Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Work Session Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Council Chambers – Town Hall
152 Washington Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 12:30 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Mayor Melham at 12:31 p.m.

Members Present:
Council Members Vincent Cozzarelli, Naomy DePeña, Thomas Graziano, Diana Guardabasco, Frank Velez III, and Mayor Melham

Also Present:
Township Attorney Steven Martino, Township Manager Brian Banda, Police Chief Mark Minichini and Municipal Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

Absent:
Council Member Tracy Muldrow

Pledge of Allegiance:
By Mayor Melham

Sunshine Law:
By Jacqueline Guaman

Pursuant to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975) known as the Sunshine Law, notice of this regular meeting was published on Friday, January 9, 2026, edition of the Star Ledger. The Sunshine Law was compiled by adopting and forwarding to the press, posting and filling with the Municipal Clerk the annual resolution showing the date, time, and place of each meeting. A copy of the annual meeting notice has been posted on the Township website and Town Hall Bulletin Board.

Proclamations/Presentations:

A. Chinese Culture Presentation by the Belleville High School Chinese Culture Club
B. Proclamation Presented to Firefighter/EMT's for Assisting with a newborn field delivery on 1/21/26 - Rescheduled for March 24, 2026

Guest Speaker Miss. Huang – Since starting the Mandarin program at Belleville High School in 2021, Miss Huang has highlighted the town's historical connections to Chinese culture by running a Mandarin Club and providing cultural learning opportunities. Three Mandarin students will present on Chinese Lunar New Year.

Bellville Highschool Students - Melanie Cardoza, Oliver Urbano, and Jesaily Rosario

- Chinese Lunar New Year (Spring Festival), a 15-day celebration marking the start of spring and family reunions.
- The holiday dates back over 3,500 years to the Shang Dynasty as an agricultural and religious celebration honoring gods and ancestors. During this time, farmers would rest and commemorate a year's worth of harvesting while worshipping to ensure a good gathering
- Students also highlighted Belleville's early Chinese immigrant community, noting that 86 Chinese immigrants celebrated Lunar New Year in 1871 after arriving to work at the Passaic Steam Laundry
- Traditions discussed included family feasts, red envelopes for good luck, red decorations, cleaning for good fortune, fireworks, new clothing, and honoring ancestors.
- Chinese Lunar New Year combines one of the twelve Chinese zodiacs with one of the five elements, creating a 60-year cycle

Work Session/Council Discussions:

Police Chief Minichini – Deferred to Deputy Chief Corbo

A. Discuss an ordinance to update emergency snow streets

- The Traffic Bureau reported discrepancies between the snow emergency street list currently in use and the original ordinance. They requested to amend the ordinance to reflect the updated list to avoid public confusion.
- Streets not reflected in the ordinance include portions or full lengths of Belmont Avenue, Harrison Street (Mill Street to Sanford Avenue), Main Street, Mill Street, Newark Avenue, and Sanford Avenue. Heckel Street and High Street are listed in the ordinance but are not currently enforced by the police department.
- The County streets we maintain include Union Avenue and Washington Avenue in the case of a state of emergency.
- We will post on our social media and town website with proper signage everywhere.

Mayor Melham

- What was the discrepancy? Were there streets that weren't listed?
- So, will we be voting for an ordinance to accept the changes? And then we'll post the new list on the website?

Councilman Cozzarelli

- Chief, does that include the County Streets, and will they be on the list?

B. Discuss to amend ordinance to the No Parking Zone on the north side of Belleville Avenue to include Mt. Prospect Avenue to Branch Brook Drive

- The Traffic Bureau received resident complaints about vehicles parked too close to the corners at Cedar Hill and Belleville Avenue, obstructing visibility when turning. It's recommended to eliminate parking from Cedar Hill to Cottage for safety.
- Current parking restrictions in the area (including weekday and overnight limits) are inconsistent and confusing. They recommended eliminating parking altogether from Cedar Hill to Cottage for safety and clarity.
- The complaint was raised by residents in the area, and the Traffic Bureau conducted a traffic study and review before making its recommendation.

- The Traffic Bureau recommended prohibiting all parking on the north side of Belleville Avenue from Mount Prospect to Branch Brook Drive and removing the current time-based parking restrictions on the north side from Branch Brook Drive to Cottage.

Mayor Melham

- So that means we're going to paint the curbs and put signage up?
- So that will be on a future ordinance as well?
- That works well, I like it when traffic makes traffic recommendation.

Councilman Graziano

- What's it being removed from? Cottage to…?

Police Chief Minichini

- There is effectively no parking from Union upward, so the previous restrictions were unnecessary.
- Also, Mayor there is another first-reading ordinance scheduled for the next meeting, and the new procedure requires it to be discussed in advance.
- The Attorney advised that the removal of handicapped parking spaces must also be officially removed from the ordinance.

Mayor Melham

- All speakers are requested to use microphones to ensure the public can hear and avoid complaints.
- Every handicap issue doesn't need to be reported. The traffic and police departments handle these matters, and only agenda items need to be discussed at meetings.
- Police and Traffic can make decisions regarding handicapped parking but cautioned against Council members making individual recommendations.

Jacqueline Guaman

- The police department went over the applications and there were handicapped parking spaces that had to be removed.

Questions/Discussions:

Manager Brian

- Going forward, any changes to handicapped parking do not require a workshop.

Township Attorney Martino

- Information must follow the proper chain of communication: matters should be reported to the Clerk, then the Manager, who notifies the Attorney, so they can determine what needs to be addressed prior to meetings.
- The goal is to determine in advance which matters should be placed on the agenda for discussion, and which should not. The process was implemented after several ordinances over the past six months were described as surprises. To prevent this, the Manager now consults with the Attorney and the Clerk before items are placed on the agenda for first reading.
- Determining what information should be brought forward is a decision of the Mayor and Council, not solely the Manager. Council may provide the Manager with suggestions on matters they wish to discuss during meetings, which the Manager can then review with the governing body.

Mayor Melham

- Until a process is established, business will proceed as usual. Council members were encouraged to review ordinances and the agenda packet in advance, noting that additional explanation may not be necessary, particularly given limited time during Wednesday work session meetings.
- Changes such as adding or removing handicapped parking spaces are self-explanatory when reviewing the ordinance in the agenda packet.
- Until formal guidelines are established, it is not necessary to be informed of every matter occurring in town.

Councilman Graziano

- Strict guidelines are needed to avoid ambiguity. Notices should not be handled on a week-to-week basis.

Councilman Cozzarelli

- It was suggested that, for the next meeting, the Manager prepare a memo outlining the rules of council meetings and distribute it via email to all members.

Mayor Melham – Next item of business report of the Manager. Clarification was sought on whether the intent is to establish a dollar amount for gardening fees, as none currently exists.

Report of the Township Manager: Brian Banda

A. An ordinance for community garden fees
- Garden beds for $25 each.
- 34 gardening beds put up for the season at $25.

B. Town wide re-assessment needs to be done by 2028 which is state mandated
C. CFO Frank DiMaria will go over IMAC stuff.

CFO Frank DiMaria

- The County-wide reassessment is underway, with engineers currently updating the Tax Map, which must be completed first. RFPs for the reassessment of real property will be issued to award the contract as soon as possible, hopefully by summer. Based on prior experience, the estimated cost is approximately $1.2–$1.5 million over five years, not including Tax Map update expenses.
- Payment was for an electronic version of the tax map. Instead, the Township opted for the manual update at a cost of $30,000, which is now nearly complete.
- It was noted that the values apply to the last two quarters of the tax year.
- It was explained that this is the JIFFs form of resolution used after selecting a provider. The Town already qualifies with IMAC for health and P&C coverage, making them the risk manager and the Town's representative at JIFF.

Mayor Melham

- Questions about whether this had already been addressed, noting that a million-dollar estimate and a $30,000 cost had previously been discussed.
- This issue appears to be a concern for 2028.
- Inquired about Resolution No. 117-2026 appointing a risk management consultant, asking how this company was selected given that others had also been qualified.

Report of the Mayor:

A. None to report

Approval of Minutes:

Jacqueline Guaman

A. None to report

Communications:

Jacqueline Guaman

A. None to report

Ordinances:

Jacqueline Guaman

A. Ordinances for Introduction
   - None to report

B. Ordinances for Public Hearing
   - None to report

Public Comments:

Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

Mario Droz, 95 Bell Street – for the risk management, is there an additional cost since they are already an insurer?

CFO Frank DiMaria

- No costs, JIFF pays 6% so they all get the same deal.
- E must be one of the town's smaller road age projects; it's a state road age project.
- This is road resurfacing and reconstruction if it needs to be done in certain areas, curbs/sidewalks etc.
- Its Main Street entire length.

What does E & F mean? What is that project? Is it one section or the entire length?

Mayor Melham

- Mr. Herritz isn't here so Mr. Manager please respond.
- Give a summary for everybody and talk into the mic.
- Any other questions for public comment?

Manager Brian

- F is the Main Street Improvement project, Frank what is E?
- Main Street is part of a grant.

Councilman Cozzarelli

- Sometimes you combine them with 2 years into one project to make a better price.

Motion to Close Public Comments by Councilman Cozzarelli; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña. Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez. Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

Resolutions:

RESOLUTION #116-2026 A RESOLUTION CANCELING OPEN TAX BALANCE ON 9-11 TAPPAN AVENUE TAX EXEMPT PROPERTY ACCORDING TO N.J.S.A. 54:4-3.6
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION # 117-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE REQUEST OF PROPOSALS TO CONDUCT A REVALUATION OF ALL REAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE FOR THE YEAR 2028
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION # 118-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING A RISK MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #119-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TAX EXEMPTION AND REFUNDING ON A DWELLING HOUSE OF AN APPROVED DISABLED VETERAN
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #120-2026 RESOLUTION FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME FOR AWARD FOR THE PROJECT 2024-MA-00488-LA2024 MA
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #121-2026 RESOLUTION FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME FOR AWARD FOR PROJECT PRO-2023 MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENTS-00096
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #122-2026 PROCLAMATION PRESENTED TO FIREFIGHTER/EMT'S ANTHONY CIFELLI, JOSEPH DIPASQUALE, JOSEPH LELINHO, ANTHONY

MALANGA, PIETRO VELARDI AND LIEUTENANT DAVID LELINHO FOR ASSISTING WITH A NEWBORN FIELD DELIVERY ON JAN. 21ST, 2026
Motion by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Velez, and Mayor Melham Nays: None
Absent: Muldrow Abstain: None Motion Carries

New Business:

A. None to report

Executive Session:

A. None to report

Motion to Adjourn at 1:02pm by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña.
All-In-Favor

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacqueline Guaman, R.M.C.
Township Clerk

The next Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 6:00pm.