Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Reorganization Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Belleville High School - Auditorium
100 Passaic Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Mayor Velez at 12:08pm

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

Pledge of Allegiance:
By Mayor Velez

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 June 22, 2026 NJ Legal Ads. A copy of the meeting notice has been posted on the Township website and Town Hall Bulletin Board.

Invocation:
By Father Ivan Sciberras from St. Peter's Church

Certification of Municipal Election:
By Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

Oath of Office:

1. Administered to Mayor Frank Velez by Senator Cory Booker
2. Administered to At-Large Council Member Michelle Rodriguez by Chris Durken
3. Administered to At-Large Council Member Danyale Wells by Michael Johnson
4. Administered to 2nd Ward Council Member Thomas Graziano by Mayor Velez
5. Administered to Deputy Mayor Tracy Juanita Muldrow by Mayor Velez

Motion to Appoint Thomas Graziano to fill the vacancy of 2nd Ward Council Member until the next scheduled General Election by Guardabasco; Seconded by Cozzarelli.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Motion to Appoint Tracy Juanita Muldrow as Deputy Mayor by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Roll Call of New Council:
Council Members Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez

Councilman Graziano:

- Thank you everyone, with this new Council we are going to continue to perform and moving Belleville forward. Good luck to all.

Councilwoman Rodriguez:

- Thank you to the public for putting your trust in me, this will be a rewarding journey to continue to advocate for the community Belleville has created. Thank you to my family and again for the public trust.

Councilwoman Wells:

- Thank you to my family and for the public trust in putting us in office, we asked for your support, and you delivered so thank you for the opportunity and I will get to work for all of Belleville.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Congrats Mayor Velez and Councilwoman Rodriguez and Wells, this job can be time consuming so to have your family support is something to be thankful for, to the volunteers and individuals who will be appointed today, good luck and thank you.

Councilwoman Guardabasco:

- Wishing Councilwoman Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez on a successful new term, welcome back Councilman Graziano. I look forward to working alongside each of you to continue to make Belleville better.

Deputy Mayor Muldrow:

- Thank you, Mayor Velez and congratulations, to our incoming Councilwoman Rodriguez and Wells and Graziano welcome back. Thank you Cozzarelli and Guardabasco for your support and the opportunity to serve as Deputy Mayor.

Mayor Velez:

- Thank you all for your support, we are very grateful and will not squander this opportunity. We are going to do amazing things for Belleville by working as a team.

Motion to Appoint Councilman Graziano to be the Council representative to the Planning Board by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Cozzarelli.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Resolutions:

Consent Agenda:

Motion to Adopt Consent Agenda with the exception of resolution R-203-2026 by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Cozzarelli.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

RESOLUTION #204-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING DIPISA & LAGO, LLC A PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACT PURSUANT TO A FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS FOR TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY SERVICES

RESOLUTION #205-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACT PURSUANT TO A FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS FOR ALTERNATE TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY SERVICES – PEARCE LAW

RESOLUTION #206-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING CHIRAG D. MEHTA, ESQ. AS MUNICIPAL PROSECUTOR FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE

RESOLUTION #207-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING JAMES V. POMACO, ESQ. AS PUBLIC DEFENDER FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE

RESOLUTION #208-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING STEVEN MARTINO, ESQ. AS ASSISTANT TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE

RESOLUTION #209-2026 APPOINTING/REAPPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

RESOLUTION #210-2026 APPOINTING/REAPPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING BOARD

RESOLUTION #211-2026 APPOINTING/REAPPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE RENT LEVELING BOARD

RESOLUTION #212-2026 APPOINTING/REAPPOINTING MEMBERS OF THE ZONING BOARD

RESOLUTION #213-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING FUND COMMISSIONER

RESOLUTION #214-2026 RESOLUTION APPOINTING ALTERNATE FUND COMMISSIONER
RESOLUTION #215-2026 APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE MUNICIPAL GREEN TEAM FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION #216-2026 REAPPOINTING COUNCIL MEMBER VINCENT COZZARELLI AS THE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SECOND RIVER JOINT MEETING

RESOLUTION #217-2026 APPOINTING/REAPPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE BUDGET/LABOR COMMITTEE FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION #218-2026 APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION #219-2026 APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION #220-2026 APPOINTING MEMBERS TO THE REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40:69A-91

RESOLUTION #221-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO THE FEBRUARY 23, 2021 WATER CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE AND THE CITY OF NEWARK

RESOLUTION #222-2026 APPROVING ANNUAL RENEWAL AND ISSUANCE OF PLENARY RETAIL CONSUMPTION LICENSES "33" FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 TO JUNE 30, 2027 – J VERA ENTERPRISES LLC "J'S BAR & GRILL"

RESOLUTION #223-2026 DESIGNATING THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION #203-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING DIPISA & LAGO, LLC A PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACT PURSUANT TO A FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS FOR TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY SERVICES
Motion by Councilman Cozzarelli; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Mark DiPisa:

- I am honored and thrilled to be part of the township and to work with this new council. We will get things done in best interest of the residents and we're going to keep Belleville moving forward. Thank you for the opportunity.

Public Comments:

Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Cozzarelli.

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

Assemblywoman Carmen Morales - 1612 Hamilton Street

- Congratulations to the new At-Large Councilmembers, Deputy Mayor Muldrow and Mayor Velez, I look forward to continuing the great work of putting Belleville first and to serving Belleville community.

Frank Fleischman III – 833 Main Street

- Congrats Mayor Velez and Councilwoman Wells and Rodriguez, I hope you all will work together to make Belleville better.
- I've put together a project called Belleville Forward and I hope council read and consider some of the ideas/recommendations to enhance transparency, citizens engagement and responsible development in Belleville.

Lawrence Guines – 70 Watchung Avenue

- For years there's been an open gym policy on Sundays from 7:30am - 9:30am at the Friendly House and since the recent renovations, now that is no longer available plus a $200 fee to rent the gym.
- As a resident of Belleville, requesting Council to bring back open gym policy every Sunday free of charge since this was this case previously since 2021.

Jerry Delguercio – 8 Grove Street

- This Council is very historic, probably the most diverse council in the State of New Jersey and congratulations to all the newly elected officials.

Cheryl Gandy – 15 Prospect Street

- From the Greater East Orange Tenants Association and resident of East Orange and wish to congratulate everyone on their new positions.

Ellen Lund – 74 Clinton Street

- The Belleville Senior Center should be available to all residents free of charge as well as former residents of Belleville who no longer reside in Belleville.

- Please consider reversing this policy so it's free for all seniors and Belleville residents.

County Commissioner Lin Luciano

- Congratulations to the Mayor and At-Large Council members.
- The dignitaries and residents here are all available to assist and help this Council succeed, feel free to reach out to us if needed.

Commissioner Germaine Ortiz – Bergen County

- Congratulations to all the newly elected officials.

Councilwoman Tracy Phillip – Bloomfield Township

- Congratulations to all the newly elected officials.
- Thank you for your public service.

Kimberly Ferreira – 29 Overlook Avenue

- Parking on Overlook with the overflow from Washington Avenue has been an inconvenience, is there a way to combat that?
- Trash throughout town could be better, maybe have more cleanup community days because it's not just the township responsibility but also the residents.
- Congratulations everyone, I'm excited about this new chapter.

Dominic Sama – 527 East Street, Long Branch, NJ

- Congratulations to all the newly elected officials and my long-term friend Mayor Velez.
- Both of us are the youngest elected officials in our town.

Eric Alfonso – Superintendent of Belleville High School

- Congratulations to all the newly elected officials and Mayor Velez as this is our first Latino Mayor in history.
- Looking forward to continuing our partnership working together for Belleville.

Joanna – 42 Brighton Avenue

- As a special needs mom, that budget was cut and that is very concerning. Please do all you can to help families with special needs children.

Councilwoman Joanna Congleton Haley – Ridgefield, NJ

- As an elected official myself I understand how this job can take time away from your family, friends and what you put back into your community, so I hope the community of Belleville understands that.

Anne Sonkayanman – District Director for Congresswoman Anna Lydia Meija

- On behalf of the Congresswoman, congratulations on this new chapter. We are ready to build partnership with you all and wish you the best of luck.

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

New Business:
None

Motion to Close new business by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Graziano.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Benediction:
By Father Ivan Sciberras – St. Anthony's Church

Adjournment:
Motion to Adjourn at 2:00pm by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None Motion Carries

Respectfully Submitted,

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

The next Work Session Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 12:30pm.