Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Regular Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Council Chambers – Town Hall
152 Washington Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Mayor Melham at 6:02pm

Members Present:
Council Members Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham

Present via Phone:
Council Member DePeña

Also Present:
Township Manager Brian Banda, Township Attorney James Esposito, Police Chief Mark Minichini, Chief Financial Officer, Frank DiMaria and Municipal Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

Pledge of Allegiance:
By Mayor Melham

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 meeting was published in the January 9, 2026, Star Ledger. An annual meeting notice resolution was adopted, forwarded to the press, posted, and filed with the Municipal Clerk, establishing the date, time, and place of all meetings. A copy of the annual meeting notice has been posted on the Township website and Town Hall Bulletin Board.

Proclamations/Presentations:
Presented by Mayor Melham

A. Proclamation Recognizing Luci Tiankee for her outstanding achievements in wrestling
B. Proclamation Recognizing Valentina Sheldon for her outstanding achievements in wrestling
C. Proclamation Recognizing Elizabeth Pena for her outstanding achievements in wrestling
D. Proclamation Recognizing Kristina Zarrillo for her outstanding achievements in wrestling

Work Session/Council Discussion:
Redevelopment Attorney – Dean Donatelli

A. Affordable Housing Compliance

- Court issued certificate of compliance for the next 10 years with condition the Township adopts an Affordability Assistance Manual.

- Roughly $4.7 million in affordable housing trust fund but is complicated to remove without going through extra steps.
- With the affordable housing assistance manual, 20% of the trust fund will provide for ownership assistance, downpayment assistance, payment of closing costs and lender fees.
- Rental assistance program – income eligible person allowed moving expenses, utility deposit assistance, first month's rental assistance and security deposit assistance.
- Opinion of council on affordable housing trust fund money and how to use it strategically to be able to pull from at will to give to eligible persons.
- Secondly, the trust fund is available to residents in the counties of Essex, Warren, Morris and Union; therefore, what is council opinion on a Belleville resident preference using those funds?
- Council can create new units using the $4.7 million on all affordable senior project for Belleville residents only, excluding neighboring towns.

Mayor Melham:

- Let's hold off on discussion for that until the new Council takes over after July 1st.

Report of the Manager:

- Fairway Park & Plancion Park are now in phase II, which includes the ball fields.
- Fairway Park roughly $50,000 & Plancion Park a little more expensive but with cooperation from the school we can turn it into a nice project.
- Friendly House – floors are done, working on finishing touches for ramps and moldings as well as all our technology needs are now included in the facility.
- Food truck park – we are still vetting new contractors, and the price quotes are coming in 2-4x the amount of the original quote.
- Santander municipal parking lot – fencing under construction, the lot will be paved next week.
- Police building renovation – men's locker room are complete, now working on the women's locker room and observing the leaky hallway.
- Fire training tower – complete, waiting on DCA approval to use the facility.
- 192 Belmont (townhall annex & police substation) – 3 quotes came in high, so we reworked the floor building plans with the police department to require less construction, so hopefully that helps decrease the pricing when we resubmit our plans to get new quotes.
- Easy Ride – proposal for the shuttle service must be submitted to the NJTPA and will go under review with them.
- Main Street resurfacing project – DOT reviewing the plans in specs and are making adjustments, then we can go out to bid to begin work by this summer.
- Road repaving plans – currently still in the works with the DOT and hoping to begin in the fall.

- Center & Charles Street – waiting on the grant company to give us the final clearance to start the project.
- Lead line replacement program – waiting on DEP approval, hoping to start project in July.

Committee Reports:

- Grant committee – received additional Green Acre supplemental funding for the grandstands in the amount of $1.5 million, this brings our total to $3.58 million in grant funding.
- Initial estimate was $5.3 million; taxpayers will have to fund the remaining balance.
- Grant team received $200,000 from the DCA for recreation improvement grant (remediation to the pistol range).
- Senior Advisory Board – membership is still growing, they request the town provide senior shuttle services for the July 3rd firework, add more mobility challenged parking spots closer to the senior building and unauthorized parking on bingo days is becoming problematic, requests the town to address the issue.
- DPW will be painting fire hydrants next week with assistance from our summer help program.
- Recreation – summer and fall registrations are open but will close soon. New programs and clinics are on the township website.

New Business:

- Resolution R-201: NJDOT grant submission needs to be done by July 1st - municipal aid for future road improvement on Clairmosse Drive, Micker Place and Davidson Street.
- Resolution R-202: Safe Streets to Schools federal grant – the town must designate a design professional from the list provided to us and costs will be refunded.

Report of the Mayor:

None

Approval of Minutes:

Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

- December 16, 2025 – Pending (David Arce)
- May 26, 2026
- June 10, 2026

Mayor Melham:

- December 16, 2025 minutes what is the status on those minutes?

Clerk Guaman:

- We do not have those minutes, they are still pending.

Mayor Melham:

- Mr. Manager, what is the hold up? If it doesn't pass tonight, the new Council will have to vote on a matter they were not present for when it was discussed.

Manager Brian:

- I have the minutes now; I'd rather have the clerk's office be able to review them before we finally submit.

Motion to Adopt May 26th and June 10th minutes by Councilman Cozzarelli; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Communications:

Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

A. Green Acres Grant Award non-matching of $1,500,000 for the Municipal Stadium Grandstand Improvements
B. Notice of DCA Recreational Improvements Grant award of $200,000 for the Riffle Range site remediation

Ordinances:

Ordinances for Introduction:

Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

- None

Ordinances for Public Hearing and Second and Final Reading:

ORDINANCE #26-26 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 3 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ENTITLED "POLICE REGULATIONS," TO MODIFY HOURS OF OPERATION FOR CERTAIN BUSINESSES AND TO ESTABLISH REQUIREMENTS FOR TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR OPERATION OF FULL-SERVICE HEALTH CLUBS AND GYMS

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:

Tracy Wilcox – Diamond Back Massage Therapy (owner)

- Does this affect my business?

Mayor Melham:

- No.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #26-26 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

ORDINANCE #27-26 ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A SPECIAL EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF $1,500,000 FOR THE PREPARATION AND EXECUTION OF A COMPLETE PROGRAM OF REVALUATION OF REAL PROPERTY IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY

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

Public Comments:
Jerry Dogercio – 8 Grove Street

- How often does this get done?
- Isn't there a rule that it is supposed to be every 10 years?

Mayor Melham:

- Roughly every 8-10 years.

CFO DiMaria:

- When the equalization ration falls below a certain threshold, which it has, you are mandated to have one.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #27-26 by Councilman Cozzarelli; Seconded by Councilman Velez.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #28-26 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE II, 2-13 ET SEQ. OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE TO ESTABLISH A LAW DEPARTMENT

Motion to Open Public Comments 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

Public Comments:
Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mt. Prospect Ave.

- We never had a law department?

Mayor Melham:

- The wording in the ordinance was different but there is a budgetary item for law.
- We had a budgetary department, just never in the administrative code.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #28-26 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 #30-26 AN ORDINANCE FIXING PERSONNEL POSITIONS, SALARIES, WAGES AND COMPENSATION AMOUNTS AND RATES-REPEALING ORDINANCE #49-25

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:
Mario Drodz – 95 Bell Street

- What does rates-repealing mean?
- Police and Fire are both first responders so how is there a discrepancy in pay for starting salary at the academy? I was under the impression the rate would be the same.
- What's the change though?

Clerk Guaman:

- We're repealing ordinance #49-25 which basically means we are editing the original to reflect this amended ordinance tonight.

CFO DiMaria:

- The change includes changing the township attorney from an employee to an independent contractor and the poll workers pay as well since it was never established by ordinance.

Police Chief Minichini:

- The fire department never had an academy until recently and it's two separate unions that negotiate their contract.

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ordinance #30-26 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

Public Comments:

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

Tracy Wilcox – 217 Belleville Ave.

- My permit fee increased by $400, I understand keeping solicitation out but as an owner whose been here for 8 years, I think other measures should be put in place.

Mayor Melham:

- Brian, how are you spending her $400 to keep solicitation out of her establishment?
- The fees were chosen by the professionals and the Council voted on it.

Manager Brian:

- There's a lot more added to the ordinance than the fees.
- There are inspections and other things that go on, as a preexisting business, she's been allowed to circumvent some of the new rules.
- If council wishes to amend the fees to allow preexisting businesses to pay a lesser fee that is an option.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- At the time the ordinance did do its job, and we got rid of a few bad apples, but as the Manager said maybe we can amend it.

Renee – 75 Franklin Ave.

- Requesting Council and Mayor elect to establish an ordinance prohibiting AI data centers in all zoning districts to protect residents.
- Also requesting a statewide moratorium until stronger AI bills are codified into law.
- This is stemming from a recent litigation Nutley was in with Big Tech regarding the On3 site.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Email the Manager all your findings and he will distribute that information to the Council.

Gary – 307 Fairway Ave.

- At Fairway Park there are huge pits on the outfield of the baseball field, can we do something about them?

Manager Brian:

- Those will be repaired.

Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mount Prospect Ave.

- For Fairway Park we lost a grant which goes back to incompetent management.
- The Friendly House had its grand opening years ago and it was great; every year we are doing more stuff there.
- Food truck lot isn't working out – we lost one contractor; another contractor was bad and now its 4-5x the original amount. Is this good management?

Mayor Melham:

- We didn't lose the grant; we gave it back.

Manager Brian:

- This project predates me; I helped pull it back together with the help of our CFO.
- The pistol range predates me as well. It's all contamination. It's not about project management but rather cost and remediating that contamination.
- Whether or not you get a grant, the DEP wants you to remediate if there is contamination.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- He's referring to the pistol range.

Mario Drodz – 95 Bell Street

- Resolution R-194-2026 what are you transferring?
- Resolution R-196-2026 can you clarify updated tax maps?
- Is it a transfer from one department to another?
- How is the town website running after July 1st?
- What are the terms and conditions? Don't you have to vote on it?

CFO DiMaria:

- A transfer to cover mispostings as a result of the audit.
- It's a transfer from one line of accounts to another.
- You can't do a revaluation unless your tax maps are up to date, so we must hire an engineering firm or surveyor to update the tax maps to submit to the State of NJ so we can proceed with our county ordered reassessment.
- We're going out for RFPs for website services – there is a three-to-six-month lead time with switching over and evaluating the companies. We will be using the same contractor we have now, but it will be on a paid basis.
- No, because it's under $53,000.
- If you want to see the contract, you can submit an OPRA request, and you will be sent a copy.

Motion to Close Public Comments by Councilman Cozzarelli; 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 and Adopt Consent Agenda with the Exceptions of Resolutions R-187-2026, R-188-2026, R-189-2026, R-190-2026 and R-191-2026 by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilman Cozzarelli.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez, and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #186-2026 AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TO ISSUE CHECKS IN PAYMENTS OF BILLS FROM VARIOUS ACCOUNTS

RESOLUTION #192-2026 RESOLUTION OF THE BELLEVILLE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL ADOPTING THE TOWNSHIP'S FOURTH ROUND OPERATING MANUAL FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AFFORDABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

RESOLUTION #193-2026 RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING MARIE DI PASQUALE TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

RESOLUTION #194-2026 BUDGET TRANSFER RESOLUTION – CY2024 ADOPTED MUNICIPAL BUDGET AND CY2023 APPROPRIATION RESERVES

RESOLUTION #195-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A NON-FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT TO DR. JAMES ORSINI FOR CONSULTING PHYSICIAN SERVICES

RESOLUTION #196-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING CONTRACT AMENDMENT NUMBER 1 FOR THE PREPARATION OF UPDATED TAX MAPS FROM NEGLIA GROUP

RESOLUTION #197-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING LUCI TIANKEE FOR HER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN WRESTLING

RESOLUTION #198-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING VALENTINA SHELDON FOR HER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN WRESTLING

RESOLUTION #199-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING ELIZABETH PENA FOR HER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN WRESTLING

RESOLUTION #200-2026 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING KRISTINA ZARRILLO FOR HER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN WRESTLING

RESOLUTION #187-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING ANNUAL RENEWAL AND ISSUANCE OF CLUB LICENSES "31" AND PLENARY RETAIL CONSUMPTION WITH BROAD PACKAGE PRIVILEGE LICENSE "32" FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 TO JUNE 30, 2027

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

RESOLUTION #188-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING ANNUAL RENEWAL AND ISSUANCE OF PLENARY RETAIL CONSUMPTION LICENSES "33" FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 TO JUNE 30, 2027

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

RESOLUTION #189-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING ANNUAL RENEWAL AND ISSUANCE OF PLENARY RETAIL DISTRIBUTION LICENSES "44" FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 TO JUNE 30, 2027

Motioned by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.

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

RESOLUTION #190-2026 RESOLUTION RESCINDING R- 155-2026 APPROVING A PERSON-TO-PERSON TRANSFER FOR PLENARY RETAIL DISTRIBUTION LICENSE #0701-44-003-009, ISSUED FROM TCF HOLDINGS LLC TO TCF HOLDINGS FOUR LLC (POCKET LICENSE)
Motioned by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow and Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: Mayor Melham Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #191-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING PLACE-TO-PLACE TRANSFER – EXPANSION OF PREMISE FOR PLENARY RETAIL CONSUMPTION LICENSE #0701-33-017-007, ISSUED TO MIRO CORP. T/A MICHAEL'S ROSCOMMON HOUSE
Motioned by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow and Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: Councilman Cozzarelli and Mayor Melham Motion Carries

New Business:
Motion to Approve and Adopt Resolutions R-201-2026 and R-202-2026 by Councilman Velez; Seconded by Councilman Cozzarelli.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, DePeña, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Velez and Mayor Melham
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #201-2026 RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION AND EXECUTE A GRANT CONTRACT WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE CLARA MAASS DR, MINKER PL, AND DAVIDSON ST. IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

RESOLUTION #202-2026 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND TOWNSHIP CLERK TO EXECUTE A FEDERAL AID AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NJDOT)

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- We have a presentation we would like to present to the Council Members who will be leaving us and would like to thank you for your service and wish you the best.

Councilman Graziano:

- Farewell speech to express gratitude for serving the residents of Belleville for the past eight years as Councilmember At-Large and Deputy Mayor.

Executive Session:
None

Adjournment:
Motion to Adjourn at 6:54pm by Councilwoman DePeña; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco. All-In-Favor

Respectfully Submitted,

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

The next Reorganization Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1, 2026 at 12:00pm at the Belleville High School Auditorium – 100 Passaic Avenue, Belleville, NJ 071409.