Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Regular Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Council Chambers – Town Hall
152 Washington Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Clerk Jacqueline Guaman at 6:00pm

Members Present:
Council Members Vincent Cozzarelli, Thomas Graziano, Diana Guardabasco, and Frank Velez III

Present by Phone:
Council Members DePeña, Tracy J. Muldrow, and Mayor Melham

Also Present:
Township Attorney Steven Martino, Township Manager Brian Banda, Police Chief Mark Minichini, Chief Financial Officer Frank DiMaria, Director of Public Works Robert Welter, and Municipal Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

Pledge of Allegiance:
By Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

Sunshine Law:
By Clerk 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.

Township Attorney Martino:

- Since the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are absent, the Council should appoint a member to chair the meeting.

Motion to Appoint Councilman Cozzarelli to Chair tonight's meeting by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Proclamations/Presentations:
Presented by Councilman Cozzarelli

A. Lupus Awareness Month (May)

The Sanchez Family – Lupus is not widely known and can take years to diagnose. Their daughter was diagnosed at age 9 after a two-year process, and they expressed gratitude to the Township of Belleville for the proclamation. They also mentioned an upcoming Lupus Research Alliance walk on May 9 and invited others to participate. Thank you.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- That's wonderful, God bless you and your daughter.

The Sanchez Family:

- Can we take a picture with Council please?

Clerk Guaman:

- Where is the Lupus walk taking place?

The Sanchez Family:

- At MetLife with the Lupas Research Alliance.

B. National Volunteer Month (April)

Work Session/Council Discussions:

Manager Brian Banda

A. Discuss hours of operation for gyms, liquor stores and smoke shops

- In December of 2025, discussions were held with local businesses regarding hours of operation.
- Current permitted hours for liquor stores: Sunday – Thursday 10:00am – 10:00pm Fridays, Saturdays and days before holidays: 10:00am – 11:00pm.
- Some businesses in town remain open until 11:00pm or 11:30pm throughout the week.
- State law prohibits the sale of spirits outside the hours of 9:00am – 10:00pm.
- After reviewing neighboring municipalities, including Nutley and Newark, both of which require liquor stores to close at 10:00pm, the recommendation is:
- Maintain the current 10:00pm closing time and eliminate the extended 11:00pm hours currently permitted on Fridays, Saturdays and days before holidays.
- Smoke shops proposed hours of operation – 10:00am-8:00pm. ✓
- Two smoke shops close between 8:00pm and 9:00pm, one remains open until midnight.
- Referencing neighboring towns, Newark limits smoke shop operations to 9:00pm while Nutley operates between 8:00pm and 9:00pm.
- The recommendation is Belleville should not permit later operating hours than neighboring municipalities.
- One smoke shop currently operating until midnight requests if Council would consider 10:00pm.
- Gyms proposed hours of operation – 5:00am to midnight.
- All gyms in town currently operate within those hours, except for one facility that operates 24 hours 7 days a week.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- I support keeping the gym open 24/7 since health and wellness are important.
- Instead of requiring private security, the Police Department can conduct a security walkthrough with the business owners to ensure everything is in order. Chief, can you coordinate that?
- I'm comfortable with a 9:00pm closing time for now as a trial period. If there are no issues, we can consider extending the hours later.
- We can revisit this matter in 6 months to evaluate how it works.

Councilman Graziano:

- Agreed that some level of security is necessary and should not fall solely on the Police Department.
- Supports limiting liquor stores and smoke shops to 10:00pm in line with neighboring towns.
- Suggested requiring security cameras for future gyms while grandfathering existing businesses.

Councilwoman Guardabasco:

- For the 24hr gym, people shifts change (police, nurses, etc.) so I'm in agreement with the security means in place passed midnight.

Mayor Melham:

- State law governs liquor store hours and expresses support for limiting smoke shops from operating until midnight but not necessarily requiring an 8:00pm closing time.
- Noted that Signature Fitness is a strong community partner and operates successfully 24 hours a day without issues.
- Questioned the need for additional security requirements for gyms when there have been no known problems or calls for service.
- Emphasized the importance of being business-friendly and avoiding unnecessary burdens on businesses when no existing problem has been identified.

Manager Brian:

- Clarified that the discussion was not focused on one business and that the recommendation already supports allowing the current gym to remain open 24hours.
- Stated that the security discussion was only a consideration for Council, particularly for any future full-service gyms seeking 24-hour operations.
- Noted that safety concerns relate more to activity outside the facility when patrons are leaving late at night.
- Confirmed the discussion applies to full-service gyms, not boutique studios.
- Summarized the proposed hours as:
- Liquor stores – 10:00pm
- Smoke shops- 9:00pm
- Full-service gyms – 24 hours

- Stated that an amended version would be prepared and emailed to all parties involved.

Police Chief Minichini:

- As a whole no, moreover practically at night no.
- Alright no problem.

Frank DiMaria, CFO

A. Discuss bond ordinances

- Reported that there are seven ordinances for introduction: 3 utility ordinances and 4 general capital ordinances.
- Explained the general capital ordinances will fund Township facility, road, and unforeseen infrastructure needs through the remainder of 2026.
- Noted additional ordinances may be introduced later for specific road projects or departmental requests.
- Clarified the ordinances remain within their authorized scope and are subject to state spending and financing timelines.
- Stated the Township has resolved prior balance issues and is in a better financial position.
- Explained the road ordinance is a general "Plan B" ordinance for unspecified road work and cannot be used for equipment purchases.
- Confirmed the ordinances are for introduction only.

Councilman Graziano:

- In the ordinance there's language that says what the money is used for right? If the money/fund is not spent, it cannot go anywhere else, correct?
- Right, but you can't take the funds and put it into something that is short of money. Got it.

Councilman Velez:

- Brian is there any way to publicize repaving the roads at least 6 months in advance once this ordinance is adopted? I know usually we publicize 1-2 weeks prior.

Manager Brian:

- Suggested publicizing seasonal road repaving plans once funding sources, road lists, project timelines, and future funding plans are finalized.
- Stated they would coordinate with the Township Engineer to develop a plan.

Police Chief Minichini

A. Discuss amending soliciting ordinances to allow residents to opt out their address

- Police were previously tasked with issuing solicitor's permits; after reviewing neighboring towns, an opt-in/opt-out system is proposed.
- Residents may choose to be placed on a "no solicitation" list or opt in; those who opt in and pass a background check may receive permits.

- An ordinance has been drafted and is currently under attorney review for legality and language.
- The program will be publicized via social media for resident sign-ups.
- Enforcement would include issuance of summonses for violations of the no solicitation list.
- Absolutely, they get an ID and must present it when the police ask for it.

Attorney Martino:

- This is acceptable for commercial solicitors only.
- We should have the ordinance ready at the next meeting.

Manager Brian:

- When you give them the license for solicitation, do they have to wear the ID around their neck?

Report of the Manager:

A. Capital Project Updates:

- Fairway Park Phase I is complete and open; community garden sold out. Phase II planned for later this year (walkway and ball field included).
- Friendly House renovations complete – Opening expected around May 1st
- Police locker renovations are 99% complete; move in expected this week pending inspections.
- DPW obtaining quotes for hallway renovations.
- Fire tower complete; fencing being installed.
- Senior Advisory Board – membership is growing, Atlantic City trip was successful with another planned for June. Bocce court open, potential league.
- Senior Advisory Committee meeting- May 20th
- Senior Prom- May 15th

Report of the Mayor:

- Expressed it has been an honor to represent the Township and highlighted the positive impact of donating an ambulance to a hospital in the Dominican Republic that couldn't afford one.

Approval of Minutes:

Clerk Guaman

- December and January – Pending
- March 24, 2026

Motion to Adopt March 24, 2026 minutes by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Communications:

Clerk Guaman

- Issuance of Belleville raffle/bingo license numbers #3396-3404 by the Municipal Clerk's Office
- Resignation email received by Ms. Tamara Rinaldi resigning as a member of the Zoning Board
- Reminder the 2026 Financial Disclosures Statements are due April 30, 2026
- Confirmed there is a fine, the deadline is April 30, 2026.
- Confirmed that communication regarding the library board appointment was provided at the last Council meeting.
- Noted that R-140-2026 will be pulled from the agenda due to the realization that it is not required.
- Advised that an email was sent to all Council members regarding a mandatory water management video from Thomas Heritz.

Councilman Cozarelli:

- And if you don't there is a fine right?

Mayor Melham:

- Jacky, do you have my communications for the Library Board appointment?

Councilwoman Guardabasco:

- Congratulations Councilwoman Muldrow and her husband on the birth of their twin boys. I hope you are doing well.

Councilwoman Muldrow:

- Thank you so much.

Councilman Velez:

- I'm excited for you.

Ordinances:

Ordinance for Introduction

ORDINANCE #18-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF VARIOUS WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS IN, BY AND FOR THE WATER UTILITY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $250,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham

Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #19-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF THE WATER METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM IN, BY AND FOR THE WATER UTILITY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $500,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Velez

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #20-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF THE LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT PROJECT (PHASE II) IN, BY AND FOR THE WATER UTILITY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $5,000,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #21-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE VARIOUS IMPROVEMENTS TO MUNICIPAL FACILITIES IN, BY AND FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $500,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Velez

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #22-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN, BY AND FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $250,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE

ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #23-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE ACQUISITION OF NEW ADDITIONAL OR REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY FOR THE USE OF VARIOUS TOWNSHIP DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES AND AGENCIES IN, BY AND FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $500,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS

Motion by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #24-26 BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE UNDERTAKING OF THE 2026 ROAD RECONSTRUCTION AND CURB AND SIDEWALK REPLACEMENT PROGRAM (LOCAL) IN, BY AND FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF $500,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS

Motion by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.

Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Councilman Graziano:

- CFO, we're asking if we stay under 2%, we wouldn't have to go to this ordinance being that were going over at 1.5, we need this ordinance to make it 3.5%, correct?
- Is this money a fund just in case something goes over?
- Is this going to cover any of the shortfalls in our budget?
- So again, is it for overage?
- So, is it in case line items in the budget go over?

Frank DiMaria:

- Confirmed the cap index is 3.5%.

- Noted the ordinance allows unused cap to be banked for up to two future years if the municipality comes in under the limit.
- Explained the budget cap formula used to calculate the total budget.
- Out-of-cap items are subtracted first, then the 2% index is applied to operating expenses, with adjustments for items such as new construction and health insurance.
- Clarified that the cap applies to departmental operating ("in-cap") expenses and once reached, spending cannot exceed it.
- Noted that out-of-cap items are considered beyond day-to-day control.
- Defined "in-cap" as day to day operational spending limits.
- Stated the ordinance covers the 2026 cap for operations and is valid for two subsequent years.

ORDINANCE #25-26 CALENDAR YEAR 2026 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14)

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

Ordinances for Public Hearing and Second and Final Reading:

ORDINANCE #13-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, CHAPTER 8-2.8, PARKING DURING EMERGENCIES

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

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #13-26 by Councilwoman Guardabasco Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #14-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, CHAPTER 8-2.2, PARKING PROHIBITED AT ALL TIMES ON CERTAIN STREETS

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

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #14-26 by Councilwoman DePeña Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #15-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, 8-2.2, BY ADDING PARKING PROHIBITED AT ALL TIMES ON CERTAIN STREETS
Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Public Comments:
Mario Drozdz – **95 Bell Street**
- Resolution #137-2026.
- Apologies.

Councilman Cozzarelli:
- We are still on the ordinances portion of the agenda.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #15-26 by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #16-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, NEW JERSEY, CHAPTER 8-16, ENTITLED "HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES", BY REMOVING CERTAIN DESIGNATED HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES
Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #16-26 by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #17-26 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 12, ARTICLE 12-16 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE

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

Public Comments:
Jerry DelGercio – 8 Grove Street

- What is chapter 12? It doesn't give specifics on the agenda.
- So, a C/O for commercial instead.
- Oh, so titles changed.

Manager Brian:

- Chapter 12 addresses Building and Housing regulations.
- An amendment was implemented under the direction of Nicholas DeAngelis, Director of the Code Enforcement Department, establishing a requirement that commercial property resales be subject to inspections moving forward at the time of sale.
- Yes, a resale certificate.

Attorney Martino:

- From a code enforcement standpoint, a certificate of occupancy for that purpose is not allowed so we're calling it a certificate of inspection because of the way the code is outlined.
- Certificate of inspection applies to commercial units.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #17-26 by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

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

Mario Drozdz – 95 Bell Street

- R-137-2026 what are we amending?
- The reimbursement agreement with City Homes at Essex Park, is that part of tax appeal? If so, how much is it?
- Suggested tabling appointment resolutions until after the election so newly elected officials can make those decisions.
- The condo owners don't snowplow now?

CFO, Frank DiMaria:

- Explained that the capital budget amendment incorporates the ordinances introduced tonight.
- Noted it is part of the 6-year capital improvement plan required by statute and must be updated whenever new capital commitments are made.

Attorney Martino:

- Clarified the reimbursement is not related to a tax appeal but is required under the NJ Condominium Act for services such as leaf collection, lighting on common roads, and snow removal.
- Noted the reimbursement is based on a 2019 agreement between the Township and the development, which has remained unchanged until now.
- Stated the reimbursement amount is increasing by $2,500 from $25,000 to $27,500.

Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mount Prospect Ave.

- R-139-2026 is this the official introduction of our budget?
- The budget wasn't introduced yet? It's supposed to be done by 2/20 by state law. What's taking so long?
- R-136-2026 – lead line replacement program, is the $617,000 the actual amount to get started and replace the lines?
- This is out of control, not only in Belleville but everywhere. This is one of the biggest scams in NJ.
- Potholes – can we fill the potholes with quality material like tack coat, so they remain closed and don't falter 1-2 days later?

CFO Frank DiMaria:

- Confirmed the budget ordinance will be read by title only.
- Stated the $617,000 is for engineering related to phase II, part of a projected $30 million program with approximately $5 million planned over 6 years.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Director Welter, can you give a quick detail of how DPW handles our asphalt patching?

Director of DPW – Robert Welter:

- Explained pothole repair process involves preparing the hole and applying material with recent transition from cold patch to hot patch due to a new plant opening in Naprico.
- Noted that cold patch repairs are temporary (about 1-2 weeks) and are highly affected by weather conditions, which can cause material to dislodge.

John Buglione – 60 Watchung Ave.

- Offered apologies to Councilwoman Muldrow and congratulated her on a recent personal milestone.
- Noted resident and business appreciation for 24-hour police coverage.
- Raised concerns about safety on Franklin Street involving mopeds, scooters, and bicycles on sidewalks, particularly impacting pedestrians and elderly residents.

- Identified issue as potentially within Councilwoman Muldrow's ward and requested attention.
- Reported a malfunctioning crosswalk light near the church and Crown Fried Chicken, creating pedestrian safety hazards where drivers are not consistently yielding.
- Requested police investigation into these complaints.
- Since the Friendly House opens May 1st will future elections be held there?

Philomena Frantantoni – 129 Mount Prospect Ave.

- Has the light in the parking lot by Belleville Pizza has been fixed?
- Suggested that all pending appointment resolutions be held until after the election so newly elected officials can make their own appointment or reappointment decisions.

Manager Brian:

- I was told it was repaired. If it's not fixed, please let us know.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Some of these appointments are due to unforeseen circumstances such as Zoning board member Tamara who moved, so now her position is vacant. So, I don't think we should leave a vacancy open until after an election.

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

Resolutions:

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda with the Exceptions of R-140-2026, R-141-2026, R-143-2026, R-144-2026, R-155-2026, R-158-2026 and R-159-2026 by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Mayor Melham.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #135-2026 AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TO ISSUE CHECK IN PAYMENTS OF BILLS FROM VARIOUS ACCOUNTS

RESOLUTION #136-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT OVER $53,000.00 FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM – PHASE II TO COLLIERS ENGINEERING & DESIGN, INC. $617,500.00

RESOLUTION #137-2026 R3ESOLUTION AMENDING THE CY2026 CAPITAL BUDGET

RESOLUTION #138-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP TO ENTER INTO MUNICIPAL REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT WITH CITY HOMES AT ESSEX PARK CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, INC.

RESOLUTION #139-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING 2026 MUNICIPAL BUDGET TO BE READ BY TITLE ONLY

RESOLUTION #142-2026 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR A PERIOD OF SIX (6) MONTHS FOR 2024-SST-00044-LA-2024-SST BELLEVILLE TOWNSHIP LIGHT RAIL PEDESTRIAN SAFETY PROJECT III TO THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

RESOLUTION #145-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TAX COLLECTOR TO ISSUE A DUPLICATE TAX SALE CERTIFICATE NO. (SEE LIST BELOW) IN THE NAME OF PRO CAP 8 FBO FIRSTRUST BANK, PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 99 OF THE PUBLIC LAWS OF 1997

RESOLUTION #146-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TAX COLLECTOR TO CANCEL TAX SALE CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION #147-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REDUCTION TO 20205 TAX LEVY

RESOLUTION #148-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING FRANK DAUKSIS FOR LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH MICHAEL'S ROSCOMMON HOUSE

RESOLUTION #149-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING NATIONAL SPORTSWEAR FOR DECADES OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

RESOLUTION #150-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING FIREFIGHTER ANTHONY CIFELLI FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE IN THE BELLEVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

RESOLUTION #151-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING A. VENIERO & SONS FOR NEARLY A CENTURY OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE IN BELLEVILLE

RESOLUTION #152-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING OFFICER ALEXANDER MENDOZA FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE AND LIFE-SAVING ACTIONS

RESOLUTION #153-2026 PROCLAMATION DECLARING THE MONTH OF MAY AS LUPUS AWARENESS MONTH IN THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE

RESOLUTION #154-2026 PROCLAMATION – NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH OF APRIL 2026

RESOLUTION #156-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES/GRANT MANAGEMENT FY23

USDOT SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL TO COLLIERS ENGINEERING & DESIGN INC.

RESOLUTION #157-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT OVER $53,000.00 FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES FY23 SAFE STREETS AND ROAD FOR ALL GRANT PROGRAM TO NEGLIA GROUP $500,000.00

RESOLUTION #160-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR A GRANT FROM THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS FOR THE RIFLE RANGE RESERVE REMEDIATION PROJECT

RESOLUTION #140-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING RALPHAEL TABOCLAON TO SERVE AS TRUSTEE ON THE BELLEVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD (PULLED)

RESOLUTION #141-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING PLACE-TO-PLACE TRANSFER EXPANSION OF PREMISE FOR PLENARY RETAIL DISTRIBUTION LICENSE #0701-44-002-008, ISSUED TO CHOKSHI BEVERAGES INC.
Motion by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow and Velez
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: Mayor Melham Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #143-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING FRANK DI MARIA TO THE POSITION OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
Motion by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Councilman Graziano:

- Requested clarification on the start and end dates of appointed positions, including tenure timelines, using the CFO appointment as an example.
- Noted that these details should be discussed more thoroughly in a dedicated meeting.
- Expressed concern that receiving a large meeting packet on short notice (e.g., 300 pages over a weekend) does not allow adequate time for review.

Attorney Martino:

- Clarified that the CFO was appointed nearly four years ago to an unexpired term that ended in 2023 and has continued serving without formal reappointment.
- Stated this resolution serves to formally reappoint the CFO.
- Explained that under state statute, tenure is granted only after four consecutive years in the position followed by reappointment.
- Confirmed the CFO has not yet reached four years of service (currently approximately 3 years and 10–11 months).
- Noted that this resolution alone does not confer tenure; tenure would only occur after completion of four years and a subsequent reappointment.

Councilwoman Guardabasco:

- He won't be tenured until next year when he gets reappointed.

Mayor Melham:

- Noted that a similar question was raised and was addressed by contacting Steve via email.
- Emphasized that questions can be handled through direct communication and do not need to wait for a Council meeting.

RESOLUTION #144-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR A MANAGEMENT ENHANCEMENT REVIEW PROGRAM (MERP) GRANT FOR A MUNICIPAL EFFICIENCY STUDY

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

Councilman Graziano:

- Requested a deeper, forensic level review of operational efficiencies to identify potential cost reductions. Can it be investigated?
- Asked whether a forensic component could be added to the MERP grant after adoption, noting the distinction between a standard operational study and a forensic analysis.

Manager Brian:

- They said they can investigate our operations to make sure we operate efficiently. If it's too many staff in one area, they can investigate that.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Brian and I sent in on those grant calls so we can investigate it.

RESOLUTION #155-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING PERSON-TO-PERSON TRANSFER FOR PLENARY RETAIL DISTRIBUTION LICENSE #0701-44-003-009, ISSUED FROM TCF HOLDINGS LLC TO TCF HOLDINGS FOUR LLC

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

RESOLUTION #158-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING ANTHONY NICOSIA TO SERVE AS A MEMBER ON THE BELLEVILLE ZONING BOARD TO FILL THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF TAMARA RINALDI (TABLED)

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

Councilman Velez:

- Reported resident concerns regarding the individual, citing controversy in social media and news coverage.
- Stated that the perceived impact on the town warrant's caution.
- Recommended not proceeding with a hasty appointment and conducting further review to ensure the candidate is appropriate and qualified for the position.

Councilman Graziano:

- Suggested tabling the matter to allow further discussion before proceeding.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Recommended tabling the item if Council is not comfortable proceeding, to allow time for individual review and research.

Councilwoman DePeña:

- Requested Councilman Velez share any relevant information with the full Council, noting this is the first time the issue has been raised.

RESOLUTION #159-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF A FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDED AND RESTATED REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BY AND AMONG THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, 11 FRANKLIN REDEVELOPER LLC, AND TFJ BELLEVILLE LLC AND LERP BELLEVILLE LLC

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

Councilman Graziano:

- Noted this developer has contributed retail space throughout Belleville.
- Further discussion requested due to limited familiarity with the specifics and absence from the prior Planning Board meeting.
- Asked for clarification on redevelopment extension language and project sequencing.
- Inquired about potential traffic impacts and whether openings would be permitted under a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.
- Referenced prior practice of imposing monthly penalties for missed deadlines and asked what recourse exists if work remains incomplete after a year.
- Explained that bond protections allow the Township to draw on the bond to complete unfinished work if necessary.
- Expressed that the matter was discussed at a prior meeting and may not have been communicated to all members.

Manager Brian:

- Dean Donatelli is present and he can provide more insight.

Dean Donatelli – Redevelop. Attorney:

- The amendment relates to the redevelopment agreement for the Roche Diagnostic redevelopment on Franklin Ave and Mill Street.
- The redeveloper is required to complete signal improvements at Mill Street and Franklin Avenue.
- The agreement prohibits issuance of any certificate of occupancy prior to completion of those traffic improvements.
- The developer is experiencing delays due to difficulty obtaining signal equipment.
- Proposal includes payment of a community development fee, posting of a bond to guarantee completion, and extending the deadline to February 2027.
- The request is for a one-year extension to complete the signal improvements.
- Residential construction cannot proceed until the traffic improvements are completed; only limited retail space may open in the interim.
- Traffic trip generation data was not available at the time of discussion.

- Confirmed that if the redeveloper does not meet required project deadlines, extension payments will be owed to the Township.

Mayor Melham:

- Clarified that the redeveloper is requesting up to a one-year extension to complete the required work.
- Confirmed that a bond is in place, which can be used to complete the work if the redeveloper does not perform.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Noted that the developer intended to begin work immediately, but the County requested a delay until all materials are secured to avoid construction interruptions.

Attorney Martino:

- That meeting was two months ago, not last Monday.

New Business:

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Announced intent to introduce a resolution at the next Council meeting to appoint a new Historic Preservation Board member to fill a vacancy.

Executive Session: None

Adjournment: 7:34pm

Motion to Adjourn by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña. All-In-Favor

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Mayor Melham:

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- Confirmed that a bond is in place, which can be used to complete the work if the redeveloper does not perform.

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New Business:

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Executive Session: None

Adjournment: 7:34pm

Motion to Adjourn by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman DePeña. All-In-Favor

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacqueline E. Guaman, R.M.C.
Township Clerk

The next Work Session Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 12:30pm.