

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Regular Meeting
MINUTES
January 22, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Welsh called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Far Hills Municipal Building and read the open public meetings statement in accordance with the law.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilman Joseph Carty, Councilwoman Mary Chimenti, Councilman Peter J. Cocoziello, Jr., Council President David P. Karner, Councilman Rick Rinzler, Councilman Charles P. Schwester, Mayor Kevin P. Welsh

Absent, as Excused:

Absent:

Also Present: Borough Clerk Dorothy S. Hicks, Borough Attorney Albert Cruz, Chief of Police Michael DeCarolis

Approximately 30 members of the public were in attendance.

Mayor Welsh welcomed everyone to the first Community Check-in meeting and encouraged residents to express their comments and provide feedback on any matter concerning the Borough of Far Hills.

REPORTS

Councilman Carty – Police

Councilman Carty reported the Police Committee met this evening and PBA contract negotiations were progressing.

Councilwoman Chimenti – Health & Sanitation

No report.

Councilman Cocoziello - Fire, Water, Light, Buildings & Grounds

Councilman Cocoziello stated that a presentation on the Borough's Infrastructure and Capital Improvements Plan was planned for later this evening.

Council President Karner – Laws & Ordinances

Council President Karner reported the Municipal Court receipts for December 2023 totaled \$4,804.22 with the municipal portion being \$2,592.68.

He informed the Borough Council of a potential tour of the Matheny school facility in Peapack & Gladstone in April/May.

Councilman Rinzler – Finance & Insurance

Councilman Rinzler reported he attended the monthly meeting of the Suburban Joint Insurance Fund on January 11, 2024. He reviewed November 2023 Loss Time Accident report of which Far Hills had zero incidents. He also apprised the Borough Council of the importance of an active cyber security

program due to an increase in cybercrime and relayed a cyber incident involving fraudulent invoices which resulted in nearly \$6,000,000.00 in damages.

Councilman Schwester – Roads

Councilman Schwester reported that as a precautionary measure the Borough roadways were salted in anticipation of the snowstorm which ultimately did not yield the forecasted amount of snowfall. He stated that he was made aware of potholes on Campbell and Lake roads which were appropriately addressed by the Bedminster DPW. Lastly, he informed the Borough Council that he videotaped the current condition of the roadways, where the installation of the watermain for the Kimbolton development was being constructed, to ensure repairs at the conclusion of the project are appropriate.

Chief DeCarolis

Chief DeCarolis reported that the newly appointed police officer, Walter Sliwa, III was doing a great job and the police department was running efficiently.

Mayor Welsh

Mayor Welsh presented a brief status update regarding the concerns raised about the retaining wall and the building heights at the Kimbolton/Pulte development. On January 18, 2024, the Borough's Zoning Officer issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to Pulte Homes of NJ, LLP regarding the construction at the Kimbolton/Pulte development. The purpose of the NOV is to bring the developer into compliance with the requirements of the Planning Board and the Borough. Mayor Welsh stated that due to the sensitive nature of this issue, at this time discussions are limited to Executive Session. Neither the Borough Council, Borough Clerk nor I can disclose any further information due to the potential for litigation in this matter. On behalf of the Borough Council, we appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we are moving forward and taking the appropriate actions.

REGULAR AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

12/26/2023 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content and release.

12/26/2023 – Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content only.

1/2/2024 – Reorganization Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content and release.

1/2/2024 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Rinzler was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content and release.

1/11/2024 – Special Meeting Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content and release.

1/11/2024 – Executive Session Minutes

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried that these minutes be approved for content only.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 24-052 – Temporary Capital Budget - Development of Affordable Housing

Mayor Welsh presented a brief overview of capital budget appropriation for the 2024 affordable housing allocation as detailed in the agreement with Raritan Valley Development Corporation for the properties at 8, 10 and 46 Peapack Road and 3 DeMun Place. He noted that the Borough Council had retained the February 2023 payment of \$75,000.00 until there was substantial advancement in the construction of the affordable housing units. The construction was anticipated to be completed in June/July 2024.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti that Resolution 24-052 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, Coccoziello, Karner, Rinzler, Schwester

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

ORDINANCES - INTRODUCTION

ORDINANCE 2024-01 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS APPROPRIATING \$150,000.00 FROM THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND TO THE BOROUGH'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti that Ordinance 2024-01 be introduced.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, Coccoziello, Karner, Rinzler, Schwester

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

The items listed within the consent agenda portion of the meeting have been referred to the Borough Council for reading and study; a copy placed on the table in the meeting room and is considered routine and will be enacted with one motion the Borough Council with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is required, the item may be removed from the agenda by Borough Council action and placed on the regular agenda under new business.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 24-053 – Authorizing Change Order – NJDOT Local Aid
Pennbrook Road – Section 1
2. Resolution 24-054 – Payment of Bill List

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Rinzler that Resolutions 24-053 and 24-054 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, Coccoziello, Karner, Rinzler, Schwester

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION

Five Year Capital Improvement Plan

Mayor Welsh and Councilman Coccoziello presented the Five-Year Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Plan which included the following topics: Fairgrounds Riverbank – Improvements and Stabilization; Enhancing Walkability and Safety; Sustainable and Resilient Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement; Municipal Building and Infrastructure Updates; Road Improvements; Fairgrounds and Park Improvements and Village Streetscape and Building Improvements. A copy of the presentation has been appended to the minutes.

Community Check In

Mayor Welsh opened this portion of the meeting to the public.

Cindy Campbell, Peapack Road, Far Hills inquired about the maintenance of the older oak trees and noted the time required for a tree to reach maturity and asked if a subcommittee could be considered for future tree planting projects.

Mayor Welsh encouraged residents to email him if interested in joining a subcommittee.

Mike Collins, Schley Road, Far Hills stated that the installation of additional sidewalks along Peapack Road would be welcomed in the Borough. He also inquired about the potential to decrease the speed limit on Peapack Road.

Mayor Welsh responded the Borough Council had previously reached out to the County regarding reducing the speed limit on Peapack Road, however, due to their calculations the current speed was justified; however, the Far Hills Police Department remains active in their enforcement detail. Mayor Welsh added that the Borough received a grant from the NJDOT for the installation of two solar powered pedestrian crosswalk signs that would be installed this spring.

Councilman Coccoziello responded that traffic calming measures, like those planned for the new bridge on Route 202 over the Raritan River, are effective in reducing the speed of traffic. He also referenced the road map in the presentation noting that the Borough only has jurisdiction over the municipal roadways.

Cindy Decorges, Railroad Avenue, Far Hills expressed her appreciation for the recent community events including the holiday tree and movie nights. She inquired if there were plans for new basketball hoops at the fairgrounds and if a bike lane could be installed on Peapack Road linking Far Hills to the Natirar Park. Lastly, she commented upon the amount of salt that has been utilized on the roadways during snowstorms.

Mayor Welsh responded that there was an initiative in Somerset County to connect parks throughout the county.

Councilman Schwester commented regarding the salt on the roads, that the forecast indicated considerably more snow than what had actually occurred.

Steve Newman, Lake Road, Far Hills inquired as to the plans for the resurfacing of Route 202 from Far Hills to Bernardsville.

Bill Vierbuchen, Schley Road, Far Hills inquired as to how the road improvements in the Borough are prioritized and noted the need for improvements to Schley Road.

Mayor Welsh responded by providing an overview of the process for a road improvements project which can take approximately two years to complete as time is required for the grant application, preparation of the engineering design and bid specifications, award of the contract and then finally construction. He also informed the public that the Borough must allocate the capital funds upfront and then are reimbursed through the grant which can fiscally limit the number of projects that can be undertaken at one time.

Mike Watson, Peapack Road, Far Hills commented upon the varying speed limits on Peapack Road from Peapack & Gladstone towards Far Hills.

Mayor Welsh reiterated that the roadway is under the jurisdiction of Somerset County.

Mark Vogel, Spring Street, Far Hills inquired about the pedestrian safety signage planned for Peapack Road.

Mayor Welsh responded the solar powered pedestrian crosswalk signs would be installed at the intersection of Peapack Road and Railroad Avenue and Dumont Road. Additional speed limit signage is planned to be installed throughout the Village area this spring.

Cindy Campbell, Peapack Road, Far Hills asked about the frequency of the blinking lights for these pedestrian crosswalk signs.

Mayor Welsh responded that the lights are activated when a pedestrian pushes the button prior to crossing the road and suggested residents review the signs that were installed on Holland Avenue in Peapack & Gladstone.

Leanne Gabinelli, Peapack Road, Far Hills stated it was such a pleasure being a member of the Recreation Committee and thanked Mayor Welsh and Council President Karner for their efforts. She also supported enhancing police enforcement for traffic safety in addition to the installation of the pedestrian safety signs.

Chief DeCarolis responded that a daily police enforcement detail was normally scheduled from 7:00 am to 9:00 am along Peapack Road.

Councilman Schwester inquired if a speed camera to automatically issue tickets could be installed on Peapack Road.

Chief DeCarolis responded that the use of a speed cameras was currently prohibited.

Gerry Colasurdo, Pennbrook Road, Far Hills commented favorably upon the improvements to the drainage system recently completed on Pennbrook Road but emphasized the need for ongoing maintenance of the storm inlets and roadways. He also inquired about funding additional improvement projects due to the potential increase in tax revenue from the Kimbolton/Pulte development.

Councilman Coccoziello responded by providing a brief overview of the more stringent stormwater regulations now being required of many municipalities, including Far Hills which included ongoing maintenance of the storm drain inlets. Further details of these regulations can be found on the Stormwater Management page on the Borough website.

Mayor Welsh responded at this time the Borough was being fiscally responsible and taking a conservative approach regarding any potential increase in tax revenue from this development.

Councilwoman Chimenti encouraged residents to contact the Borough regarding any clogged storm inlets, potholes, or other areas in need of attention throughout the Borough.

Betty Udelsman, Meadowbrook Club Way, Far Hills inquired if traffic markings could be painted on Peapack Road to alert drivers of the upcoming crosswalks.

Mayor Welsh responded that Peapack Road was under the jurisdiction of Somerset County but stated that the pedestrian signs planned to be installed at the two crosswalks should assist residents with crossing this roadway.

John Mahoney, Fox Hunt Court, Far Hills inquired about the Notice of Violation (NOV) regarding the Kimbolton/Pulte development.

Mr. Cruz provided a brief overview of the four components of the NOV which was issued to Pulte Homes of NJ by the Borough's Zoning Officer on January 18, 2024. There is a thirty (30) day deadline for Pulte to respond to the NOV.

Ms. Hicks stated an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request could be submitted to obtain a copy of the NOV.

Tom Rochat, Old Minebrook Road, Far Hills inquired about the status of the professional services contract with the Borough Planner, Banisch Associates which was only authorized through January 31, 2024. He urged the Borough Council to consider authorizing the contract through December 31, 2024 as it would not be fiscally responsible to appoint a new Borough Planner at this time as the Planning Board was currently in the process of the reexamination of the Master Plan.

There were no further comments from the public.

Mayor Welsh closed this portion of the meeting for public comment.

Affordable Housing Legislation – NJ Assembly Bill No. 4

Mr. Cruz provided a brief update regarding the status of NJ Assembly Bill No. 4. He also reviewed the opportunity for the Borough to join the statewide consortium led by the Borough's Special Counsel on Affordable Housing, Jeffrey Surenian to challenge this legislation which includes a change in the methodology in determining each municipality's affordable housing obligation in the Fourth Round which begins in July 2025. Mr. Cruz advised that while there was currently \$40,000.00 remaining in the consortium trust fund, additional funding may be required in the future which Mr. Cruz estimated to be \$5,000.00.

A brief discussion ensued resulting in a general consensus to authorize the use of the current funding to challenge this proposed legislation and for the Borough to join the statewide consortium.

PUBLIC COMMENT – *The Mayor and Council welcome comments from any member of the public. To help facilitate an orderly meeting and to permit the opportunity for anyone who wishes to be heard, speakers shall limit their comments to 5 minutes.*

Mayor Welsh opened the meeting for public comment.

Denise Hawkins, Dumont Road, Far Hills commended the Mayor and Council for their efforts in keeping Far Hills a lovely country setting and wonderful place to live.

There were no further comments from the public.

Mayor Welsh closed the meeting for public comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Welsh read Resolution 24-055 into the record.

Resolution 24-055 – Executive Session

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231 P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Far Hills, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of an action upon the specified subject matter.
2. The general nature of the subject matters to be discussed are as follows:
 - Attorney Client Privilege – Potential Litigation – Kimbolton Development
3. It is anticipated that the minutes on the subject matter of the closed session will be made public upon conclusion, dismissal, or settlement of litigation; or final resolution of agreements on personnel matters; and in any event, when appropriate pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-7 and 4-13.

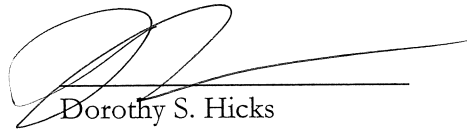
4. The Council will come back into open session and may take further action.
5. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Carty and unanimously carried to approve Resolution 24-055.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Chimenti was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dorothy S. Hicks', written over a horizontal line.

Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk

APPROVED – 2/12/2024



BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS New Jersey

5 Year Infrastructure and Borough Capital Improvement Plan

The 5-year infrastructure and borough capital improvement plan encompasses a range of vital enhancements and developments aimed at enhancing our community's functionality, safety, and beauty. The plan includes various projects such as riverbank stabilization, walkability improvements, municipal building infrastructure updates, road improvements, fairgrounds enhancements, allocation of funds, village streetscape and building improvements

Objectives

1. Enhance Public Infrastructure

1. Commit to ongoing maintenance and upgrade of roads, bridges, sidewalks, signs and open space

2. Improve Community Facilities

- Invest in the renovation and enhancement of public spaces like the Fairgrounds and municipal building
- Enhance accessibility and pedestrian safety in all public facilities

3. Promote Sustainable Water and Sewer infrastructure

- Integrate green technologies and practices in all new and existing infrastructure projects.
- Support initiatives for renewable energy sources and energy-efficient public buildings.

4. Ensure Public Safety and Health

- Upgrade emergency services facilities and equipment.
- Implement health and safety improvements in public spaces, considering current health guidelines.

5. Foster Economic Stability

- Support small businesses and community feel
- Utilization of federal and state grants
- Treasury management

6. Public feedback and Q&A

Fairgrounds Riverbank Improvements and Stabilization

1

Project Initiation

Collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers and NJDEP to initiate the stabilization and enhancement of the north branch of the Raritan riverbank and slow erosion

2

Environmental Enhancement

Focusing on environmental functionality and beauty, aiming to create a more aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound riverbank.

3

Community Impact

Highlighting the positive impact on local communities and the anticipated benefits of the improved riverbank for the community

Enhancing Walkability and Safety

Crosswalk Improvements

Ongoing efforts to enhance pedestrian safety through improved crosswalks and signage. Funds allocated for work to commence in 2024 through a grant from NJDEP Pedestrian Safety Support and enhancements of accessibility at crosswalks

Sidewalk Extension

Potential extension of sidewalks on Far Hills Ave, creating better accessibility and improving bike connections.

Streetscape Upgrades

Plans for signage and streetscape improvements, contributing to the overall charm and functionality of the villiage.

Sustainable and Resilient Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement

NJDEP changes from Tier B to Tier A - requirements

Perform catch basin and inlets analysis and inspection

Drainage upgrades as road infrastructure investment and capital projects progress

NJ American Water line replacement along route 202

Sanitary system upgrades

Municipal Building and Infrastructure Updates

1

HVAC System

Upgrading the meeting room's HVAC system for improved air conditioning efficiency and comfort.

2

Parking Lot Maintenance

Seal coating for the parking lot and stripping dedicated efforts for fairgrounds repainting and upkeep.

3

Fairgrounds

Dedicated efforts for fairgrounds repainting and upkeep.

4

Overall Infrastructure

General maintenance, repairs, and preservation of the municipal building's infrastructure. Roof replacement and bathroom upgrades.

Roads

Figure 3



Roads Improvements

(Over \$1m in Approved Grants)

1

Dumont Road and Demun Place with drainage
and wheelchair accessible (2024 Grant)

Status: Awarded Spring 2024

2

Upper Section Pennbrook Road (2024 grant)

Status: Going out to bid in 2024

3

Lake Road (2025 grant)

Status: Commencing road work 2025-2026

4

Far Hills Ave/Schley (2026-2029, with curbing)

Hidden Valley and Spring Hallow

Status: Conceptual Evaluation

Fairgrounds and Park Improvements

Potential Facilities

Discuss plans for baseball fields, playgrounds, walking paths, basketball courts, and signage and fencing installations and building maintenance

Community events and engagement - movie night tree lighting, VNA

\$180,000 donation to the Malcolm Belcher Fair Grounds and Village Improvements
utilization of funds and plans

Village Streetscape and Building Improvements

Create Opportunities to enhance and preserve the historic charm and beauty of or Village

Encourage building owners to enhance building facades, signage, lighting, street scapes, and landscaping for a cohesive and functional streetscape.

Financial

Take every opportunity to leverage grants and efficiencies to perform improvements efficiently

Funding capital improvement accounts to perform work

Treasury Management

Feedback and Questions