

**BOROUGH OF KEYPORT
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025, 7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER: 7:01 PM

SUNSHINE LAW NOTICE: Read by Borough Clerk

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council, Borough of Keyport, held on the above date in Borough Hall Council Chambers, Keyport, NJ, pursuant to the Annual Notice on file with the Borough Clerk forwarded to the Asbury Park Press, and Newark Star Ledger and posted on the Bulletin Board in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L.1975, c.231.

ROLL CALL: Members Present: Councilmember Brady, Councilmember Gross, Councilmember McNamara, Councilmember Merla, Councilmember Reilly, Council President Vecchio, Mayor Araneo;

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/MOMENT OF SILENCE

ADMINISTER OATH OF OFFICE

Mayor Araneo administered the Oath of Office to Police Officer Ryan Buchanan

PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Araneo presented outgoing Councilmember Cathleen Reilly and Council President Melissa Vecchio with plaques thanking them for their commitment to serving the community.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Councilmember is lead or co-lead liaison of Committees in bold)

Councilmember Brady: Environmental, Recreation/Senior Center, Municipal Alliance, Fire/First Aid/OEM, Green Team

Environmental

- No meeting since the November update. Next meeting is January 26th at 8PM

Recreation

- Holiday House Decorating Contest is ongoing. Residents have until Friday to add their house to the list.
- Whoville Holiday Kids Craft event held. Thank you to the Keyport Library, Municipal Alliance, and the Senior Center for joining with craft tables.
- Events list for 2026 Recreation events will be shared early in 2026.
- Next meeting Monday, January 5th at 7PM

Municipal Alliance

- Meeting held last night and discussed events for 2026, including bringing back the Senior Prom, a kite event at the waterfront, participating in Red Raider Night, and the International Overdose Awareness vigil.
- Next meeting is scheduled for January 19th

Councilmember Gross: KBBC, Police, Recycling, Health/Registrar/Construction/Fire Bureau/Code Enforcement/Zoning

KBBC

- Tree lighting event was a success.
- Next meeting tomorrow at Borough Hall.

Police

- Read Calls for Service Report noting total calls at year-end 16,142.

Health/Registrar/Construction/Fire Bureau/Code Enforcement/Zoning

- Read Health Office Report
- Nothing to report for Construction Office.
- Wished all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilmember McNamara: Public Works/Water-Sewer, Green Team, Cannabis, NPP, Finance/Grants, Recreation/Senior Center

Public Works

- Water main and service line repairs made on Green Grove and First Street
- Final leaf and branch collection for Zones 1 and 2 began last week. Zones 3 and 4 begin tomorrow. No new collections until the Spring. Continue to drop at Recycling Yard on Saturdays between 9AM-Noon.
- Public Works responded to winter storm over the weekend and snow removal operations are ongoing.
- Residents reminded not to place snow in roadways.
- Residents can contact DPW garage with questions or concerns, or use Report a Concern on the website.

Green Team

- Participated in webinar about revamping Sustainable Jersey. Some certification programs paused.

Cannabis

- Call scheduled for tomorrow with Blaze located by Stop N Shop.

Councilmember Merla: Planning Board, Redevelopment, Public Works/Water-Sewer, Harbor Commission

- Thanked Mayor for time spent working without a Borough Administrator

Planning Board

- No meeting until end of February.
- Professional appointments will be made in January

Redevelopment

- Nothing to report

KBBC

- Meeting tomorrow night.

Public Works/Water-Sewer

- Thanked DPW Superintend and crew for the storm response

Councilmember Merla asked Chief Ferm for an update on the graffiti issue on Green Grove. Chief Ferm said its an active investigation. He asked the Chief about vehicle parking on streets during snow storm.

Councilmember Merla said he met with residents of Osborn and Division Streets about parking issues, noting those residents are submitting a petition requesting the council's help. He thanked Councilmembers Reilly and Vecchio for their service and wished all a Merry Christmas.

Councilmember Reilly: Finance/Grants, Fire/First Aid/OEM, Police, Municipal Alliance, Cannabis

Councilmember Reilly thanked residents for the opportunity to serve the Borough over the past three years and expressed appreciation to the Mayor. She shared that it has been a pleasure working with the Mayor and recognized the many roles and responsibilities she takes on.

While noting that the job was not always easy, she expressed gratitude for the chance to get to know the Borough's employees and professionals who regularly help answer questions and support the community.

Councilmember Reilly highlighted the dedication of the police department, the volunteer first aid, fire department, and municipal staff who keep the Borough running, adding that the town is fortunate to have such committed people and encouraging residents to appreciate their work.

Council President Vecchio: Harbor Commission, NPP, Finance/Grants, Redevelopment

Council President Vecchio thanked voters for the opportunity to serve on the council and stated that all decisions made during her tenure were guided by what she believed was in the best interest of all Keyport residents. She shared that her daughter inspired her to become more involved in the community and expressed pride in serving the Borough.

She noted that council service requires significant time and effort beyond regular meetings, including committee work, research, and responding to community concerns, and explained that the time commitment, particularly time away from family, was the reason she chose not to run for reelection.

She thanked the mayor for her trust and the opportunity to serve as Council President and to step in for the Mayor when needed. She also expressed appreciation to Borough staff, professionals, volunteers, and fellow council members for their support and collaboration, recognizing the contributions of volunteers such as fire, first aid, and committee members.

Council President Vecchio acknowledged challenges faced during her tenure, including criticism and misinformation on social media, and emphasized the importance of respectful discourse and understanding the legal limits around certain municipal matters. In closing, she thanked her family and friends for their support and expressed pride in her time serving the community and in demonstrating the importance of civic involvement and giving back.

Mayor Araneo: Library, Cultural/Civic, Mayors Wellness Campaign, Planning Board, KBBC, Green Team

Mayor Araneo thanked Councilmember Reilly and Council President Vecchio again for doing their best for the Borough.

Mayor Araneo stated she had no committee reports, noting she has been involved in many ongoing Borough matters while serving in an acting administrative role. She addressed concerns from residents regarding the Second Street project and acknowledged that complaints about the project have been raised. Mayor Araneo explained that the project is a significant undertaking. She emphasized that the council chose to complete the full scope of improvements and noted that the engineers were invited to provide a presentation to update the council and the public on the project's progress.

Matt Zwingraf, CME – provided an update on the Second Street project. Mr. Zwingraf reported that utility work and a portion of the curb and sidewalk installation have been completed. Due to seasonal weather conditions, construction has been temporarily paused for the winter. The Borough will coordinate with the contractor on a timeline to resume work, likely in early spring, and the contractor will address any maintenance issues that arise in the meantime.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Meeting was opened to the public for comments on **agenda items only**.

Comments are limited to no more than five minutes per person.

Opened: 7:29PM MM: Vecchio 2ND: Merla

Jeffrey Spangler, Second Street - asked questions regarding resolutions related to legal service payment authorizations, the purchase of equipment for the Water and Sewer Department, and a proposed engineering contract to address a water main issue near West Front Street and Main Street. Discussion also included potential future monitoring of water loss from main breaks.

Elmer J. Graham, Jr., St. Peters Place - asked questions regarding Resolution 2025-310 related to a grant agreement with Monmouth County for the Senior Center and Resolution 2025-313 regarding the purchase of body-worn cameras and a backup system for the police department. Explanations were provided regarding both resolutions.

Michael Lane, First Street – asked questions regarding Resolution 2025-316 related to a shared services agreement with Freehold for information technology support and inquired about the cost increase from the previous year. Mr. Lane asked about a contract with CME Engineering, including the amount spent under the contract and the use of professional service agreements without formal bidding. Explanations were provided regarding the nature of shared services agreements and the legality of awarding professional service contracts without bidding.

Al Litwak, Walnut Street and Harbor Commission member – asked council to refer any questions relating to the Keyport Harbor Transient Mooring & Anchoring Policy and Procedures listed on the agenda under New Business back to the Harbor Commission.

Closed: 7:45 PM MM: Merla 2ND: Reilly

Councilmember McNamara – questioned a zoning officer charge on the payment of bills, anticipated cost and timing of work at W. Front and Main, and requested the employment handbook updates be tabled. She asked that the fire department resolution include membership subject to background check.

Mayor Araneo stated she wanted to enter the following email into the record:

“Dear Laurie, I want to thank you for providing assistance while Donna Purcell was out. Your help ensured that our operations continued smoothly. You will be paid for the deputy registrar services until 10/22/2025. As you prepare to move on from the Borough, please know that we appreciate your time and effort. On behalf of everyone at the Borough, I wish you the best in your future endeavors. May your next chapter bring you fulfillment. Warm Regards, Kimberly Humphrey.”

Mayor Araneo stated this was sent to Laurie Graham to her personal email, Donna Purcell, Mayor Araneo, Denise Nellis, Barbara Hassmiller, and Laura Amada. She wanted to state on record that she was advised her services were no longer needed.

CONSENT AGENDA

- R2025-296 Authorizing Appointment of a Part-Time Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Borough of Keyport (*Tabled November 25, 2025*)
- R2025-301 Payment of Bills Listed on the November 25, 2025 Bills List
- R2025-302 Payment of Bills Listed on the December 12, 2025 Bills List
- R2025-303 Payment of Bills Listed on the December 16, 2025 Bills List
- R2025-304 Permitting the Transfer of Excess Appropriations Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:4-58
- R2025-305 Requesting Approval of Items of Revenue and Appropriation – N.J.S.A. 40A4-87
HTS Distracted Driving Grant
- R2025-306 Amending Resolution 2025-3 Appointing Borough Attorney for the Year 2025
- R2025-307 Amending Resolution 2025-7 Appointing Employment Counsel for the Year 2025
- R2025-308 Amending Resolution 2025-10 Appointing Special/Conflict Counsel for the Year 2025
- R2025-309 Authorizing Refund of Property Tax Overpayment
- R2025-310 Authorizing Execution of 2026 Grant Agreement Number 13-067 with Monmouth County for the Provision of Social Services by the Keyport Senior Center to Senior Citizens
- R2025-311 Authorizing a Contract for the Purchase and Install of One (1) Ford F450 Mason Dump Truck Body for the Water and Sewer Department through the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ)
- R2025-312 Authorizing a Contract for the Purchase of One (1) Ford F150 Truck for the Water and Sewer Department through the Bergen County Cooperative Pricing System
- R2025-313 Awarding a Contract through State Contract 23-Fleet-33791 for Body Worn Cameras and Cloud Based Backup to Motorola Solutions
- R2025-314 Authorizing the Award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract for Professional Engineering Services Associated with the Repair and Replacement of Water and Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure
- R2025-315 Authorizing Borough of Keyport to Enter into an Agreement with the Monmouth County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals for Animal Control Services
- R2025-316 Authorizing the Borough of Keyport to Enter into Shared Services Agreement with the Township of Freehold for the Provision of Information Technology Services
- R2025-317 Resolution to Adopt Procedures for Administration and Inspection of Federal Aid Highway Projects
- R2025-318 Approving Renewal of the 2025 Employee Handbook and the Policies and Procedures for the Borough of Keyport
- R2025-319 Approving New Jersey State Firemen’s Association Application for Membership

Motion to Table R2025-318 moved by Reilly, carried by Brady.

Roll Call: Ayes: Brady, Gross, McNamara, Merla, Reilly, Vecchio
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent:

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS

Motion to approve resolutions **R2025-296, R2025-301 through R2025-317, and R2025-319** on the Consent Agenda

MM: Reilly 2nd: Merla
Roll Call: Ayes: Brady, Gross, McNamara, Merla, Reilly, Vecchio
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent:

PUBLIC HEARING/ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE

1. Ordinance – Amending Certain Parking Restrictions

The Clerk read the Ordinance by Title: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF KEYPORT, IN THE COUNTY OF MONMOUTH, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING CERTAIN PARKING RESTRICTIONS IN BOROUGH CODE CHAPTER 7A (TRAFFIC SCHEDULES) AND CHAPTER 8 (PARKNG LOTS AND HANDICAPPED PARKING)**

1a. Motion to Open Public Hearing at 7:54 PM MM: Vecchio 2nd: Brady

Elmer J. Graham, Jr., St. Peters Place – asked why this ordinance has to be amended. Mayor Araneo explained the changes.

Jack Straub, Main Street – thanked governing body for putting this through. Most restaurants have their own parking so he would argue for an hour to 90 minutes, but two hours is a step in the right direction. He hopes we can continue to look at the Parking Study that Andrew Kelsey completed and make improvements.

Mike Lane, First Street – asked where the overflow parking will go. He guesses it will overflow to Broad Street and First Street. He said this ordinance will impact the residential areas. Very concerned there is no question this will impact First Street, Main Street and Beers Street. Come up with a plan other than eliminating parking. You need to include where people can park.

1b. Motion to Close Public Hearing 8:00 PM MM: Merla 2nd: Reilly

Councilmember McNamara asked if any thought was given to any of the inconsistencies with the other parking lots. Every parking lot is different as to time limitations.

Discussion ensued regarding inconsistent time-limited parking in various lots. Suggestion was made that all inconsistencies be addressed and be included in the ordinance. Discussed tabling the ordinance.

1c. Motion to Table the adoption of this Ordinance MM: McNamara 2nd: Brady

Roll Call: Ayes: Brady, Gross, McNamara, Merla, Reilly, Vecchio
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent:

1d. Motion authorizing the Clerk to publish the Ordinance as adopted was not moved as the ordinance was Tabled.

REPORTS

1. Municipal Clerk’s Report for November 2025
2. Tax/Water/Sewer Collector’s Report for November 2025
3. Board of Health Treasurer’s Report for November 2025
4. Building Department Report for November 2025
5. Municipal Court Report for November 2025

MM: Reilly 2nd: Brady Ayes: All Nays:

NEW BUSINESS

Keyport Harbor Transient Mooring & Anchoring Policy and Procedures

Al Litwak of the Harbor Commission discussed the need for a formal policy to manage transient boats in the harbor. The discussion was prompted by a recent incident in which an uninsured boat washed ashore and has remained there for nearly two months. The Department of Public Works obtained an estimate for the cost for removal at approximately \$45,000, and the owner does not have the financial means to cover it, leaving the Borough potentially responsible.

Mr. Litwak emphasized that the purpose of the proposed policy is to prevent similar situations in the future by ensuring better oversight of transient vessels. Currently, the harbor operates reactively with no system to verify whether visiting boats carry insurance. Without such safeguards, boat owners could abandon vessels, creating financial and environmental burdens for the Borough.

The proposal includes establishing a harbor master role to oversee transient boat activity. Mr. Litwak noted that most harbors have a harbor master and estimated the role would require only about six hours of work per year due to the relatively low number of transient boats in Keyport harbor. Potential options for filling the role include the police department, marina operators, the yacht club, or volunteers. The Harbor Commission seeks authorization to explore these options and return with recommendations.

The goal of the policy is to allow transient boaters to visit and contribute to the local economy, such as patronizing restaurants, shops, and facilities, while ensuring they do so responsibly and without imposing costs on the Borough.

The Mayor expressed support for the proposal and agreed that a harbor master position would be beneficial. Council Member McNamara asked whether practices in other Bayshore communities had been reviewed. Mr. Litwak noted experience with harbors such as Oyster Bay, Long Island and Atlantic Highlands and mentioned that our yacht club moorings require boats to carry at least \$100,000 in insurance.

Council President Vecchio described the proposal as a strong starting point and stated that improved harbor management would benefit the community. The Mayor indicated that the proposal will be reviewed further.

Councilmember Merla requested an update from Borough Engineer Trevor Taylor regarding sewer concerns raised at a prior council meeting by Collette Kennedy of Atlantic Street. Mr. Taylor reported that a 2021 inspection found the sewer main in poor condition and recommended future replacement. He explained that basement fixtures located below the sewer level may experience backups, which could potentially be mitigated by installing check valves in certain laterals, depending on the situation.

He also noted that sewer flow from the north side of town travels across Route 36 and down Atlantic Street to a BRSA metering chamber near the recycling center. A possible system modification could redirect the flow more directly, and he suggested evaluating that option. Mr. Taylor will compile his findings and recommendations for the Borough's review and noted the need to incorporate sewer improvements into a broader sanitary sewer master plan.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Meeting was opened to the public for comments.

Comments are limited to no more than five minutes per person.

Opened: 8:17 PM MM: Merla 2ND: Vecchio

Sandy Marion, Perry Street - expressed appreciation for the service of Council President Vecchio and Councilmember Reilly. She also raised a concern about an interaction she observed involving a councilmember and the Police Chief when her husband entered the meeting. The Borough Attorney advised that no response was required during public comment.

David and Drew, Osborn Street - raised concerns about limited parking on Osborn Street and Division Street near the school, particularly during school hours when faculty parking fills the nearby First Aid parking lot and overflows into the neighborhood. They circulated a petition and said they have more than 50% resident support for resident-only parking in the area.

Police Chief Ferm noted that restricting parking could shift overflow into other neighborhoods. Chief Ferm suggested an alternative parking area at the Jackson Street ballfield and Mayor Araneo suggested the school be included in discussions to explore solutions. The residents emphasized safety concerns, blocked driveways, and difficulties accommodating deliveries due to limited parking. One resident suggested utilizing a shuttle.

The Mayor asked the Chief to review the issue and consider meeting with school representatives to discuss possible solutions.

Jeffrey Spangler, Second Street - requested an update on delays with the Second Street project. The Borough Engineer stated the contractor is currently off the job due to weather conditions that prevent paving and concrete work. They will work with the contractor to develop a revised completion

schedule and review the causes of the delay. Mr. Taylor explained they administer the project, but the means and methods are up to the contractor.

George Walling, Second Street - raised concerns about the quality of work on the Second Street project, including safety issues and potential problems with sewer laterals. He referenced a letter from P&A claiming instructions from CME or the Borough. Councilman Merla asked for clarification on the laterals, and Mayor Araneo noted that she pulled two P&A bills totaling nearly \$886,000. Discussion ensued about payments and the total contract amount. Mr. Walling mentioned there are already cracks in the concrete.

Elmer J. Graham Jr., St. Peters Place – recommends We Care Adult Daycare. He mentioned American Legion Raritan Post 23 meets first Thursday of every month. All honorably discharged veterans are welcome. Mr. Graham urged civility and respect in 2026.

Michael Lane, First Street – noted that the Deputy Ventures Mystic developer’s agreement lacks reference to the recently approved subdivision, which requires delineation of flood risk in terms of frequency and height. He emphasized the need for clear payment and work terms. Sea level rise concerns were also raised. Mr. Lane continued to speak about flooding, providing handouts to council.

John Merla, Broad Street – referenced previous appointment of harbor masters by ordinance adopted in 1986. Thanked councilmembers Vecchio and Reilly for their service. Commented regarding Senior Freeze and property revaluation. Mentioned six-month waiting list for Meals on Wheels and urged council to look into this.

Closed: 9:07 PM MM: Merla 2ND: Gross

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R2025-320 - Authorizing a Meeting Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b for the purpose of discussing matters subject to attorney-client privilege related to digital signs and matters related to Fair Share Housing mediation.

MM: Brady 2nd: Reilly Ayes: All Nays:

Council reconvened to Open Session at 9:35 PM, moved by Reilly and carried by Vecchio. The following resolution was considered and adopted.

RESOLUTION

R2025-321 Authorizing the Execution of a Mediation Agreement with Fair Share Housing Center in Connection with the Borough’s Fourth Round Affordable Housing Obligation

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-321

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MEDIATION AGREEMENT
WITH FAIR SHARE HOUSING CENTER IN CONNECTION WITH THE BOROUGH’S
FOURTH ROUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING OBLIGATIONS**

WHEREAS, the Borough of Keyport (“Borough”) filed a Resolution of Participation in the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program (“Program”) and a Declaratory Judgment Action pursuant to the Fair Housing Act on January 22, 2025; and

WHEREAS, on April 1, 2025, the Court entered an order establishing the Borough’s Fourth Round affordable housing obligations and directing the Borough to file its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (“HEFSP”) by June 30, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Borough filed its HEFSP on June 18, 2025; and

WHEREAS, on August 30, 2025, Fair Share Housing Center (“FSHC”) filed a formal challenge to the Borough’s HEFSP pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-304.1(f)(2)(b); and

WHEREAS, the Borough and FSHC have participated in mediation sessions before the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program to address the issues raised in the challenge and negotiate a resolution; and

WHEREAS, these mediation efforts have resulted in a proposed Mediation (**Exhibit A**) Agreement that resolves the issues raised by FSHC and establishes a path toward compliance certification for the Borough in the Fourth Round; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Borough Council find that entering into the Mediation Agreement is in the best interests of the Borough, will facilitate compliance with the Fair Housing Act, and will allow the Program and the Mount Laurel judge to review the HEFSP and implementing ordinances for compliance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Keyport, County of Monmouth, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The Mayor and Borough Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute, on behalf of the Borough, the Mediation Agreement between the Borough of Keyport and Fair Share Housing Center, subject to de minimis changes from counsel.
2. The Borough’s Affordable Housing Counsel is hereby authorized to take any and all steps necessary to effectuate the Mediation Agreement, including preparing and submitting filings, participating in any additional proceedings before the Program, coordinating with the Borough’s professionals, and implementing all requirements contained in the Agreement.
3. The Borough Attorney, Affordable Housing Counsel, Borough Planner, Borough Administrator, and all other appropriate Borough officials are authorized and directed to take any additional actions necessary to implement the terms of the Mediation Agreement and to advance the Borough’s efforts toward obtaining compliance certification.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption according to law.

MM: Brady 2nd: McNamara
Roll Call: Ayes: Brady, Gross, McNamara, Merla, Reilly, Vecchio
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent:

ADJOURNMENT
Motion to Adjourn: 9:39 PM MM: Reilly 2nd: Vecchio