

COMMISSIONERS CAUCUS MEETING MINUTES
RIDGEFIELD PARK
March 6, 2025
7:00 PM

Mayor MacNeill announced that this meeting is being held in accordance with the “Open Public Meeting Act, N.J.S.A. 10 4-6 et seq.” notice of which was sent to the Record, and the Star Ledger on December 31, 2024 and was posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board and the Village Website.

This agenda is listed as a courtesy and attempt to inform the public of actions being considered by the Village Board of Commissioners. There may be additions and deletions prior to the Board taking final action. Any action may be taken at any meeting, which includes all Caucus and Regular sessions. The Commissioners reserve the right to conduct and/or attend any meetings presently scheduled for the rest of 2025 by a combination of electronic and/or in-person means. Meetings are open to the public.

ROLL CALL

Those present were Commissioners Anlian, Gerken, Mirza (7:23pm) and Mayor MacNeill in the chair.

Absent: Commissioner Portorreal

Also, present: Philip Boggia, Chris Chapman, Village Attorney; Joe Rella, Chief of Police; Rich Flynn, DPW Asst. Superintendent and Tara O’Grady, Village Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Gerken, seconded by Commissioner Anlian to approve the minutes of the Commissioners Caucus Meeting and Closed Session Meeting of February 20, 2025.

On roll call, Commissioners Anlian, Gerken and Mayor MacNeill voted “YEA”.

Absent: Commissioners Mirza, Portorreal

DISCUSSION I

Ordinance 2025-04 – Towing Ordinance

Chief Rella advised that Tumino’s Towing stores towed vehicles properly and Neil’s does not. The Village had always had 3 towing companies. Since there are currently two, Chief Rella is in favor of having a third.

Clerk O’Grady will locate the information from the Hackensack tower and forward to Chief Rella.

CORRESPONDENCE

02-17 NJLM Weekly Roundup - Informational

02-18 Michael Porcelli, County of Bergen – 2026-2027 Resurfacing - Informational

02-19 NJDEP Weekly Update - Informational

02-20 NJLM Daily Update - Informational

02-21 NJLM Weekly Roundup – Informational

02-22 Derek Sands, County of Bergen – State of the County Address - Informational

02-23 Derek Sands, County of Bergen – Revolution NJ – Celebrating our Nation’s 250th Anniversary – Informational

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03-01 NJDEP Weekly Update - Informational

03-02 Jacqueline Rivera, NJ State Planning Commission – Bergen County Public Meeting regarding the Draft Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan – Clerk O’Grady will search for and provide the link for the plan to the Commissioners.

03-03 William Betesh – 30 Cross RP Urban Renewal, LLC. – Resolution to be prepared for the March 11th meeting agenda.

03-04 Local Finance Notice No. 2025-05 – Informational

HEARING OF CITIZENS

No citizens present.

DISCUSSION II

Chiefs of the Ridgfield Park Fire Department

Chief Lynn, Asst. Chief Zardoya and Asst. Chief Alberque were in attendance to discuss the current state of the Fire Department’s response numbers. He stated the percentages/numbers are down since the 2022 study that was done. The Village does not meet the minimum staffing requirements 82% of the time and does not meet the response time 27% of the time. Action needs to be taken. Recruitment is not the issue but retention and response are the issues. The Commissioners should revisit the request for a centralized firehouse.

Chief Lynn advised there are some legalities with the closure of Hose Co. No. 4 that have not been resolved. There is a firefighter, currently not affiliated with another company, freelancing at calls. This is a dangerous scenario. The State needs to be notified that Hose Co. No. 4 no longer exists. What is being done with the building and apparatus is also another question that needs to be addressed.

The Fire Department is currently operating with inadequate equipment.

The Fire Department will be entering in a Shared Services Agreement with the County for their dispatch program. This will eliminate the Police Department from dispatching the Fire Department. There will be no cost to the Village for this agreement.

Mike Alberque, Asst. Chief, stated he has been a member of the Fire Department for 53 years. He came back as a Chief to assist with issues the Fire Department is having. The radio system is horrible – dangerous situation. LOSAP percentages are low – 25% of the Fire Department members made less than 55% of calls (440 total calls in 2024). Over 50% of members made 4% of calls. In the next year or so, the Commissioners should consider hiring a part-time Fire Administrator due to the demands that are now on the Fire Chief.

A few years ago, Mike Alberque advised the Commissioners that Hose Co. No. 1’s roof is leaking. This needs to be addressed. Commissioner Anlian advised to get it fixed – the Village will cover the cost.

There were issues with the 1099’s that were issued by the Village. Some were issued as Misc. while others were issued as NEC. This needs to be addressed.

Rich Flynn, Asst. DPW Superintendent, stated that the Fire Department imploded itself. The members that spoke at the Fire Department meeting regarding the study of the Village’s emergency services were members that don’t even live in town or regularly respond to calls.

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Commissioner Anlian stated they did look at locations for a centralized firehouse – the old Boswell property on Mt. Vernon Street, Brewster Park and the Methodist Church. The Methodist Church seems to be the only feasible location. The Village may have to acquire the property via condemnation and give the Church some space on the property. The Village will not lose a ratable since the Church is tax exempt.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION:

2025-29 Authorize the Submission of a Grant Application for the US Congress for the Replacement of the Village's Public Radio System

Motion by Commissioner Gerken, seconded by Commissioner Anlian, that Resolution 2025-29 be approved.

On roll call, Commissioners Anlian, Gerken, Mirza and Mayor MacNeill voted "YEA".

Absent: Commissioner Portorreal

REPORTS

Commissioner Gerken advised the new Judge started this past Tuesday.

A letter was received that there are no oil tanks in Fellowship Park. Boswell will proceed with design work.

The CSO Phase 1 work is on schedule. He will be meeting next week with Suburban on what the next phase should be.

As per Boswell's status report – the Floodplain ordinance draft needs to be completed by next week and sent to the DEP. Boggia's office is working on it.

Comm. Gerken is currently working with Civic Plus on the website design.

Comm. Gerken is working with Millenium on a grant for the Motorola System.

Commissioner Mirza stated the cost from Civic Plus on the Recreation permit software is \$6000 for the first year and \$3500 every year after. The cost is for training, design and set-up. The next step is to send the contract to Boggia for review.

The Rescue Squad is ready to submit their first round of pay-outs.

Mayor MacNeill stated 85 Challenger Road is losing Samsung. He and Phil Boggia are trying to be proactive. They are trying to locate the owner of the building to determine what should be done with it – residential?

Mayor MacNeill stated his intern and advocate are working on NJ Transit. One focus is a shuttle to the Hackensack train station if a shuttle to 15X is not feasible.

The Ramadan Festival was very nice – a gracious group of people.

Mayor MacNeill read Dr. Seuss to the Kindergarten, First and Second graders at Roosevelt School for the Read Across America program.

Clerk O'Grady advised she received a letter from the County regarding mosquito spraying this year. She will send a letter of approval.

As a reminder, the Scouts will be attending the March 11th meeting to receive their Presidential Volunteer Service Awards.

Ms. O'Grady asked if the Commissioners will be approving summer hours this year – yes.

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Asst. Superintendent Flynn advised the DPW received three prices for the improvements of the Municipal Building front steps - \$16,000.00, \$25,000.00 and \$30,000.00.

The DPW was called to check the sewer line at 17 Teaneck Road. Their machine got stuck in the line last night. They called Montana and the cost to clear the line and camera it will be \$4700.00.

The new skid steer was delivered.

Vogt Park renovations will start on Monday – swing set, rubber matting.

Brewster Park is replanting new trees – Shade Tree project.

Chief Rella asked what date will be good for Ptl. Knebl's promotion to Sergeant – March 25th

He posted a hiring notice – not going well. Would like someone already certified and bilingual.

Some officers may be taking Family Leave this year – need to cover shifts properly, very inexperienced department.

CLOSED SESSION

Resolution:

2025-30 Authorize Closed Session Meeting

On a motion by Mayor MacNeill, seconded by Commissioner Gerken, the public portion of the meeting recessed in order to convene a Closed Session Executive Meeting permitted pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b (8) Personnel

On roll call, Commissioners Anlian, Gerken, Mirza and Mayor MacNeill voted "YEA".

Absent: Commissioner Portorreal

The Board of Commissioners convened closed session at 8:56 p.m.

On a motion by Mayor MacNeill, seconded by Commissioner Gerken, the Board of Commissioners returned to open session at 9:08 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Gerken, seconded by Commissioner Anlian to adjourn.

On roll call, Commissioners Anlian, Gerken, Mirza and Mayor MacNeill voted "YEA".

Absent: Commissioner Portorreal

Mayor MacNeill adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

/s/ John H. Anlian
Commissioner

/s/ William G. Gerken
Commissioner

Absent
Commissioner Mirza

/s/Tara O'Grady
Village Clerk
Approved on March 20, 2025

Abstain
Commissioner Portorreal

/s/ Adam MacNeill
Mayor