Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Special Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Council Chambers – Town Hall
152 Washington Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Mayor Velez at 7:00pm

Members Present:
Council Members Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez

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

Absent:
Council Member Cozzarelli

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 August 11, 2026, NJ Legal Ads. A copy of the meeting notice has been posted on the Township website and Town Hall Bulletin Board.

Ordinances:
Ordinances for Public Hearing & Second and Final Reading:
ORDINANCE #31-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, NEW JERSEY, CHAPTER 8-16, ENTITLED HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES – (REMOVING)
Motion to Open Public Hearing by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Hearing and Adopt Ordinance #31-26 by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilman Graziano.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #32-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, NEW JERSEY, CHAPTER 8-16, ENTITLED HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES – (ADDING)

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

Public Comments:
Gary Hinton – 307 Fairway Avenue

- Does this ordinance include vending, hot dog trucks, etc.?

Clerk Guaman:

- This is a handicap ordinance. It's to add handicap parking spaces.

Motion to Close Public Hearing and Adopt Ordinance #32-26 by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #33-26 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 4 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE ENTITLED "GENERAL LICENSING", ARTICLE 17, ENTITLED "SOLICITORS AND CANVASSERS"

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

Public Comments:
Gary Hinton – 307 Fairway Avenue

- Does this ordinance include the vending trucks?

Manager Brian:

- No, this is for solicitors only. This is to keep solicitors trying to sell stuff to you away from your home.

Motion to Close Public Hearing and Adopt Ordinance #33-26 by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

ORDINANCE #34-26 AN ORDINANCE FIXING PERSONNEL POSITIONS, SALARIES, WAGES AND COMPENSATION AMOUNTS AND RATES – REPEALING ORDINANCE #30-26

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

Public Comments:
Michael Sheldon – 47 Floyd Street

- This ordinance has newly introduced positions and potentially unbudgeted stipends.
- Ordinance introduces four new salary positions and stipend allocations effective in 2026, why is that?
- Is that a statutory requirement? If not, what is the justification for doubling of the Municipal prosecutor per diem rate?
- The Public Defender salary increased by 60% in one year, what is the justification for that?
- The Assistant Municipal Tax Collector max. salary increased from $82,238 to $96,900.
- The Municipal Clerk salary fixed at $123,00 in 2023, now its range is $110,000 to $140,000.
- Assistant Town Attorney position, which is part time, capped at $156,099, that's the same as the full-time Municipal Attorney, why is that?
- Account clerk I flat rate is $51,000.00, in the past it was a 6-step progression process, why is that?
- What is the justification for the Personnel Director salary as well as the Director of Purchasing salary?
- What duties account for the creation of the new annual stipends for the QPA and Deputy Municipal Clerk? Are these tied to extra hours or certifications?
- What is the total overall budget impact of adding the new full-time principal health specialist and public information specialist trainee position?

CFO DiMaria:

- All these changes in salaries were included in the introduced 2026 budget.
- A few contracts were deposed of in June/July of 2026 which allowed room for the budget to offset these salary changes.

Manager Brian:

- Except for a few, most of these are not new, they were always in the ordinance, just the salary is changing.
- These changes weren't drastic but corrections that needed to be made to ensure everyone is being fairly compensated.

Mayor Velez:

- The Deputy Municipal Clerk position went from $83,000 full-time position to now a $10,000 stipend position, these changes of different positions and salaries are saving the town $179,000.

Councilwoman Wells:

- We said we will focus on correcting some things that need attention. This is not the end but the beginning.

Mario Drodz – 95 Bell Street

- Are the stipends separate of the salary or is that included with the salary and pension?
- So how do they get paid, a separate check?
- So, if you make $100,000, that extra $20,000 stipend doesn't raise your pension then?
- Who was the QPA before and how much were they making?
- What was the previous QPA salary?
- So, what is this person making now that you are bringing them up to $20,000?
- What is he making now?

CFO DiMaria:

- It's separate, non-pensionable.
- No, they get added together.
- The base salary is pensionable, not the stipend.
- There was no payment for the QPA.
- The person that is getting the QPA stipend position is the Payroll and Pension Supervisor.
- About $104,000 for payroll and pension plus the additional $20,000 QPA stipend.
- In the past there was no compliance with the local public contracts law or pay-to-play, we are now rectifying that.

Manager Brian:

- They were using someone else's license for a signature. They weren't doing the job of a purchasing agent.

Mayor Velez:

- Please elaborate on how broken the past practices were and how now we are fixing and ensuring this town is following regulatory practices to put the township in compliance.

Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mt. Prospect Ave.

- We didn't have purchasing agents before?
- You let this happen for 3-4 years?
- When was the last time you paid for a purchasing agent?
- Yes, you did, a woman named Sue when I was in office worked as the purchasing agent.
- Back in the 80s during my time in office.
- Over the years, Mr. DiMaria approved and introduced bond ordinances for no purpose.
- Town funds have been misappropriated for years and Mr. DiMaria approved funds that were not legal.

CFO DiMaria:

- The town had QPA's used to raise the bid threshold but did none of the work in terms of purchasing.
- It ended when I got here. I recommend changing the department with the previous Manager, but it didn't happen, therefore, the finance sector handled everything involving purchasing ourselves.
- Now it's shifted to one separate division in finance.
- Until now, you never had a separate stipend for a purchasing agent.
- When was that?
- The bond ordinance Mr. Frantantoni is referencing was from April of 2021, he spoke with the previous Manager as to how that incentive payout got into the ordinance, I started working for the Township on June 26, 2022.

Mayor Velez:

- Can we focus on the questions pertaining to this ordinance only.

Councilman Graziano:

- Mr. Frantantoni is referring to 2017-2018 which was not under the current manager or CFO then, but the previous Manager and we had two temporary CFOs at that time.
- Wanted to set the record straight because it is not fair to the current CFO and Manager to take the heat for something that did not happen under their watch.

Councilwoman Wells:

- I'm asking Mr. Frantantoni and the public to give us an opportunity to have some time to put in the work instead of jumping to conclusions.

Madam Arlene Schor – 75 Rossmore Place

- A purchasing agent must be documented; it should not be a stipend. I question your sound judgement on allowing it to happen.
- I ask that you refrain from calling people asking questions/comments a joke publicly Mr. DiMaria.

Jerry Delgercio – 8 Grove Street

- Are these stipends just for one year or is it continuous? Usually, stipends are not part of the salary.
- What you're saying is that it should be centralized.
- There were salaries that were increased, are any of those titles under a contract with the Municipal Employees Association?
- What do you mean by corrections?
- The Town Clerk got a raise? Then the Deputy Clerk?
- Are you saying a temporary person for $10,000?
- So, is it $83,000 plus the $10,000 on top?
- How does an Account Clerk get a promotion, and they end up losing money?

- When it's an ordinance for public hearing there is no time limit. There's a time limit for public comments but not public hearing on an ordinance.

Manager Brian:

- It's not part of the direct salary; it's for extra duties that they have taken on.
- We do stipends to avoid hiring another person for a full-time salary.
- Every person feels they have respectable value and you have to respect that; people are not working for free.
- A centralized department is what's best for the town, so we are working on building around that.
- The Deputy Clerk's position was vacant, instead of hiring someone new for $83,000 we removed the salary and turned it into a $10,000 stipend to give to someone that's already working for the town and has the qualifications for the position.
- No, it's just $10,000 we got rid of the $83,000.
- So, you're saying in the next title the minimum should be a little bit above the maximum for the previous title?

CFO DiMaria:

- These corrections are not bumps or anything.
- If you have the wrong title in the ordinance, you must correct it.
- The Deputy Clerk did not get a raise; it is a stipend.
- There is a progression in steps from going from one title change to another, prior to 2022 this town salary ordinance was not put together cohesively to where there is a clear distinction and thus, we had to amend it.

Attorney DiPisa:

- There's 30 seconds left, do you want to finish up your comment, ask any more questions and then the administration can respond.
- If Mayor and Council want him to surpass his 5 minutes that is not an issue with me.

Mayor Velez:

- As the Attorney stated, discussions on ordinances will not have a time limit. That said, it is the discretion of the Chair to ensure Robert's Rule of Order is being applied.

Motion to Close Public Hearing and Adopt Ordinance #34-26 by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman Muldrow.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

Public Comments:

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

Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mt. Prospect Ave.

- The fire on Crescent Terrace resulted in the fire hydrants not working, the fire department need to drain and flush out these hydrants.
- Get the firemen to take care of their own equipment.

Michael Sheldon – 47 Floyd Street

- Any chance of moving the Tuesday, August 25th meeting to 7:00pm?
- Newspaper article from the Star Ledger regarding the Mayor of Hackensack demanding an independent audit of the city's PILOT income.
- If town hall is not collecting or disclosing the annual financial audits mandated by state law, how can the Council or taxpayers have confidence that developers are paying their fair share?
- Request Council to authorize a third-party forensic audit, conduct an internal interview of oversight personnel, and enforce OPRA and transparency to provide the records being requested.

Gary Hinton – 307 Fairway Avenue

- The ordinance for vending trucks where they can only be parked for 15 minutes and then move locations, this one food truck on Franklin Avenue is putting cones out so people can't park, it is illegal. What can be done?

<u>Remarks to Answer Public Comment Questions:</u>

Mayor Velez:

- Suggests a presentation from the Fire Chief on the infrastructure needs in town.
- The State delegation and Belleville district Senators and Assemblymen are looking into funds to give to Belleville for upgrades to first responders equipment and infrastructure improvements.
- DPW Director Robert Welter has been actively fixing the potholes around town in an aggressive manner while we have cooperative weather.
- The public input and feedback will help the administration be able to address some of the issues in town.
- Bobby, can you elaborate on today's efforts and the future goals of the new Council, Mayor and DPW?
- For next week's Council meeting we are going to keep it at 6:00pm. Today was 7pm because we wanted to show the public there is an interest.
- Councilman Graziano, can you elaborate on the PILOT audits?
- A list of audit dates will be announced soon.

- Grant funding we received have been for the operational audit that was recently acquired.
- Manager, can you elaborate on the vendor truck situation since that predates this Council time.

DPW Director Robert:

- Actively investigating the water infrastructure alongside the fire department in town.
- The hydrants are DPW jurisdiction, if something's wrong the engineers go out and address them.
- No, the regulators were operating at optimal running pressure.
- We had the Mayor and Council come out with DPW to assess the town and went to different wards to fill all the potholes.
- Recommends the public to get the following apps: GoGov and Connect Belleville to stay updated and receive communications from the administration.
- GoGov allows residents to put in requests for things they want improved, as such it takes time and requires manpower.
- It was more efficient for DPW to take over because if it broke, we could fix it.

Manager Brian:

- Bobby, the big fire we had, was there an issue with the water pressure?
- Deputy Hands, did we put out the fire on Crescent? What was the time arrived at the scene?
- We've had no problems putting out our fires, our responsive time is great, but we will push to do better.
- The truck on Franklin Ave. has been there for decades, and the owner father was a veteran – the Courts decided they were grandfathered in based on the concept that so long as the family were operating the truck, the truck can stay there. If no direct lineage of family operated the truck, then they must move.

Deputy Hands:

- Yes, we did and under 5 minutes.
- We used to flush the hydrants but found they were always breaking causing DPW to have to do more work.
- Flushing was causing damage so eventually it fell into the hands of DPW.

Councilman Graziano:

- Why are the fire hydrants under the care of DPW and not the fire department?
- Working on getting a rent roster and creating an ordinance for it to address the developers.
- Spoken about the PILOTS with the Redevelopment Committee to bring up concerns and how to address them.

Gary Hinton – 407 Fairway Ave.

- The town law should have nothing to do with that court order. The ordinance is clear.

Attorney DiPisa:

- I'll have the BA forward to me the court case so I can analyze it before commenting.

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

Report of the Mayor:

- Met with NJDOT and Assemblywoman Morales on the progress of Washington Ave.
- Washington Ave is a state project; communication has been frequent so when we receive notice the public will know.

Resolutions:

Consent Agenda:

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

RESOLUTION #255-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING A PERSON-TO-PERSON TRANSFER FOR PLENARY RETAIL DISTRIBUTION LICENSE ISSUED FROM TCF HOLDINGS LLC TO TCF HOLDINGS FOUR LLC (POCKET LICENSE)

RESOLUTION #256-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF OVERPAYMENT OF THIRD QUARTER 2026 PROPERTY TAXES FOR 187 CORTLANDT STREET, BLOCK 8607 LOT 4

RESOLUTION #257-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF OVERPAYMENT OF THIRD QUARTER 2026 PROPERTY TAXES

Executive Session:

Motion to Go into Executive Session for contract matters, potential litigation, and attorney-client privilege by Councilwoman Wells; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

Motion to Exit Executive Session by Councilman Graziano. Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: Cozzarelli Abstain: None Motion Carries

Adjournment:

Motion to Adjourn at 9:48pm by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman Muldrow.

All-In-Favor

The next Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 6:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacqueline E. Guaman
Township Clerk