additional parking and fewer impacts on businesses and traffic. Other Council members discussed the importance of supporting cultural and community events while also balancing the concerns of existing downtown businesses and residents. Council members also discussed possible alternatives and compromises, including limiting the duration of street closures, reducing or regulating outside food vendors, and continuing discussions with the organizers regarding event logistics. The governing body ultimately agreed to revisit the proposal at a future meeting after obtaining additional information and clarifying event details with the organizers.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2026 CDBG Application (EC)

Borough Administrator Colvin discussed a proposed resolution related to a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for sewer infrastructure improvements serving approximately 30 to 40 homes in the Glaser, Grant, and Wyckoff areas. He explained that the project would improve aging sewer infrastructure that currently connects through a transfer station near the Department of Public Works facility and noted that the funding would come through a federal grant program administered by Somerset County. A discussion followed among Council members regarding the scope of the project, use of grant funding, and whether engineering consultants would be involved. Councilman Agrawal expressed support for pursuing grant funding but raised concerns about ensuring that the funds would result in tangible infrastructure improvements for residents rather than being heavily spent on studies or consultant costs. During the discussion, Administrator Colvin further explained that the project is also connected to planned improvements associated with the Stop & Shop redevelopment area and noted that the developer has committed approximately \$350,000 toward sewer system improvements benefiting the surrounding neighborhood. The governing body also discussed the procedural status of the resolution and noted that the matter had previously been introduced at an earlier Council meeting.

2. Raritan Seniors Liaison (DT)

Mayor Tozzi stated that Councilman Agrawal was previously awarded the Liaison assignment.

3. Town Hall Discussion (DT)

Mayor Tozzi discussed plans to organize a public town hall meeting to encourage additional community discussion and resident participation. He suggested holding the event outdoors once the weather improves, potentially during the first week of May, and indicated that a Saturday afternoon timeframe may be most suitable to maximize attendance and accessibility for residents. During the discussion, Council members emphasized the importance of informing residents about the purpose and format of the town hall meeting and ensuring that the event would provide adequate space and accommodations for public participation. Mayor Tozzi stated that the event would be properly organized with sufficient seating and logistics to allow broad community involvement and encouraged Council members and residents to provide additional feedback regarding scheduling and planning.

ORDINANCES – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

None

ORDINANCES – INTRODUCTION

Mayor Tozzi recused himself from the dais.

Council President Fritzingler read a statement regarding revisions made to the proposed Agway redevelopment project. The statement explained that public comments and community feedback had been considered during the revision process and that the Mayor directed Borough professionals and the developer to work toward a scaled-back plan intended to better address resident concerns while still meeting state requirements. The statement further noted that the revised proposal reduced the total number of residential units from 75 to 60, reduced unit sizes, and modified project amenities. It stated that most of the building would now be limited to three stories, with only the section adjacent to the train station remaining at four stories. The revisions were described as an effort to reduce visual impacts, lessen excessive building mass along Thompson Street, and provide a more appropriate transition between the redevelopment site and the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Ordinance No. 2026-09

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 known as Block 61, Lot 3.01 as shown on the tax map of the Borough of Raritan as a Non-Condensation 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 formalize a redevelopment plan for the former Agway

Councilman Agrawal expressed concerns regarding the timing and review process associated with the revised Agway redevelopment proposal, stating that substantial changes to the redevelopment plan had been provided to Council members shortly before the meeting, limiting the opportunity for thorough review and analysis. He emphasized that he supports redevelopment of the Agway property due to its strategic location, but believes the project must be designed in a manner that appropriately fits the surrounding neighborhood and addresses resident concerns. Councilman Agrawal acknowledged that revisions reducing the project from 75 to 60 units and lowering portions of the building height represented movement in a positive direction, but stated that additional concerns remained regarding setbacks, traffic, parking, environmental impacts, and overall compatibility with the area. He referenced presentations and analyses provided by residents, including concerns previously raised by the Planning Board regarding setbacks and site impacts. Additionally, Councilman Agrawal emphasized the importance of greater resident involvement and public engagement in the redevelopment process. He stated that residents are asking to participate in meaningful discussions about the project and encouraged additional dialogue between the governing body, the developer, and the community to better address concerns and identify acceptable compromises before moving forward.

On motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman DiGraziano, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance 2026-09.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: Agrawal

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-1

Ordinance No. 2026-10

Bond Ordinance Amending Capital Bond Ordinance Number 2023-06 Finally Adopted by the Borough Council of the Borough of Raritan, New Jersey on April 18, 2023

The purpose of this ordinance is to amend prior capital ordinance #2023-06 by cancelling unused or reduced appropriations for certain capital items and reallocating those funds for Fire Department radios

Councilman Agrawal discussed a proposed capital expenditure for Fire Department radio equipment and emphasized the importance of carefully reviewing capital projects during the Borough's current financial challenges. He stated that completed or unused capital projects should be closed out promptly so that remaining funds can be reallocated efficiently and questioned why previously approved funding for the radio project had not been utilized earlier. During the discussion, Paige Elster explained that the total radio project cost had increased significantly due to rising equipment prices, supply delays, and changes in equipment availability, requiring additional funding beyond the original 2023 appropriation. Ms. Elster further explained that existing capital funds from other completed projects were being reallocated to avoid issuing additional debt while ensuring that firefighters receive the necessary radio equipment. Councilman

Agrawal stated that he understood the importance of the project and respected the explanations provided by CFO Elster and Fire Department representatives, while also emphasizing the need for careful financial oversight and justification of capital expenditures.

On motion by Councilman Harwood, seconded by Councilman Martinez, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance 2026-10.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzing, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

Ordinance No. 2026-11

An Ordinance Amending Chapter 207 (Land Use and Development) so as to Update Regulations on Outdoor Advertising Signs

The purpose of this ordinance is to regulate outdoor advertising signs by allowing billboards as a conditional use in certain zones and setting standards for their placement, size, spacing, and operation

Mayor Tozzi explained that the proposed billboard ordinance was developed after the Planning Board reviewed potential locations where digital billboards could legally be permitted within the Borough while attempting to minimize impacts on residential neighborhoods and downtown areas. He stated that the Borough could not entirely prohibit billboards due to legal requirements and potential litigation concerns, so the ordinance instead established strict limitations regarding where billboards could potentially be located. Mayor Tozzi explained that the Planning Board identified several possible locations primarily along State highway corridors and commercial or industrial areas, including portions of Route 28, Route 206, areas near Johnson & Johnson properties, and locations near the Somerville Circle and Orlando Drive areas. He noted that the proposed ordinance was not approving any billboard construction at this time, but rather establishing designated zones and standards for any future applications. During the discussion, Mayor Tozzi and Council members reviewed several ordinance provisions, including the requirement that no billboard be located within 500 feet of a residential zone, height restrictions limiting billboards to a maximum of 50 feet, and additional regulations addressing setbacks, lighting, brightness, and roadway visibility. Mayor Tozzi emphasized that the Planning Board conducted the research and developed the proposed criteria in an effort to prevent billboards from being placed directly within residential or heavily traveled downtown areas while still complying with applicable legal requirements.

Councilman Agrawal stated that he understood residents' concerns regarding billboards and explained that the Borough could face lawsuits if billboards were completely prohibited. He stated that the proposed ordinance was intended to discourage billboard development by strictly limiting eligible locations and imposing setback requirements, including the 500-foot residential buffer. Councilman Agrawal noted that he had discussed the issue with residents, the Borough Engineer,

and the Planning Board attorney and stated that the ordinance would have prevented some previously proposed billboard locations from qualifying. He added that he viewed the ordinance as a reasonable starting point to help protect the Borough while addressing legal concerns and stated that he was comfortable supporting it.

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Introduce Ordinance 2026-11.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2026-03-066 through No.2026-03-067)

Resolution No. 2026-03-066

Approving Budget Self-Examination

Resolution No. 2026-03-067

Approving 2026 CDBG Application

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-03-066 through Resolution No. 2026-03-067 – Consent Agenda.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 6-0

BILLS LIST

Resolution No. 2026-03-068

Approving Bills List

Councilman Agrawal asked for the Van Cleef Engineering Associates – Sewer Analysis Calculator Revisions & Ordinance Development in the amount of \$22,000.00 to be pulled from the Bills List.

On motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-03-068 – Bills List excluding the Van Cleef Engineering Associates – Sewer Analysis Calculator Revisions & Ordinance Development in the amount of \$22,000.00.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: x

Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 6-0

Councilman Agrawal discussed concerns regarding the Borough's procedures for approving engineering services, consultant work, and project expenditures. He explained the distinction between the Borough Engineer's annual retainer agreement and additional project-specific work, stating that redevelopment studies, sewer projects, and other engineering-related services should be separately reviewed and approved by the governing body in a public meeting. He expressed concern that certain expenditures and additional engineering costs had proceeded without sufficient Council discussion or formal authorization and emphasized the importance of maintaining transparency and accountability regarding public spending. Councilman Agrawal also questioned the amount of work performed in connection with a previously discussed sewer-related engineering invoice and advocated for increased financial oversight, additional competition among engineering firms, and more aggressive cost-saving measures in light of the Borough's financial challenges. He stated that all expenditures should be carefully scrutinized to help avoid future tax increases and improve fiscal management. During the discussion, Borough CFO, Paige Elster, explained that the engineering work in question related to prior sewer ordinance analysis and redevelopment-related presentations that had already been initiated. She noted that a portion of the project funding had previously been included in the Borough's budget and that the additional work fell within applicable procurement thresholds and existing professional service arrangements. Ms. Elster also acknowledged Councilman Agrawal's concerns regarding process and competition among engineering firms while explaining the basis for the expenditures and approvals.

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Approve the Payment for Van Cleef Engineering Associates – Sewer Analysis Calculator Revisions & Ordinance Development in the amount of \$22,000.00.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez
Nay: Agrawal
Absent: x
Abstain: x
Motion Carried: 5-1

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Professional Property Appraisers – Revaluation Status Payment – \$74,479.00
2. Van Cleef Engineering Associates – NJDOT Avon, Brentwood, & Tysley Work on Base Map & Review – \$21,724.00
3. Van Cleef Engineering Associates – Sewer Analysis Calculator Revisions & Ordinance Development – \$22,000.00

On motion by Councilman Giraldi, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Approve the Certification of Funds – Revaluation Status Payment, NJDOT Avon, Brentwood, & Tysley Work on Base Map & Review, Sewer Analysis Calculator Revisions & Ordinance Development.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzingler, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Giraldi, Harwood, Martinez

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)

Jim Werner, 407 Victoria St – Mr. Werner asked if he could get a copy of the duties of the Senior Citizen Liaison and also inquired about the automatic doors for this building. Mayor Tozzi explained that the handicapped-accessible door improvements are in progress and noted that the project requires coordination and installation work that could not be completed immediately.

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln - Mr. King expressed disappointment that his previously suggested alternative redevelopment concept for the Agway property had not been further considered by the governing body. He advocated for a smaller-scale, three-story senior and veterans affordable housing development, stating that such a project could provide additional affordable housing credits while reducing concerns related to parking, infrastructure impacts, setbacks, and building scale. Mr. King argued that the alternative proposal could better address the needs of senior citizens and veterans within the Borough while also incorporating community-oriented commercial uses such as a café or coffee shop. He stated that he believed the revised 60-unit redevelopment proposal still failed to adequately address many of the concerns raised by residents regarding density and neighborhood impacts.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd - Mr. Foohey commented on the status of the apartment development along Orlando Drive after recently visiting the site. He noted concerns about portions of the property appearing unsecured, including open garage areas, doors left open, visible tools, extension cords, and construction materials, and expressed concern about potential safety hazards and animals accessing the site. Mayor Tozzi responded that delays to the project were primarily related to utility connection issues involving American Water, particularly water line installations, but advised that Borough officials were aware of the situation and that work was continuing toward completion. Mr. Foohey also announced that registration was open for the seventh annual town-wide yard sale, scheduled for the first Saturday in May, with registration available through April 18.

Jill Brown, 18 Elmer St - Ms. Brown expressed concerns regarding the proposed development at the Lagrange Street property and stated that, in her view, important issues involving density, environmental conditions, and project oversight had not been adequately addressed throughout the review process. She referenced prior discussions regarding the number of residential units proposed for the site and emphasized the responsibility of the governing body and reviewing boards to carefully evaluate projects and ensure that recommendations and conditions are properly followed. Ms. Brown also discussed concerns related to environmental conditions at the property, including references to historical reports involving possible hazardous materials, asbestos, and potential contamination. She questioned whether sufficient follow-up inspections, testing, and documentation had been completed regarding hazardous material handling, asbestos removal, and environmental remediation activities associated with the site. Additionally, Ms. Brown expressed concerns regarding the potential health and quality-of-life impacts on nearby residents and encouraged greater oversight, transparency, and review of project documentation and approvals. During the discussion, Mayor Tozzi acknowledged her concerns, noted the importance of the issues raised, and invited her to discuss the matter further prior to the upcoming Planning Board meeting where the project would be considered.

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr – Mr. Laggini expressed concern regarding the impact of continued tax increases on Borough residents, property owners, and downtown businesses, stating that many local businesses are already struggling economically. He questioned the Borough’s expenditures for grant writing services and discussed the importance of maximizing grant funding opportunities to help offset municipal costs. Mr. Laggini also raised concerns about the long-term impacts of additional residential development, particularly related to school overcrowding, future school expansion costs, and the resulting effect on property taxes. He stated that the Borough should carefully consider the cumulative impacts of continued development on infrastructure and public services. Additionally, Mr. Laggini reflected on changes within the Borough over recent decades and expressed concern about preserving the character and future of the community. He suggested exploring alternative approaches to affordable housing obligations, including the possibility of utilizing property associated with major commercial or industrial landowners for future affordable housing development. He concluded by acknowledging the challenges facing the governing body while expressing concern about the Borough’s financial future and the burden on residents.

Bob Strauss, 56 Vones Ln - Mr. Strauss expressed concern about the long-term impacts of redevelopment decisions being made within the Borough, particularly projects involving large residential buildings in areas he believed were not suitable for that level of density. He stated that decisions made today would have lasting consequences for future generations and urged the governing body to carefully consider the long-term effects of development on the community. Mr. Strauss also discussed concerns regarding flooding, infrastructure, and planning associated with proposed redevelopment projects, referencing flood-prone areas near the former mall site and questioning how future flooding events, parking issues, and long-term maintenance would be managed. He expressed concern that future residents and taxpayers could ultimately bear the financial burden of inadequate planning decisions.

Sam Timms, 1 LaGrange St - Mr. Timms thanked Borough officials for organizing a future town hall meeting and encouraged additional public discussion regarding redevelopment, budgeting, grants, and long-term planning within the Borough. He emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability, and clearly identifying the expected inputs, costs, outputs, and outcomes associated with Borough projects, grants, and expenditures before votes are taken. Mr. Timms raised concerns regarding the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application discussed during the meeting, questioning the accuracy of language contained within the related resolution and expressing concern about project oversight, spending practices, engineering costs, and the Borough’s overall financial management. He also advocated for increased public visibility regarding grant timelines, project status, competitive bidding, and Borough expenditures. Additionally, Mr. Timms discussed concerns related to tree removal associated with roadway improvements, redevelopment impacts, and the Borough budget, while encouraging greater resident involvement and collaboration in solving municipal challenges. He stated that residents want to assist the Borough and urged the governing body to work more closely with the public moving forward.

Brittany Eriksson, 1 LaGrange St - Ms. Eriksson discussed concerns regarding the revised Agway redevelopment proposal, stating that although the number of residential units had been reduced from 75 to 60, the project would still represent one of the densest developments in the Borough. She stated that she remained concerned about issues involving density, building height, setbacks, and impervious coverage, and questioned whether the revised plan adequately addressed sound planning principles and public benefit considerations. Ms. Eriksson stated that she supports redevelopment of the Agway property and believes the site has the potential to serve as an attractive gateway to the Borough and riverfront area. However, she expressed the opinion that the redevelopment should focus on a more appropriate transit-oriented design that better balances community character, affordability, public safety, and quality of life concerns. Additionally, Ms. Eriksson raised concerns regarding transparency and public participation in the redevelopment process, including discussions involving the redevelopment subcommittee and the

status of certain meeting minutes that had not yet been approved or released. She stated that residents are seeking greater public involvement and access to information regarding redevelopment decisions and cautioned against redevelopment actions occurring without meaningful public input.

Greg Natale, 63 Thompson St - Mr. Natale expressed concerns regarding the Borough's engineering review and escrow process, stating that property owners with active projects have limited ability to question or negotiate engineering charges deducted from escrow accounts. He argued that relying heavily on a single engineering firm creates potential conflicts of interest and advocated for increased competition and lower bidding thresholds for professional and construction-related services. Mr. Natale also discussed concerns about potential legal exposure for the Borough, stating that resident-related disputes and litigation should be taken as seriously as potential lawsuits involving developers or corporations. Additionally, Mr. Natale stated that he supports redevelopment of the Agway property in principle and acknowledged the value of increased activity and families within the community. However, he argued that the proposed redevelopment alone would not fully address the Borough's affordable housing obligations and encouraged the governing body to pursue more creative and flexible approaches to affordable housing compliance rather than relying primarily on large-scale residential development projects.

Marguerite Caruso, 73 Second Ave - Ms. Caruso expressed concerns regarding the Borough's increasing reliance on rental housing developments and questioned why additional condominium or homeownership opportunities were not being more actively considered as part of redevelopment efforts. She stated that, given the Borough's limited available land, redevelopment should focus more on creating permanent housing opportunities that encourage long-term residency, community stability, and homeownership. Ms. Caruso also discussed concerns about density and the growing number of rental developments being introduced throughout residential areas of the Borough. She stated that rental housing can create a more transient population and questioned whether concentrating additional rental units throughout the community was the best long-term planning approach for Raritan. Additionally, Ms. Caruso emphasized the importance of strengthening and sustaining the Borough's sense of community while also addressing affordable housing and senior housing needs. She suggested that future redevelopment efforts should better balance affordability goals with opportunities for permanent residents and long-term community investment.

Roger Copt, 1120 Rt. 202 - Mr. Copt expressed concerns regarding potential conflicts of interest involving individuals associated with the Agway redevelopment review process and urged the Borough Attorney to further examine and address those concerns. He also questioned whether certain individuals involved in the matter should have recused themselves due to their proximity to the redevelopment site. Mr. Copt additionally raised concerns regarding parking requirements for the revised 60-unit Agway redevelopment proposal, arguing that the project should fully comply with parking, setback, and height requirements without receiving variances that could increase on-street parking impacts within the surrounding neighborhood. He stated that inadequate parking could worsen existing parking issues in the area and expressed opposition to any overflow parking affecting nearby residential streets. Furthermore, Mr. Copt discussed the historical use of the Agway property and surrounding railroad areas, noting that agricultural chemicals and materials were historically stored and transported in the area. He expressed concern about the potential for environmental contamination at the site and urged that thorough environmental review and investigation be conducted before redevelopment proceeds.

Patrick Dinsmore, 523 Victoria St - Mr. Dinsmore requested an update regarding the status of the 21 Orlando Drive development and ongoing delays involving American Water utility work. Borough officials responded that water line installation and related utility connections remained outstanding and were necessary before the project could proceed toward completion and occupancy approvals. Mr. Dinsmore also raised concerns regarding environmental issues previously discussed by the Environmental

Commission, specifically allegations that construction activity extended beyond the approved disturbance area onto Somerset County Park Commission property. He referenced notices of deficiency issued by environmental agencies and questioned whether the governing body was aware of the matter and whether the required remediation work had been completed. During the discussion, Mayor Tozzi and Borough officials acknowledged the concerns and explained that corrective work related to grading, paving, and site restoration was still expected to occur as part of the remaining project work once the utility improvements are completed.

Jennie Rose, Letter submitted read by Clerk - Raritan resident JennieRose submitted comments expressing concerns regarding transparency, public notice procedures, and the Borough's handling of redevelopment and land use ordinances. She stated that repeated procedural issues, vague agenda items, and insufficient public notice undermine public trust and limit residents' ability to remain informed about government actions and redevelopment proposals. Ms. JennieRose also expressed concern that existing land development ordinances and community safeguards were being amended in ways that prioritize redevelopment interests over the quality of life of current residents. She urged the governing body to slow the redevelopment process and ensure that decisions involving affordable housing and redevelopment are approached carefully, transparently, and with meaningful public input. Additionally, her comments emphasized the importance of preserving critical land use and environmental protections, including floodplain regulations, stormwater management standards, parking requirements, environmental remediation requirements, groundwater protections, building height limitations, setbacks, and infrastructure safeguards. She stated that redevelopment and affordable housing initiatives should continue to prioritize public safety, environmental health, neighborhood character, and long-term community sustainability while supporting responsible economic growth and connectivity within the Borough. JennieRose concluded by urging the governing body to refrain from approving additional redevelopment ordinances unless they clearly maintain and reinforce these protections and safeguards for the benefit of current and future residents.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Tozzi asked for a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting.

On a motion by Council President Fritzing, seconded by Councilman Martinez, Council moved to Adjourn the Regular Meeting.

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion passed: 6-0

The Regular Meeting adjourned at 10:47 p.m.

Kimberly Mathewson
Acting Municipal Clerk

Date: _____