BOROUGH OF KEYPORT
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 7:12 PM

SUNSHINE LAW NOTICE: Read by Municipal 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 Gross, Councilmember McNamara, Councilmember Merla, Councilmember Reilly, Council President Vecchio, Mayor Araneo
Councilmember Brady was absent

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/MOMENT OF SILENCE
Mayor Araneo requested a moment of silence for the recent passing of long-time Keyport resident Doug Sutphin, mail carrier and father-in-law of former Councilman Ron Peperoni, and for American patriot Charlie Kirk.

PROCLAMATION
Mayor Araneo read the Hunger Awareness Month Proclamation

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

Councilmember Brady was absent – report by Councilmember McNamara

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

- Read Construction Department monthly report
- Read Police Calls for Service report
- Read Registrar monthly report

KBBC
- KBBC meeting is tomorrow the 17th; Italian Festival was a great time; Snapper Contest on the 13th was a great time for the kids; Town-wide yard sale was held this past weekend; 5K coming up this Saturday; next Thursday is the Duck-Duck-Jeep car show

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

Read Recreation and Senior Center report for Councilmember Brady:
- 5K race is this Saturday – can register from 2pm-7pm on Friday at Borough Hall
- Trunk or Treat October 19th from 4pm-6pm – register your car with Denise Nellis
- Halloween and Christmas house decorating details coming soon on website and social media
- NJ Division of Taxation holding public sessions to assist with property tax relief programs; a session being held tomorrow from 12pm-4pm at 651 Prospect Avenue in Cliffwood Beach; see website for other information.

Public Works/Water-Sewer
- Fire hydrant repair – Broad and Hurley hydrant fully repaired
- Park maintenance – broken equipment at Main Street Park has been replaced
- Street lighting repairs – Broad Street lights are now functioning
- Leaf and Branch pickups going on – see website for schedule
- Street sweeping going on
- Report a Concern available on website

Green Team

- Meeting tomorrow – working on items for Sustainable Jersey

Cannabis

- Work is underway on highway corridor dispensary location by Stop N Shop

Other

- Councilmember McNamara requested the following statement, initially read at the June 17th meeting, be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting as read so it can be made a part of the permanent record:

"Mayor, it is fortuitous that the Planning Board is here with us tonight. Approximately 14 months ago, in April 2024, five of the current members of the governing body voted to approve R2024-147, which was "*authorizing the award of a non-fair and open contract for professional surveying services for preparation of a major subdivision located within Waterfront Park.*"

Having lived here while Waterfront Park was formerly created, and looking at the description on the Parks and Recreation portion of the Borough website, it has always been identified as being on the Bayfront adjacent to American Legion Drive. In 2018, the Planning Board adopted the "Open Space and Recreation Plan" element for the Borough of Keyport, which very clearly identifies the location of Waterfront Park as that same location: the Bayfront adjacent to American Legion Drive. Waterfront Park is documented open space and recreation area on the official NJDEP ROSI.

My reason for detailing the property commonly known as Waterfront Park, by myself and many others in Keyport and elsewhere, is to share my lack of understanding that the proposal put forth by the Borough Engineer for surveying services included Borough property on the other side of American Legion Drive. I'm not alone on this council in believing that the work that was being proposed was necessary to ensure the Borough was compliant with Green Acres requirements post-Waterfront Park creation and to ensure that we would not jeopardize the $870,000 grant from NJDEP for Fireman's Park work. I believed that to meet those mandates the entire proposal needed to be done.

In the course of the past 14 months, I have heard from many residents and others on the actual proposal and that the bayside adjacent to American Legion Drive is all that needed to be surveyed – the property that was included on the other side is unrelated to Green Acres and the NJDEP grant. I have come to learn that the inclusion of the additional 22 lots in this proposal was the Borough Engineer's idea. It stemmed from a communication the mayor received from a property owner interested in acquiring Borough property that is adjacent to theirs.

There was no resolution in November when the Borough Administrator signed and submitted an application on behalf of the Borough of Keyport to the Keyport Unified Planning Board. That application included the subdivision completion for Green Acres and NJDEP and, in addition, for the subdivision of other Borough property.

I and others have asked for copies of the Green Acres communication requiring a survey or filing, as well as any stipulations noted in the grant from the NJDEP. To date, we have not received any such documentation.

In my opinion, it would be irresponsible to move forward with the proposed subdivision on the non-ROSI Borough property without first addressing expansions and/or new development, parking, design standards, and many other crucial land use issues to determine if in fact that move is in the best interest of the Borough and taxpayers.

The additional survey work that has already been completed can be put to the side, and should the Borough opt to consider any sale related to parts of that property, the documentation can be accessed easily. And lastly, the mayor and others went on record saying there was no intent to sell any of those properties – again reinforcing that there is no need to create these mini lots.

What should be happening at this time is simply what is legally required – only what Green Acres and NJDEP require, if in fact there is actually something that we have received from them.

I make a motion directing the borough attorney to withdraw our subdivision application and, to the extent something is being required by Green Acres to finalize the American Legion Drive realignment, directing our professionals to do just that."

- As a reminder, the NJDEP is accepting public comments until September 24th regarding the pipeline that will enter the Raritan Bay in Cliffwood and run 23 miles to Rockaway. The Keyport Borough Council approved a resolution opposing the pipeline. I encourage Bayshore residents to have their voices heard and go to the DEP website and participate in the public comment.

<u>Councilmember Merla</u>: Planning Board, Redevelopment, Public Works/Water-Sewer**,** Harbor Commission

Planning Board
- Meeting is this Thursday night

Redevelopment
- Nothing to report at this time

Harbor Commission
- Will follow up on pump stations for the creeks
- Looking into fixing the flood gates

KBBC
- Meeting here tomorrow night at 7pm

Other
- Regarding property maintenance, people were complaining about the cleanup on Maple Place. County will be out end of the week.
- Thanked Laurie Graham for her time served as a Keyport employee and wished her best of luck.

<u>Councilmember Reilly</u>: Finance/Grants, **Fire/First Aid/OEM,** Police, Municipal Alliance**,** Cannabis

Fire/First Aid/OEM
- Read First Aid calls for service report
- Fire Department meeting moved to tomorrow so no updates tonight

Police
- Met with Chief Ferm and have many updates:
- Officer now assigned as designated security officer for court dates as part of their regular duties eliminating overtime
- Current five-year plan will end this year and department would like to hire their 24th officer by the end of the year; this will eliminate almost all overtime
- Two officers scheduled for critical incident training in September
- Two officers completed defensive tactics instructor course allowing officers to train entire department which is mandatory
- One officer completed firearms instructor course brining department's total to four certified firearms instructors
- Department continues to participate in monthly active shooter training with other Bayshore towns
- Moving forward with non-lethal weapon options – one of the firearms instructors was trained in August to become an instructor to train rest of department
- Department has updated some of its technology infrastructure; now using VCSPOSS system for scheduling payroll and tracking time off and it will integrate nicely with the Borough system when we get that online
- Need exists for a few computers and are working on getting a schedule of assets so they can do a regular rotation
- Currently two open sergeant positions – no active list and new list should be released in September/October
- Department is currently staffed with 22 full-time officers; three new officers completed their three-month field training and are actively working patrol; officer hired on 7/28 is now on patrol; three officers attending Monmouth County Police Academy as SLEO II's and are scheduled to graduate in December; department is looking to fill the 23rd position created when Lt. Ruth retired with one of these recruits
- Department received over 15,000 calls for service this year

Finance

- Addressed a question about a line item on the payment of bills for conflict attorney in the amount of $8,835 clarifying that this is for the lawsuit that was filed by councilmembers against other councilmembers

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

Harbor Commission

- Snapper Contest this past weekend was amazing; happy to see 88 participants; thanked all the kids, the helpers, the Harbor Commission, and all of our sponsors; Keyport Cash donated and given out by the KBBC

NPP

- Preparing for Year 5 Implementation which will include improvements around Beach Park such as path widening and water fountains

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

Library

- Meeting was cancelled due to conflict with 9-11 Services

KBBC

- First Italian Festival was a wonderful event
- September meeting scheduled for this Wednesday

Other

- Attended Keyport Harbor Commission Snapper Contest; thanked entire Harbor Commission for securing amazing prizes for our children
- Attended Keyport Fire Department 9-11 Ceremony; special thanks to Tom Gallo who is always there for Keyport keeping the event schedule timely and adapting as needed
- Attended Charlie Kirk event; thanked Caly Gallopo for obtaining the permit and organizing such a spiritual gathering and thanked Chief Ferm along with the entire police department for ensuring everyone's safety; thanked Larry Vecchio for allowing the use of his property for the vigil; Mayor Araneo commented as Americans we must stand together in rejecting violence regardless of our beliefs, politics, or background. We must promote unity, peace, and protection of our democracy and the freedom of speech. Assassination or intimidation have no place in our society and no place in our council chambers. We can disagree but we must never let fear, anger, or hatred divide us.

Mayor Araneo asked if there is anything on the Consent Agenda that anyone would like to discuss. Council President Vecchio commented regarding payment of bills item number 25-00558 for conflict attorney and asked the Borough Attorney to explain how council is able to vote on the resolution. The Borough Attorney responded regarding R2025-250 Payment of Bills resolution that under Chapter 2-26 of the Borough Code the Borough is required to provide a legal defense to Borough officials that were acting in the scope of their public duties. Because there are four parties to that lawsuit – four governing body members – there would be four members who would ordinarily recuse from a vote on that. But by four members recusing, the Borough would not have a quorum. Based upon that, the doctrine of necessity is invoked because a quorum would be lost and the Borough would not be able to take action. The four members have no choice but to vote. Following discussion regarding moving the item from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration, it remained on the Consent Agenda.

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: 7:40 p.m. MM: Reilly 2ND: Merla

Jeffrey Spangler, Second Street – asked if the amounts listed on the bills list are the amounts being paid. Mayor Araneo replied that is correct.

Robert Bergen, Green Grove Avenue – asked about the resolution hiring the architect and the resolution for the payment of bills. He asked who determined there was a need for use of conflict counsel and was there a vote on the limit as to how much would be spent on that conflict counsel. Asked if the potential for reimbursement was ever discussed.

Elmer J. Graham, Jr., St. Peters Place – asked for explanations of Resolutions 2025-251, 2025-252 and 2025-25.

Michael Lane, First Street – commented that Resolution 2025-254 for the roof repair is a good step with a good set of project deliverables listed. However, he asked council not to approve the resolution for this particular contractor because they previously worked with the Borough Administrator.

Jennifer Henning, Main Street – asked why the roof project was not put out to bid. She asked was there any discussion about a study to move Borough Hall to the Post Office.

Robert Bergen – commented regarding the same architect on agenda tonight being hired to do a study on moving municipal building to property at Post office. He asked what is the estimated cost for the roof project. Councilmember McNamara responded the cost is included in the $2 million bond ordinance and won't cover the whole project. She thinks the job is estimated at $3.5 million.

Closed: 8:01 p.m. MM: Merla 2ND: Vecchio

CONSENT AGENDA

R2025-249 Payment of Bills Listed on the September 6, 2025 Bills List
R2025-250 Payment of Bills Listed on the September 16 ,2025 Bills List
R2025-251 Appointing a Member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
R2025-252 Authorizing Execution of the Chief of Police Employment Agreement
R2025-253 Authorizing Execution of the Captain of Police Employment Agreement

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS

Motion to approve resolutions on the **Consent Agenda**

MM: Reilly 2nd: Vecchio

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

REGULAR AGENDA

R2025-254 Authorizing the Award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract for Professional Architectural and Engineering Services in Connection with the Municipal Building Partial Roof Replacement and Related Improvements

Motion to table Resolution R2025-254 moved by Vecchio, carried by Merla

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

Motion to request the Borough Administrator do an RFP for this project moved by McNamara, carried by Merla

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 2, 2025 Regular Meeting

MM: Gross 2nd: Merla Ayes: All present Nays:

REPORTS

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

MM: Gross 2nd: Vecchio Ayes: All present Nays:

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Meeting was opened to the public for comments.

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

Opened: 8:03 p.m. MM: Merla 2ND: Reilly

Christina Greenberg, Therese Street – read a statement regarding public statements made by Councilmember Brady relative to the assassination of Charlie Kirk this past week. Ms. Greenberg stated she found the comments insensitive and requested she resign her seat as a councilmember.

Jeffrey Spangler – asked if anyone knows how may gallons of water were lost during the recent watermain break on Second Street and who will end up paying for it.

Michael Lane – commented regarding the Borough Administrator's status report which he feels has huge gaps. He listed many items he feels the status of which should be reported: pedestrian safety improvement program, complete streets design guide, community resilience element which is an opportunity to lower the cost for flood insurance, strategic recovery planning report, 22 lot subdivision, water plant sale, Army Corps. of Engineers plotted transects on waterfront property, utility pole cleanup, Henry Hudson Trail drainage ditch, 262 First Street, Browns Point Marina standpipe, Mariner's Village pile of contaminated fill, 253 First Street. Council needs a written status report.

Vinny Kyne, E. Front Street – commented Facebook is the worst means of communication. We need more face-to-face communication and should have thoughtful and deliberate conversation.

John Merla, Broad Street – congratulated Councilman Gross and his wife on the birth of his baby boy. He appreciates the support tonight to execute the agreement for the police chief. He said he came tonight to speak to Councilmember Brady but in her absence will not speak tonight so his words are not twisted. He thanked the Mayor, KBBC, Council, Police, Public Works, Fire Department, and all involved for their work on the Italian American Festival. Commented great job on the Snapper Contest.

Elmer J. Graham, Jr. – congratulated Councilman Gross on the birth of his baby. Thanked Caly Gallopo for the Charlie Kirk memorial service. Said we need to come together as a Borough. He commented on We Care Adult Care and the fund raiser being held at Shore Bowling Lanes in Neptune to raise funds for Alzheimer's disease. He encouraged all honorably discharged veterans to join American Legion Raritan Post 23.

Sandy Marion, Perry Street – thanked Caly for the beautiful tribute to Charlie Kirk. She requested the resignation of Councilmember Brady due to her inability to be unbiased to the citizens of Keyport.

Vincent Bergamo, Broad Street – has been coming to the meetings for about a year and wanted to voice his support for Councilmember Brady.

Patricia Burns, Main Street – commented regarding Councilmember Brady's social media posts and asked for her resignation.

Vinny Kyne – regarding existing lawsuit, he asks Council to take the vote over and adopt Councilmember McNamara's resolution.

Robert Bergen – regarding the water leak on Second Street he asked to find out why the contractor wasn't called out to fix the leak. He asked about the process for determining items listed on Consent Agenda.

Jeffrey Spangler – said the contractor was there but didn't do any work because of safety concerns due to heavy rains.

Judy Scibetti, Jackson Street – commented regarding the agenda process and said councilmembers are provided an agenda and can request something be moved from the Consent Agenda.

Mike Lane – applauds the fact that some councilmembers instituted a lawsuit to protect our open space.

Closed: 8:38 p.m. MM: Reilly 2ND: Gross

The Borough Attorney read the Executive Session Resolution.
Motion to enter Executive Session at 8:41 p.m. moved by Vecchio, carried by Reilly, all in favor

EXECUTIVE SESSION

R2025-255 - 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 related to: PBA contract negotiations pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b(4); and potential litigation pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12b(7)

MM: Vecchio 2nd: Reilly Ayes: All present Nays:

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: 9:54 p.m. MM: Vecchio 2nd: Reilly