

MINUTES

BOROUGH OF RARITAN **REGULAR MEETING**

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026
6:30 P.M. – EXECUTIVE SESSION
7 P.M. – REGULAR SESSION

This Regular 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 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 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 January 9, 2026.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council President Fritzinger, Councilman Agrawal, Councilman DiGraziano, Councilman Harwood, Councilman Martinez

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

Absent: Councilman Giraldi

ROLL CALL

Council President Fritzinger, Councilman Agrawal, Councilman DiGraziano, Councilman Giraldi, Councilman Harwood, Councilman Martinez

INVOCATION AND FLAG SALUTE

Councilman Harwood

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Resolution No. 2026-04-077

Entering Executive Session

1. Attorney Client
Alpine Way

On motion by Councilman Harwood, seconded by Councilman Martinez, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-04-077.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

Council convened in Executive Session at 6:31 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ADJOURNMENT

Council moved to reconvene in Regular Session unanimously.

On motion by Councilman Harwood, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council exited Executive Session and resumed Regular Session at 7:00 p.m.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

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)

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln - Mr. King questioned Resolution No. 2026-04-071, approved at the previous Council meeting, authorizing the hiring of a part-time janitorial employee. He stated that because funding for the position was already incorporated into the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget, he believed the previously adopted resolution should be rescinded or otherwise addressed to avoid duplicating the expenditure.

Jim Werner, 407 Victoria St - Mr. Werner requested that future Council agendas identify each Council member's committee and liaison assignments for the benefit of the public.

Michael Patente, 30 Glaser Ave – Mr. Patente raised several questions regarding the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget. He questioned whether Council had conducted budget workshops with department heads, expressed concern regarding the proposed Police Department renovation project and the associated architectural services, and inquired about the purpose of establishing a Sewer Ordinance Ad Hoc Committee. He also questioned whether potential changes to sewer billing practices and additional revenue opportunities had been considered during the budget development process.

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr - Mr. Laggini expressed concern regarding the proposed municipal tax increase, stating that rising taxes create financial hardship for residents, particularly those on fixed incomes. He urged the governing body to reconsider adoption of the budget and instead meet with department heads to identify cost-saving measures and reduce expenditures. Mr. Laggini also questioned the Borough's use of surplus funds and expressed concern regarding the Borough's long-term financial stability should emergency expenses arise. He encouraged Council to exercise greater fiscal restraint while continuing to provide essential municipal services.

Jill Brown, 18 Elmer St - Ms. Brown expressed ongoing concerns regarding oversight of construction and redevelopment projects within the Borough, specifically referencing the LaGrange Street property. She alleged deficiencies relating to asbestos removal, environmental safeguards, stormwater protections, contractor compliance, and site management. Ms. Brown also questioned the extent of environmental testing conducted at the property, citing concerns

regarding historical industrial uses and potential contamination. She urged Borough officials to strengthen oversight and ensure compliance with applicable environmental regulations before redevelopment proceeds.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd - Mr. Foohey expressed concerns about the Borough's budget preparation process, stating that it appeared to differ significantly from the collaborative approach used when he served on the Council. He recalled that, in prior years, the Mayor and Council held dedicated budget workshops where each department head met with the governing body to explain and justify their budget requests. He also described how the Finance Committee worked closely with the auditor to develop an initial draft budget before presenting it to the full Council, which then reviewed the budget together line by line during a workshop. Mr. Foohey questioned the current process, including who prepares the initial budget draft, and stated his belief that the existing approach was not producing satisfactory results.

Roger Copt, 1120 Rt 202 - Mr. Copt questioned whether the current municipal budget still included funding for the sewer utility and sought clarification on the purpose of the proposed ad hoc sewer committee. He expressed concern over previous discussions suggesting the sewer utility could be removed from the municipal tax levy and replaced with a separate sewer user charge, stating he had heard residents could face a minimum annual charge of approximately \$450. He strongly opposed that concept, arguing it would unfairly increase costs for many residents and businesses. Using his own business as an example, he stated that his actual sewer usage would result in a much lower bill and asserted that imposing a flat minimum charge would be unreasonable. He urged the governing body to retain the current funding structure and not pursue a separate sewer fee of that magnitude.

JoAnn Liptak, 2 W. Somerset St - Ms. Liptak questioned the Borough's financial management, asking what had happened to the approximately \$7 million surplus that existed when she left office in 2015. Drawing on her experience as a former Council member, she stated that prior governing bodies held detailed budget meetings with department heads to review and discuss budget requests collaboratively. She questioned the extent of the current Council's involvement in developing the budget and whether too much responsibility had been delegated to the Borough Administrator. Ms. Liptak urged elected officials to take ownership of the budget process, respond directly to residents' concerns, and be accountable for their decisions. She concluded by expressing her deep connection to Raritan, noting her family's long history in the Borough and her years of public service, and emphasized her desire to see the community well governed.

Sam Timms, 1 LaGrange - Mr. Timms questioned the timeline and legal requirements for adopting the municipal budget and asked whether additional time was available before a vote. He expressed concern that the governing body had not been sufficiently involved in developing the budget, stating that Council members should actively participate in shaping the budget rather than simply voting on a completed proposal. He criticized what he viewed as a lack of informed discussion and encouraged greater collaboration among the Council, department heads, the CFO, and residents to develop a more transparent and thoroughly reviewed budget. Mr. Timms also cautioned against relying on future development to address the Borough's financial challenges,

arguing that long-term assumptions should not replace difficult budget decisions made today. He urged the Council to consider postponing the budget adoption, establish an ad hoc budget committee, and work collaboratively with residents to develop a stronger financial plan. Additionally, Mr. Timms raised concerns about the condition of Borough infrastructure following the winter season, particularly deteriorating curbs and roadways. He asked whether the Department of Public Works had assessed the damage and requested that Council consider placing an infrastructure update on a future agenda so residents could better understand the identified needs and planned repairs.

Jennie Rose, Raritan Resident - Ms. JennieRose raised several concerns regarding the proposed municipal budget, focusing primarily on police compensation, shared services, professional service contracts, and community event support. She questioned the Borough's police salary and overtime expenditures, expressing concern that officer compensation had increased at a rate she believed exceeded negotiated contractual raises. She also questioned personnel decisions involving a former police officer and urged the governing body to examine potential cost-saving measures before adopting the budget. Ms. JennieRose stated that the budget should not be approved without further review, echoing previous speakers' calls for a more thorough evaluation of expenditures. She also questioned whether the Borough's shared service agreements were providing equitable value, suggesting the governing body review those arrangements to ensure they were mutually beneficial. Additionally, she questioned the structure of the Borough's engineering services agreement, asking why expenditures under the contract appeared to remain below the public bidding threshold and whether a different contractual arrangement should be considered. She also expressed concern over the proposed location for the upcoming budget town hall, suggesting it be held at a larger indoor venue, such as the school, to better accommodate residents and facilitate public discussion. Finally, Ms. JennieRose encouraged the governing body to support the proposed Filipino festival, urging Council to work with organizers to find a way to accommodate the event. She expressed her willingness to volunteer at the festival and emphasized the importance of providing equal opportunities for community groups to host public events in the Borough.

MINUTES

1. February 17, 2026 – Regular Meeting

On motion by Council President Fritzinger, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council
Approved the February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

COUNCIL COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Martinez - Councilman Martinez reported that Municipal Court collected approximately \$35,000 in traffic fines and \$2,482 in disorderly persons and ordinance violations during February. He further reported that March collections totaled approximately \$28,953 in traffic fines and \$1,392 in disorderly persons and ordinance violations. As liaison to the Environmental Commission, Councilman Martinez reported on the Borough's participation in the recent Raritan Headwaters stream cleanup held in conjunction with the Recreation Committee. He noted that numerous volunteers participated in the cleanup efforts throughout the Borough and that participants gathered afterward at Frelinghuysen Park. He thanked the volunteers for their participation and commented on the amount of debris collected during the event. Councilman Martinez also advised that the Environmental Commission recently met to discuss updates to Borough ordinances relating to stormwater management, floodplain management, and soil disturbance regulations. He stated that proposed ordinance revisions would be forwarded to the governing body for future review.

Councilman Harwood - Councilman Harwood reported that a part-time employee had been hired for janitorial services and would be starting employment with the Borough.

Council President Fritzinger - Council President Fritzinger reported that the Building Department issued 37 permits between April 7 and April 21, 2026, generating approximately \$7,165 in permit fees. He advised that the Department of Public Works was preparing the Borough's athletic fields and municipal pool for the upcoming season and announced that grass collection would begin shortly. He also informed residents that Public Service Electric & Gas would begin gas main replacement work in early May, with advance notices and affected streets posted on the Borough website. Lastly, he reported that the Historical Committee continues to operate under a temporary budget while utilizing trust funds, highlighted the success of a recent Battle of Bound Brook presentation at the Raritan Public Library, and announced an upcoming "Songs and Stories of the American Revolution" program scheduled for June 27.

Councilman DiGraziano - Councilman DiGraziano reported that the Recreation Department's spring dodgeball program continues to be well attended with two weeks remaining in the season. He announced that Opening Day for Borough baseball would be held Sunday at Ardmaer Park in Bridgewater and encouraged residents to attend. He also requested volunteers to assist with setup and cleanup activities associated with Opening Day.

Councilman Agrawal - Councilman Agrawal reported that the Senior Citizen Group continues to remain active and recently hosted guest speaker Jim Fitty Carroll, who presented information regarding the Borough's Historic and Cultural Committee. He noted that the presentation was well received by attendees. Councilman Agrawal also advised that the Senior Citizen Group continues planning future outings and educational programs. Regarding the Board of Health, Councilman Agrawal stated there was no report this evening and advised that an update would be provided at a future Council meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Pinoys of Joy (DT)

Mayor Tozzi reported that he recently met with representatives of Pinoys of Joy regarding their request to conduct a Filipino Festival on Main Street. He advised that, following discussions, the proposed event would be held on Sunday, October 11, 2026, utilizing a portion of Main Street between Wall Street and Thompson Street during the afternoon hours. Council members expressed support for the event, noting that it would celebrate the Borough's Filipino community while supporting local businesses.

On motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve the Pinoys of Joy Filipino Festival.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

NEW BUSINESS

1. Walk to Fight Alzheimer's Banner Request (EC)

The governing body considered a request from the Alzheimer's Association seeking permission to display a banner across Main Street promoting the annual Walk to Fight Alzheimer's event scheduled for later in the year. Council members voiced support for the event, recognizing its importance in raising public awareness and supporting individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease.

On motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Approve the banner request.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

2. LaGrange Street Construction (UA)

Councilman Agrawal requested that discussion regarding the LaGrange Street construction project be removed from the agenda. He explained that the property was scheduled for Planning Board consideration the following evening and believed discussion before the governing body would be inappropriate while the application remained pending.

Council concurred and the item was removed from the agenda without further discussion.

3. Sewer Ordinance Ad Hoc Committee (DT)

Mayor Tozzi announced the formation of a Sewer Ordinance Ad Hoc Committee to review the Borough's sewer utility ordinance and evaluate possible future recommendations. During discussion, Councilman Agrawal suggested including representatives from the Sewer Authority on the committee to provide technical expertise and institutional knowledge throughout the review process.

2026 MUNICIPAL BUDGET – PUBLIC HEARING

Resolution No. 2026-04-078

Adopting 2026 Municipal Budget

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Councilman Harwood, Council moved to Open the Public Hearing on the 2026 Municipal Budget.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr - Mr. Laggini questioned whether the Borough had solicited competitive proposals relating to increased operating expenses, particularly insurance costs, before preparing the proposed budget. He expressed concern regarding the overall financial impact of the proposed tax increase and discussed the Borough's reliance upon major commercial taxpayers, including Johnson & Johnson and LabCorp, noting that future changes to those ratables could significantly affect municipal finances. Mr. Laggini encouraged the governing body to continue identifying opportunities to reduce expenditures while maintaining essential services.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd - Mr. Foohey questioned the process utilized in preparing the proposed municipal budget and asked when the Borough Auditor became involved during budget development. He recalled previous governing bodies conducting public budget workshops with department heads and expressed concern that Council had not participated in a similar review this year. Mr. Foohey further requested an explanation regarding statements previously made concerning the Borough's financial condition and questioned what circumstances had changed to necessitate the proposed tax increase. He encouraged Council to review municipal spending, departmental budgets, and future revenue projections more thoroughly before adopting the budget.

Sam Timms, 1 LaGrange St - Mr. Timms expressed concern regarding the Borough's long-term financial planning and questioned the decision-making process used in preparing the proposed budget. He stated that elected officials should be actively involved in shaping fiscal policy and reviewing departmental expenditures rather than relying exclusively upon administrative recommendations. Mr. Timms questioned the Borough's projected revenues, use of surplus,

police overtime appropriations, salary increases for certain management positions, and long-term financial projections. He encouraged the governing body to carefully review expenditures, identify cost-saving measures, and consider postponing budget adoption to allow additional review and public participation. Mr. Timms also requested continued attention to roadway infrastructure, including curb and street conditions following the winter season, and suggested providing future public updates regarding planned maintenance activities.

Jennie Rose, Raritan Resident - Ms. JennieRose expressed concern regarding Police Department salary and overtime expenditures contained within the proposed budget. She questioned whether additional cost-saving measures had been explored, including review of police staffing costs, shared service agreements, and professional service contracts. Ms. JennieRose also questioned expenditures associated with engineering and professional consulting services, suggesting that additional oversight of recurring professional service contracts may identify opportunities for future savings. Additionally, Ms. JennieRose commented on the proposed location for the Borough's upcoming Town Hall meeting, expressing her preference that it be held at a larger indoor facility capable of accommodating greater public participation.

Brittany Eriksson, 1 LaGrange – Ms. Eriksson submitted a financial analysis she prepared comparing recent Borough budgets and requested that it become part of the public record. She encouraged Council to provide periodic public financial updates throughout the year rather than limiting budget discussions to the annual budget hearing. She further discussed long-term financial trends, debt service obligations, affordable housing revenues, and future commercial tax ratables, expressing concern regarding the Borough's long-term fiscal sustainability. Ms. Eriksson emphasized the importance of making informed financial decisions and maintaining transparency throughout the budget process.

Neither seeing nor hearing any other member of the public wishing to speak regarding the 2026 Municipal Budget, Mayor Tozzi closed the Public Hearing.

Chief Financial Officer Elster responded to questions raised during the public hearing regarding preparation of the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget. Ms. Elster explained that the budget was prepared over several months in consultation with Borough Administration, department heads, the Borough Auditor, and the Finance Committee. She advised that each department submitted proposed budget requests which were reviewed and adjusted throughout the budget development process. Ms. Elster further explained that the Borough experienced significant increases in several operating expenses largely outside municipal control, including health insurance, liability insurance, pension obligations, contractual salary increases, utilities, and debt service. She noted that the Borough also worked to identify savings where possible, including participation in a new joint insurance fund that reduced projected insurance costs. Ms. Elster advised that surplus appropriations, budget reserves, anticipated revenues, and departmental appropriations were reviewed in preparing the proposed budget and emphasized that the Borough continues to monitor expenditures while maintaining required municipal services. During additional discussion, Ms. Elster responded to questions regarding police overtime appropriations, shared service agreements, surplus utilization, capital expenditures, and projected future financial

obligations. Members of Council also participated in discussion regarding the budget development process, anticipated future revenues, and the financial challenges facing municipalities throughout New Jersey.

Following the close of the public hearing, members of Council discussed the proposed 2026 Municipal Budget and the comments raised by residents.

Chief Financial Officer Elster and Borough officials responded to questions regarding the budget preparation process, explaining that the proposed budget had been developed through multiple meetings with Borough Administration, department heads, the Borough Auditor, and the Finance Committee. It was noted that departmental requests were reviewed throughout the process and adjusted where appropriate while balancing the Borough's financial obligations. Discussion also addressed increases in health insurance, liability insurance, pension costs, debt service, contractual salary obligations, and utility expenses. Borough officials explained that these expenditures, many of which are outside the Borough's direct control, significantly contributed to the overall increase in the proposed municipal budget. Officials further advised that cost-saving measures had been implemented where possible, including participation in a new joint insurance fund to reduce insurance costs and continued review of departmental expenditures. Council members discussed the importance of maintaining essential municipal services while exercising fiscal responsibility. Discussion also included the Borough's use of surplus, projected revenues, shared services, capital expenditures, sewer utility operations, police overtime appropriations, and long-term financial planning. Several Council members acknowledged the concerns expressed by residents regarding the proposed tax increase while recognizing the financial challenges currently facing municipalities throughout the State.

On motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Councilman Martinez, Council moved to Adopt Resolution No. 2026-04-078 Adopting the 2026 Municipal Budget.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: Agrawal

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 4-1

ORDINANCES – SECOND READING & PUBLIC HEARING

None

ORDINANCES – INTRODUCTION

None

CONSENT AGENDA

(Resolution No. 2026-04-079 through No.2026-04-080)

Resolution No. 2026-04-079

Awarding Contract – Home Improvement Program
– 18 Bluebird Way

Resolution No. 2026-04-080

Correcting the Title Caption of Resolution 2026-03

Mayor Tozzi asked for a motion to Approve Resolution No. Resolution No. 2026-04-079 through Resolution No. 2026-04-080 – Consent Agenda.

On motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-04-079 through Resolution No. 2026-04-080 – Consent Agenda.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

BILLS LIST

Resolution No. 2026-04-081

Approving Bills List

Councilman Agrawal requested the payment to SSP Architects in the amount of \$13,825.00 be removed from the Bills List.

On motion by Councilman Martinez, seconded by Councilman Agrawal, Council moved to Remove SSP Architects in the amount of \$13,825.00 from the Bills List.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

Mayor Tozzi asked for a motion to Approve Resolution No. 2026-04-081 – Bills List, excluding the payment to SSP Architects in the amount of \$13,825.00

On motion by Councilman DiGraziano, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve Resolution No. 2026-04-081 – Bills List – excluding the payment to SSP Architects in the amount of \$13,825.00.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

CERTIFICATION OF FUNDS

1. Borough of Somerville - First Quarter CFO Shared Services – \$20,000.00
2. Bridgewater Resources, INC - February Dumping Fees – \$15,956.10

3. Professional Property Appraisers - 2026 Revaluation – \$14,095.00
4. SSP Architects - Police Department Renovations—\$13,825.00
5. Van Cleef Engineering Associates - Agway AINR Redevelopment – \$13,518.50

On motion by Councilman Harwood, seconded by Council President Fritzinger, Council moved to Approve the Certification of Funds – First Quarter CFO Shared Services, February Dumping Fees, 2026 Revaluation, and Agway AINR Redevelopment – excluding SSP Architects - Police Department Renovations.

Recorded Vote

Yea: Fritzinger, Agrawal, DiGraziano, Harwood, Martinez

Nay: x

Absent: Giraldi

Abstain: x

Motion Carried: 5-0

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)

Jeff King, 47 Vones Ln - Mr. King expressed concern over the long-term increase in his property taxes, stating that they had risen from approximately \$5,000 when he first built his home to more than \$21,000 with the proposed budget increase. He argued that, despite assertions that taxes had been kept as low as possible, the cumulative increase was excessive. Mr. King also reminded the governing body of its fiduciary responsibility to residents, urging Council members to take a more active role in reviewing, negotiating, and deliberating the budget before voting on its adoption.

Victor Laggini, 250 Weiss Terr - Mr. Laggini expressed disappointment that the governing body declined to table the budget for further review. He urged the Council to hold a special meeting, as prior governing bodies had done, to work collaboratively with department heads and committee chairs to identify potential budget adjustments before adoption. He stated that residents had requested a more thorough review of the budget and felt those concerns had not been adequately addressed. Mr. Laggini also questioned when Council members were expected to discuss budget-related issues if not during public meetings, emphasizing the importance of open deliberation and public transparency in the budget process.

Michael Patente, 30 Glaser Ave - Mr. Patente encouraged the governing body to hold more public workshop-style meetings where Council members and residents could openly discuss important issues, particularly the budget, before formal action is taken. Drawing on his own experience as a former Council member, he stated that he often felt excluded from meaningful discussions and cautioned against voting on matters without adequate information or deliberation. He urged the Council to engage in broader discussions involving all Council members, department heads, and stakeholders to ensure more informed and transparent decision-making on behalf of the Borough's residents.

Benjamin Harris, 2 Wall St - Mr. Harris expressed concern about what he described as growing dysfunction within the governing body, stating that visible tension and division among Council members had undermined public confidence. He observed that Council meetings reflected a lack of communication, coordination, and shared direction, which he believed negatively affected the

Borough's decision-making process. Mr. Harris suggested that the Council consider outside assistance, such as facilitation or mediation, to improve its effectiveness and emphasized that residents expect a governing body that works collaboratively, communicates respectfully, and makes informed decisions in the best interest of the community.

Sam Timms, 1 LaGrange St - Mr. Timms encouraged the governing body to approach difficult decisions with professionalism, respect, and a collaborative attitude, emphasizing that both Council members and residents share the common goal of improving the Borough. He commended the Council's decision to support the Filipino festival and suggested expanding community events in the downtown area as a way to attract visitors and support local businesses. Turning to the budget, Mr. Timms reiterated his concern that the Borough should not rely on future development projects as the primary solution to its financial challenges, noting that many factors affecting those projects are beyond the Borough's control. He urged the Council to focus instead on making difficult but necessary decisions regarding current expenditures. He recommended conducting a comprehensive review of spending patterns, including professional services, purchasing thresholds, contract overruns, and capital projects, to improve financial oversight and ensure projects remain within budget. Finally, Mr. Timms encouraged greater resident involvement in municipal decision-making by including members of the public on committees addressing issues such as sewer utility operations and municipal finances. He stated that increased transparency and collaboration between the governing body and residents would lead to better-informed decisions and stronger long-term financial planning.

Jim Foohey, 710 Rhine Blvd - Mr. Foohey asked whether residents would be included on the proposed sewer ad hoc committee and encouraged the governing body to involve members of the public in the committee's work. He also inquired about the status of the Raritan Mall redevelopment application before the Planning Board. Expressing concern about the upcoming demolition of the mall site, Mr. Foohey urged the Borough to closely monitor the removal of demolition debris and any potentially hazardous materials. Referencing delays experienced during the Richard Street project, he recommended that the Borough consider adopting an ordinance requiring demolition materials, particularly potentially contaminated debris, to be removed within a specified timeframe to minimize potential health and environmental impacts on nearby neighborhoods. Lastly, Mr. Foohey announced that the Borough's annual town-wide yard sale would be held on May 2, with 48 participating households. He advised that directories would be available at the library and online and thanked Councilman Laggini for his continued efforts in organizing the event.

Erica Landesberg, 21 Meehan Ave - Mr. Landesberg discussed the importance of responsible budget management, stating that public officials should carefully distinguish between essential expenditures and discretionary spending while keeping the long-term financial impact of their decisions in mind. He emphasized that elected officials have a responsibility to safeguard taxpayer dollars, review spending carefully, and ensure that ongoing commitments remain financially sustainable. He also requested additional transparency regarding the Borough's use of payments received through PILOT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) agreements, asking for information on how those funds have been allocated and how they benefit the Borough. Mr. Landesberg also expressed concern about the tone and professionalism displayed during recent Council meetings, urging both Council members and members of the public to treat one another with respect. He stated that elected officials should be mindful of their responsibility to represent residents and conduct themselves in a manner that promotes constructive dialogue and public confidence. Finally, addressing Councilman Martinez directly, Mr. Landesberg reflected on the

responsibilities of public service and encouraged him to consider the long-term impact of Council decisions on future generations. He emphasized the importance of thoughtful leadership, transparency, and making decisions that serve the best interests of the community.

Roger Copt, 1120 Rt 202 - Mr. Copt expressed strong criticism of the governing body's handling of several municipal matters. He questioned discussions regarding the Busky Lane sewer improvements, arguing that the developer, rather than taxpayers, should bear the full cost of infrastructure necessary to serve the project. He also raised concerns about the LaGrange Street redevelopment site, alleging that demolition materials may not have been properly handled and urging the Borough to ensure appropriate environmental testing and remediation. Mr. Copt further encouraged residents to attend upcoming Planning Board meetings to stay informed about redevelopment projects and contrasted the progress of local projects with other nearby developments. He also advocated for holding the proposed budget town hall at the JFK School rather than an outdoor location, stating that an indoor venue would better accommodate public participation. Finally, Mr. Copt voiced opposition to the use of PILOT agreements for future developments, stating that developers should pay the full cost of municipal improvements associated with their projects. He concluded by commenting on the importance of transparency and accountability in the conduct of public meetings.

Mike Pepe, Board of Education - Mr. Pepe, a member of the Board of Education, provided an overview of the tentative 2026–2027 school budget, advising that it includes an approximate 3% tax increase while addressing rising costs through careful fiscal management and increased state aid. He noted that the Board has managed declining student enrollment by not replacing certain vacant positions while continuing to support educational programs and adding security personnel. He invited residents to review the budget presentation online and participate in the upcoming public hearing. Mr. Pepe also provided an update on the school district's voter-approved referendum, reporting that the projects remain on budget. He explained that the addition at the middle school was designed to accommodate full-day kindergarten more efficiently while creating a traditional middle school configuration and avoiding more costly construction projects at multiple elementary schools. He added that the referendum has also funded long-needed improvements to school facilities, including upgrades to restrooms, windows, and air conditioning. Lastly, Mr. Pepe highlighted a student-led initiative at the high school supporting increased awareness and screening for lung cancer among first responders, veterans, and others at higher risk. He commended the students for their efforts and suggested they may be interested in presenting their initiative to the Borough Council in the future.

Emilie Stander, 977 First Ave - Ms. Stander thanked the Department of Public Works for its support of the Borough's recent community cleanup event, recognizing its coordination efforts and effective use of Clean Communities grant funding. She also expressed concern about the upcoming demolition and redevelopment of the Raritan Mall site, emphasizing the need for careful planning to address potential environmental and public safety risks during demolition and construction. Ms. Stander urged the Borough to coordinate with county emergency management and other appropriate agencies to prepare for possible flooding, air emissions, or the release of hazardous materials, noting the complexity of the project and the importance of proactive oversight.

Jill Brown, 18 Elmer St - Ms. Brown expressed concern about a proposal to install landscaping and benches on a Borough-owned paper street associated with a redevelopment project. She questioned whether allowing a private property owner to maintain or improve the land could

eventually create issues related to adverse possession and also raised concerns about the future maintenance of the area, particularly if responsibility were assigned to a homeowners association. In response, Borough Attorney Wenner explained the legal requirements for adverse possession, noting that it generally requires possession that is open, continuous, exclusive, adverse, and notorious for a statutory period. He stated that, while acquiring municipally owned property through adverse possession is difficult, it is not impossible, and acknowledged that the issue should be considered as part of the project's review.

Jennie Rose, Raritan Resident - Ms. JennieRose criticized the conduct of certain members of the governing body during the previous Council meeting, expressing particular concern over Councilman Giraldi's interactions with a member of the public. She stated that she found the exchange disrespectful and inappropriate for an elected official, arguing that Council members should conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner when interacting with residents. Ms. JennieRose also questioned the governing body's support for the Agway redevelopment project, asserting that Council had not adequately considered public opposition or thoroughly reviewed the proposal before voting. She challenged statements suggesting there was broader community support for the project and urged Council members to be more responsive to residents' concerns. Concluding her remarks, Ms. JennieRose expressed frustration with what she viewed as a lack of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness from the governing body. She encouraged elected officials to reflect on their conduct, uphold ethical standards, and better represent the interests of the community.

Jim Werner, 407 Victoria St - Mr. Werner expressed appreciation to Borough staff for their assistance with several matters. He thanked Borough Clerk Mathewson for helping his wife resolve an issue involving a state requirement for the Board of Health. He also commended the Department of Public Works for promptly addressing a plumbing issue at the American Legion and thanked the Borough Administrator for responding quickly to his concerns. Mr. Werner concluded by acknowledging the positive work being done by Borough staff.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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

Recorded Vote:

All in favor

Motion passed: 5-0

The Regular Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Kimberly Mathewson
Acting Municipal Clerk

Date: _____