Minutes

Mayor and Municipal Council Regular Council Meeting
of the Township of Belleville at Council Chambers – Town Hall
152 Washington Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey,
Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order:
By Mayor Velez at 6:00pm

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

Also Present:
Township Attorney Mark DiPisa, Township Manager Brian Banda, Chief Financial Officer, Frank DiMaria, Public Works Director Robert Welter, Recreation Director Leonard Averhoff and Municipal Clerk Jacqueline Guaman

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 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.

Work Session/Council Discussions:
Mayor Velez

A. Discuss ordinance prohibiting the feeding of pigeons within the Township of Belleville
    - Complaints in residential areas are caused by too much pigeon feeding, now more pigeons are entering the town.
    - Homeowners are concerned about pigeon droppings.
    - Affecting the quality of life in town.

Robert Welter – Director of DPW

B. Discuss TRANE HVAC system for township buildings
    - Reports ongoing HVAC issues at the Public Safety Building and Town Hall.
    - Notes that Trane evaluated both systems to determine the necessary heating and air conditioning improvements.
    - States that Trane will provide a detailed breakdown to the Council and public and that quotes have been received.

- Trane was selected due to its experience in commercial HVAC systems and its role as the provider of the buildings' chillers.
- Warranty options of five or ten years were considered.

Manager Brian:

- Please explain who Trane is and why we chose them.
- If these figures remain stable, converting this into a capital ordinance would avoid impacting operating expenses, the budget, or taxes while providing a fully functional HVAC system for employees in both buildings.
- Good, and our debt service, we're looking at 2.5% over 15 years is $160,000 a year, that's half the cost of what we're spending.

Trane Representative – Michael Sebastiano

- Trane conducted an HVAC audit approximately one year ago, identifying aging equipment, outdated controls, and system deficiencies in Town Hall and Public Safety.
- Annual repair costs are estimated at $250,000–$300,000, largely for temporary fixes. Some Public Safety equipment dates to the 1970s.
- Trane recommended addressing the deficiencies through a comprehensive capital project.
- Town Hall: Fixed-price proposal of $998,000 for controls upgrades.
- Public Safety: Engineering agreement of $55,000, with an estimated construction budget of $1.85 million.
- The overall project is expected to take approximately one year, depending on engineering, equipment lead times, and installation.
- Estimated utility savings are $35,000 annually (17.5%), with potential upfront incentives of $150,000–$175,000.
- The proposed open-protocol system is nonproprietary and can be serviced by other qualified HVAC contractors.
- The standard warranty is one year for parts and labor, with extended coverage of up to 10 years available.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- What is the length of the warranty provided?
- Frank, is the expected lifespan of this equipment approximately 20 years, consistent with the proposed bond term?
- What is the maximum amortization period available for this project?
- Will the annual cost be less than $250,000?
- How much DPW staff time and resources are currently spent troubleshooting HVAC issues, and how would this project free them up for other town responsibilities?

Mayor Velez:

- What is the estimate for the two buildings?
- CFO, what is the estimate cost of the town's cost on current expenditure?
- The focus should be on a long-term plan to include all infrastructure needs, and this is a conversation for another time.
- Council is interested but will have to revisit this conservation during the next budget cycle.

CFO DiMaria:

- Current HVAC repair and temporary fixed expenses are approximately $250,000 annually.
- The primary concern is the potential difference between Trane's assessment and the engineer's evaluation.
- If the engineer determines that walls must be opened to complete the work, additional costs may be incurred.
- A capital ordinance would consolidate funding to address all necessary repairs in one project.
- The estimated project cost could reach $3 million, requiring approximately $150,000 in down payment or initial funding.
- The project would consume a significant portion of the annual capital budget and could delay other projects by at least one year.
- What is the anticipated timeline for completing the project?
- Under the Local Bond Law, the applicable asset category determines the permitted amortization period, estimated at 20–25 years.
- The project may remain in bond anticipation notes for approximately 10 years before transitioning to long-term financing, subject to applicable requirements.
- Projected costs and savings appear favorable based on the figures presented.
- Are energy credits, incentives, or utility savings available?
- Can other qualified HVAC contractors service the equipment, or would the town be required to use Trane?
- What are the anticipated costs and terms of future maintenance agreements?
- Purchasing an extended warranty upfront may allow the cost to be included in the capital project rather than the operating budget, subject to applicable accounting and financing requirements.

Councilman Graziano:

- Is the AC and airflow issue also affecting the heating system?
- Has an assessment been conducted across all town buildings to identify inefficiencies and determine whether similar HVAC upgrades are needed at other locations?

Councilwoman Wells:

- What factors determine the warranty term, from the standard one-year coverage up to 10 years?
- What is the additional cost for extended warranty coverage, and can it be paid over time or must be purchased upfront?

Leonard Averhoff – Recreation Director:

C. Discuss Open Play hours at recreation facilities

- 1) Hours of operation – revise ordinance to ensure all town parks are on the same schedule and the signage reflects the correct times.
- 2) Facility permits fees – due to increased usage requests for town facilities, the town is proposing to amend the ordinance to establish updated rates that better serve the town's interests.

- 3) Open play program for the outdoor facilities – establish designated open-play hours at outdoor facilities so residents have access to recreational spaces when no scheduled programs are taking place.
- 4) Friendly House now active, with plans to offer scheduled open-gym hours for community members through a community pass.
- These four proposed changes will require amendments to the administrative code and applicable ordinance.
- Upcoming programs will provide residents with more opportunities to participate in recreational activities.
- Fees may include a membership or drop-in option, particularly given Friendly House's limited capacity.
- Open play will be available to residents who are not enrolled in scheduled programs. Activities will be advertised, and residents can register to receive updates.
- Existing mobile stations and iPads will be used to scan passes and manage facility access.
- Residents may participate in drop-in open play for a fee.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- Any adult leagues?

Councilwoman Rodriguez:

- Which town facilities are being considered for open-play use?
- Will families who are not enrolled in a program be required to pay a fee to use other recreational facilities?

Manager Brian:

- Increased facility rental requests prompted the proposal to establish designated open-play hours, ensuring residents and families have access to town recreational facilities for leisure and family activities.

Councilwoman Wells:

- Are all facilities equipped for the digital scan card?
- Will all residents registered for a community pass be required to use a digital membership card for facility access?

Councilwoman Muldrow:

- Will residents need to register through the app in advance to participate in open play, or can they drop in without prior registration?

Report of the Manager:

- Pocket Park**:** The project is moving forward and is currently under construction.
- Tree Planting: $150,000 in PSE&G funding has been received for tree planting along Beech Street and Carmer Avenue. Planting will begin soon, and homeowners will receive letters next week advising that trees will be planted on their properties.
- Santander Municipal Parking Lot: Awaiting installation of signage, with the lot expected to open this month.
- Washington Avenue: Met with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and established bimonthly meetings to address concerns raised by community members and businesses. Estimated project completion is two years.

- Watermain Improvements: Work on Center Street is complete, and work is underway on Charles Street. Once completed, lead service line replacements will begin, followed by street repaving.
- Budget Committee: The committee continues to meet weekly to finalize the 2026 budget and begin working with departments on the 2027 budget.

Councilman Cozzarelli:

- There are 50-75 retired police officers here, could someone give them an update?

Report of the Mayor:

- Directed the Town Manager to immediately suspend any termination of health insurance coverage for affected surviving spouses.
- Labor Attorney notified all impacted individuals that their health benefits will remain in effect and will not terminate October 1st, 2026.
- Letters confirming continued coverage were issued.
- The township received new documentation that warranted further investigation and initiated this review to ensure public funds are invested appropriately and that health benefits are provided in accordance with applicable laws, collective bargaining agreements and eligibility requirements.
- The Township identified 19 cases in which health benefits continued after an individual's death, along with other cases involving potentially unverified eligibility.
- Individuals found responsible for errors or inaccuracies would be held accountable.
- CFO, can you expand on the 19 cases?
- What procedures can be implemented to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future?
- What other discrepancies were identified during the review?
- The total cost associated with the cases is still being determined.
- Have the updated letters been mailed to the affected individuals?

CFO DiMaria:

- Reviewed enrollee records, verified coverage, examined personnel files, and developed a database requiring ongoing maintenance.
- Implemented annual proof-of-life verification, identifying 19 deceased individuals who remained on the system through follow-ups, obituary reviews, and insurance company inquiries.
- Established an annual verification process to maintain accurate and up-to-date records.
- Explained that, while no system is entirely error-free, improved follow-up procedures and verification measures will help reduce risk.
- Verification work will be conducted during the first three months of the year, followed by monitoring throughout the remainder of the year.
- Identified individuals who were ineligible for the plan and began addressing each case individually.
- Annual fixed costs, including stop-loss and prescription premiums, are $11,544 for single coverage, $22,958 for family coverage, $16,092 for parent/child coverage, and $18,863 for couple coverage.

- Noted that insurance costs have increased significantly in recent years; applying current rates to the identified cases would provide an estimate of potential savings.
- Confirmed that the same coverage rates apply to active employees, retirees, and surviving spouses.
- Annual administrative expenses for the plan total approximately $8 million.

Attorney DiPisa:

- Cautioned that correspondence from Council is subject to attorney-client privilege and that related legal matters should not be discussed in open session.
- No confirmation whether the letter was mailed out as of now.

Councilman Graziano:

- Mayor, has the Township determined the total amount paid in connection with the 19 identified cases?
- What is the Township's total annual health insurance expenditure for each coverage category, including single, family, parent/child, and couple plans?

Councilwoman Wells:

- On average over the past years, what are the numbers that you've been seeing?

Approval of Minutes:

A. July 28, 2026

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

B. August 18, 2026

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

Communications:

By Clerk Guaman:

A. Memorialization of a resolution introduced during August 24, 2026, Regular Council Meeting and adopted by motion of roll call vote. Res. 278-2026 resolution authorizing the waiver of all fees for use of the Senior Center for the Belleville Unico's 4th annual ALS Walk on September 26, 2026.
B. Issuance of Belleville Raffle Licenses – total of 9 licenses number RL#3405 through RL#3413.

Ordinances:

Ordinances for Introduction:

ORDINANCE #39-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2, SUBSECTION 28 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE ENTITLED "MEDICAL BENEFITS PREMIUMS FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE"

Motion by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.

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

ORDINANCE #40-2026 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 3 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, ENTITLED "POLICE REGULATIONS," TO ADD A NEW SECTION 3-51 PROHIBITING THE FEEDING OF PIGEONS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE
Motion 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**

ORDINANCE #41-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, NEW JERSEY, CHAPTER 8-16, ENTITLED HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES (REMOVING)
Motion by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Wells.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

ORDINANCE #42-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, NEW JERSEY, CHAPTER 8-16, ENTITLED HANDICAPPED PARKING SPACES (ADDING)
Motion 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**

Ordinances for Public Hearing and Second and Final Reading:
ORDINANCE #35-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE TO ACCEPT AND AGREE TO A WATER MAIN EASEMENT CONCERNING THE REAL PROPERTY COMMONLY KNOWN AS 681 MAIN STREET, BLOCK 10001, LOT 3.01 AND LOT 3.02 (FORMERLY KNOWN AS BLOCK 10001, LOT 3)
Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman Muldrow.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ord. #35-2026 by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

ORDINANCE #36-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 13 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE TO ADD SECTION 13.17 ENTITLED "USE OF

PORTABLE PROPANE HEATERS AT PUBLIC OUTDOOR EATING, DRINKING AND ASSEMBLY ESTABLISHMENTS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE"
Motion to Open Public Comments 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**

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ord. #36-2026 by Councilwoman Muldrow; Seconded by Councilwoman Wells.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

ORDINANCE #37-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 13 OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE TO ADD SECTION 13.18 ENTITLED "E-MOBILITY DEVICES AND LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES"
Motion to Open Public Comments by Councilman Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ord. #37-2026 by Councilwoman Muldrow; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

ORDINANCE #38-2026 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 Graziano; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

- Public Comments: None

Motion to Close Public Comments and Adopt Ord. #38-2026 by Councilwoman Wells; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

Public Comments:
Motion 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**

Richard Giordano – Daniel's Law:

- States their family has been in Belleville since 1898, and survivor benefits have historically been provided.
- Notes that employees accepted lower pay in exchange for these benefits and expresses concern over the potential changes.
- Reads private messages from then-Councilman Velez in 2025 in which he expressed support for retirees.

Victor Mesce – Daniel's Law

- Shares his experiences serving as a Belleville police officer and emphasizes the sacrifices made in exchange for the promised benefits.

Carl Castellano – Daniel's Law

- Served Belleville for 27 years, sacrificing time with their family, and that promised benefits for widowers, spouses, and dependents were earned through their service.
- Questions the change in position since November 2025 and emphasize the Township's commitment to these families.
- Urges Mayor Velez to uphold his November 14, 2025, statement opposing the removal of benefits from surviving spouses of those who served the community.

Vince Masi – Daniel's Law

- Proudly served 25 years protecting families and community of Belleville.
- Emphasizes the responsibility to ensure officers' families are financially protected if an officer does not return home in the line of duty.

Kathy Dalzell – 221 Fairway Ave.

- Complaints about Forest Hill Field Club setting off late-night fireworks in September each year, disrupting residents' peace.
- Issue has persisted for years and prior attempts to contact the golf course were unsuccessful.
- Requests that the Township address the ongoing issue.

Sean Joyce – 6 West End Ave. Madison, NJ

- Shared that his father-in-law, Bob Bstell, served 30 years as a captain with the Belleville Police Department.
- Expressed shock that his grieving mother-in-law's benefits, received since 1979, were set to expire October 1.
- Emphasized Janet's personal and financial sacrifices made in reliance on Bob's benefits.
- Noted that many surviving spouses depend on these benefits for daily living and have limited alternative financial support.

- Urged the Township to honor its commitments to families of officers who dedicated 25 or more years to serving Belleville.

Janet Bstell – Daniel's Law

- Janet explained that Bob left retirement and survivor benefit documents to prepare her for his passing.
- Shared Bob's experiences serving as a Belleville police officer.
- Explained that Bob's demanding schedule made balancing employment and raising their children difficult.
- Relied on Bob's assurances and survivor benefits for her family's financial security.
- Did not seek employment, trusting that Bob had ensured their family would be provided for.

Steve Kimble – 2 Deer Trail Rd., North Caldwell, NJ

- Shared that his father served 55 years with the Belleville Police Department, rising to Chief of Police before his passing in 2019, and that two uncles each served over 35 years.
- Emphasized that retirees negotiated in good faith for survivor benefits, which have reportedly been provided for over 50 years.
- Asked the Mayor and Council whether they support terminating benefits for surviving spouses.

Philomena Frantantoni – 129 Mt. Prospect Ave.

- Received a letter stating that participation in senior programs and access to the Belleville Senior Building requires a photo ID.
- Questioned the rationale for requiring photo identification to access the Senior Building.

Joe Simonetti – Daniel's Law

- Police officer in Belleville for 30 years and retired as Deputy Chief.
- What are the younger police officers supposed to do if these benefits cease to exist?

Dennis Pinto – 22 Grand Ave., South River

- Spoke on behalf of his late father-in-law, Belleville Captain Joseph Osie.
- Explained that his father-in-law entrusted him with caring for his widow, Teresa, and that he was advocating for the benefits she is entitled to receive.
- Urged the Mayor and Council to honor their commitments and preserve benefits for current and retired officers and their families.

Mike Ciallela – Business Manager

- Thanked the Mayor for pausing the matter on behalf of his 20 employees.
- Spoke in advocacy for his employees and urged the Mayor and Council to address the benefits issue promptly.
- Opposed removing benefits from police, fire, and public works employees.
- Emphasized that commitments were made and urged the Township to honor them.

Vincent Frantantoni – 129 Mt. Prospect Ave.

- Referenced the Town Manager's statement regarding plans to install an electric gate at the Valley Street parking lot to restrict access to non-employees.
- Questioned the proposed $193,000 cost, suggesting signage stating "Municipal Purposes Only. Violators Will Be Prosecuted" as an alternative.
- Urged Councilwomen Wells and Rodriguez to work with their colleagues to promote fiscal responsibility.
- Questioned why photo ID is required at the senior building when it is not required for participation in other town events.
- Raised concerns that the municipal budget remains unadopted nearly a year later and that the delay affects tax bills.
- Suggested investigating who cashed unauthorized benefit checks issued under deceased individuals' names and pursuing prosecution where warranted.

David Fatone – Daniel's Law

- Currently serving as a Belleville police officer with over 20 years of service.
- Shared that his father was also a police officer and taught him at age 16 about the commitment required to serve.
- Emphasized that lifetime family benefits provide financial security and help offset the risks of a dangerous profession.
- Expressed concern that the letters are creating fear among officers, their families, and the community.

Joseph Mundy – Daniel's Law

- Retired police officer with 26 years of service to the community.
- Expressed concern over the letters, noting his son's epilepsy and autism and his lifelong dependence on his parents for care.
- Urged the Township to protect officers' families, recognizing the dedication of active and retired officers who have devoted their lives to serving the community.

Thomas Grazzo. – Daniel's Law

- Retired Belleville police officer and currently a school resource officer for the past 13 years.
- Questioned why the investigation would affect current employees and retirees??
- Express concerns over the lack of clear answers from Council.
- Emphasized that promised benefits from Council should be honored.

Mario Drodz – 95 Bell Street

- Requested clarification on the amendments to resolutions R-280-2026, and R-289-2026.
- Referenced a similar situation from 1992 during his time on the Board of Commissioners.
- Asked who knew about the discrepancies and how long they had known.
- Questioned who proposed privatizing the ball fields, the rationale behind the proposal, and the anticipated cost savings.
- Emphasized the importance of moving forward rather than revisiting past practices.

Nick Briner – Belleville Police Retired Officers Association – Daniel's Law

- There has been no meeting since August 25th, which you publicly promised.
- The 19 deceased members weren't found in this period but last year, we are talking about now, the people that are living who are losing their benefits.
- The town is self-insured thus no bills were paid to dead people. The claims are what's being paid.
- It didn't cost the town anything for the 19 dead people because no bill came to the town.
- In 1977 the Commissioners passed an ordinance that granted health benefits for surviving spouses of eligible employees and retirees, almost 50 years ago.
- The 1977 ordinance was referenced on August 24, 2001, by the Town Manager who suggested eliminating health benefits for widows and surviving spouses to reduce costs of the Township.
- August 24, 2001, the Firemen's Mutual Benevolent Association (FMBA) filed a civil action against the township and obtained an injunction.
- September 4, 2001, the Police Benevolent Association (PBA) sent a letter to the Town Manager indication its intention to pursue legal action if the proposed elimination of benefits proceeded.
- Following the 9/11 attack, the matter received less immediate attention as the Township addressed circumstances and priorities arising from those events.
- August 5, 2002, the PBA filed a lawsuit and a motion in the court to join the FMBA litigation filed in August 2001, consolidating the related matters in a single proceeding.
- October 14, 2003, the litigation was resolved through settlement in which the PBA's Attorney sent correspondence to the Town's Attorney documenting the Township's assurances and representations to no longer move forward with the elimination/nullifying of health benefits for retirees and dependents of former employees thus both sides agreed to dispose of the litigation through a stipulation of dismissal.
- Stated that their attorney would address the matter, as he did not have the details available.
- Stated that, to their knowledge, the matter was mutually resolved by agreement and advised seeking clarification from the attorneys regarding subsequent court filings.
- When cases are dismissed by an attorney's motion, is there a final court order granted when both parties agree to dismiss the case?
- Questioned Town Manager Brian Banda's dual titles of Town Manager and Planning Aide, noting that his contract allows him to return to the Planning Aide position if removed as Town Manager, while also stating his employment is subject to the Civil Service Act, raising concerns about the terms of his dismissal.
- Stated that the Council can intervene when professional staff decisions do not align with its direction.
- Reported that the PBA attorney submitted a 26-page letter to the Council and administration documenting proof of coverage and eligibility for widows and surviving spouses.
- Reiterate offer on behalf of the association to meet with the Council/administration at any time to resolve this.

Attorney DiPisa:

- The Mayor confirmed a meeting would be held but noted that additional information received by the Council requires further review.
- The Labor Attorney requested clarification from the attorney representing the affected individuals regarding whom he represents.
- The Mayor intends to fulfill the commitment to meet once the new information has been further reviewed.
- Clarified that the Township's intent was not to remove surviving spouses' health benefits, but to verify eligibility.
- Emphasized the Township's fiduciary responsibility to ensure taxpayer funds are spent appropriately.
- The Mayor paused further action following the letters to review eligibility and ensure qualified individuals retain their benefits.
- Asked whether a final court decision was issued regarding the Township's removal of health benefits, referencing a 2001 court order provided by the attorney.
- Stated that the Township has not received a final judicial decision and requested that a copy be provided if one exists.
- Is there a final stipulation of dismissal that was signed by both parties as well?

CFO DiMaria:

- Administrative charges vary by category when an individual chooses not to see a doctor.
- Clarified that no connection was made between the 19 individuals removed and the current surviving-spouse benefits issue.
- Stated that claims were submitted under a deceased individual's name, resulting in a financial loss to the Township.

Jerry Delgercio – 8 Grove St.

- Stated that changes to established past practices should occur through negotiation of a new contract and noted that police and fire employees have binding arbitration.
- Asked Mr. DiMaria to clarify reports of deceased individuals continuing to receive benefits.
- Questioned whether several individuals received benefits without proof of eligibility and whether those cases were separate from the 19 previously identified.
- Requested clarification on the number of cases involved and whether any of the five situations were referred to the Prosecutor's Office for investigation.
- Questioned why the cases were not referred to the Prosecutor's Office and why the insurance company should bear responsibility when the Township pays for coverage.
- Urged the Council to direct that the cases be referred to the Prosecutor's Office for investigation.

CFO DiMaria:

- Confirmed that claims were paid under deceased individuals' names in multiple instances.
- Clarified that the cases were in addition to the previously discussed individuals.
- Estimated that approximately three or four cases were involved.
- Stated that the cases were referred to the insurance company, which was expected to handle the matter.
- Noted that the Township is self-insured and pays the insurance company for its services.

- Explained that the information regarding Verizon came from the company, but further details were not known.

Ruben Rodriguez – 179 Cedar Hill

- Thanked everyone for their service.
- Questioned the need for a new wildlife-feeding ordinance given the existing Code 346, which prohibits feeding wild or non-domesticated animals on municipal property.
- Asked the CFO whether the identified discrepancies had been referred to the prosecutor's office.
- Requested clarification on how the proposed ordinance would be enforced.

CFO DiMaria:

- Confirmed the discrepancies had not been referred to the prosecutor's office.

Attorney DiPisa:

- Clarified that the existing ordinance applies to public property, while the newly introduced ordinance addresses pigeon feeding on both public and private property.
- Noted that the proposed ordinance outlines the applicable requirements and restrictions.

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

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

RESOLUTION #279-2026 AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER TO ISSUE CHECKS IN PAYMENTS OF BILLS FROM VARIOUS ACCOUNTS

RESOLUTION #280-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

RESOLUTION #281-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING INCLUSION IN THE ESSEX COUNTY URBAN COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2027-2029 (OCTOBER 1, 2026, TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2029)

RESOLUTION #282-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE PRICING AGREEMENT WITH NJEDGE.NET, INC. EDGEMARKET COOPERATIVE PRICING SYSTEM

RESOLUTION #283-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE REGION VIII EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER FOR THE INTERLOCAL PURCHASING SYSTEM

RESOLUTION #284-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING CHANGE ORDER #1 AND FINAL FOR 2023 ROAD PROGRAM MA-2022 & MA2023 (PROJECT).
RESOLUTION #285-2026 RESOLUTION APPROVING CHANGE ORDER #1 AND FINAL FOR VARIOUS STREET IMPROVEMENTS MA-2020 & MA2021 (PROJECT)

RESOLUTION #286-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING ROBERT "BOB" CASCELLA THE 2026 ITALIAN HERITAGE AWARD

RESOLUTION #287-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING DARREN RISPOLI AS THE 2026 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

RESOLUTION #288-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING CHIEF PHYLLIS L. BINDI FROM THE EAST ORANGE POLICE DEPARTMENT-2026 GRAND MARSHAL

RESOLUTION #289-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING CATHERINE J. MARUCCI AS THE 2026 NUTLEY ITALIAN WOMAN OF THE YEAR

RESOLUTION #290-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING GEORGETTE COZZARELLI AS THE 2026 BELLEVILLE ITALIAN WOMAN OF THE YEAR

RESOLUTION #291-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING ROBERT FRANNICOLA AS THE 2026 NUTLEY MAN OF THE YEAR

RESOLUTION #292-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING ROBERT "BOB" G. PETERS AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2026 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD

RESOLUTION #293-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING STEPHEN "STEVE" ZIRPOLI AS 2026 BELLEVILLE ITALIAN MAN OF THE YEAR

RESOLUTION #294-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING NICOLE PONTI AS THE 2026 RENAISSANCE WOMAN

RESOLUTION #295-2026 PROCLAMATION HONORING RENEE AMADEO & URSZULA CENTANNI SALON SORELLE AS THE 2026 ITALIAN AMERICAN BUSINESS LEADERS

RESOLUTION #296-2026 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TAX EXEMPTION AND REFUNDING ON A DWELLING HOUSE OF AN APPROVED DISABLED VETERAN

RESOLUTION #297-2026 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX, NEW JERSEY, DETERMINING THE FORM AND OTHER DETAILS OF ITS "WATER UTILITY NOTE RELATING TO THE WATER BANK CONSTRUCTION FINANCING PROGRAM OF THE NEW JERSEY INFRASTRUCTURE BANK", TO BE ISSUED IN THE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF UP TO $5,000,000, AND PROVIDING FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF SUCH NOTE TO THE NEW JERSEY INFRASTRUCTURE BANK, AND AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF SUCH NOTE BY THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE IN FAVOR OF THE NEW JERSEY INFRASTRUCTURE BANK, ALL

PURSUANT TO THE NEW JERSEY INFRASTRUCTURE BANK WATER BANK CONSTRUCTION FINANCING PROGRAM

RESOLUTION #298-2026 RESOLUTION ASSIGNING PRIORITIES FOR SUBMISSIONS OF THE FY 2026 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) REPROGRAMMING APPLICATION

RESOLUTION #299-2026 RESOLUTION REQUESTING AN EXTENSION OF TIME FOR THE AWARD OF A CONTRACT FOR THE DOT MA 2024 GRANT FOR SIDEWALKS AND ADA IMPROVEMENTS

RESOLUTION #300-2026 RESOLUTION AMENDING THE 2026 APPROVED BUDGET

New Business:

RESOLUTION #301-2026 RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE PLANNING BOARD TO UNDERTAKE A GENERAL REEXAMINATION OF THE MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89

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

Mayor Velez:

- This pertains to the Master Plan, as 60% of the electorate expressed that the Township's current development regulations, Master Plan, and overall vision should be reevaluated under a new Planning Board and new representation on the Township Council.

RESOLUTION #302-2026 RESOLUTION AWARDING A NON-FAIR AND OPEN CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES – SPECIAL LABOR COUNSEL TO CLEARY GIACOBBE ALFIERI JACOBS LAGANA, LLC

Motion from the Floor by Councilwoman Guardabasco; Seconded by Councilwoman Wells.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

Mayor Velez:

- Thanks the public for sharing their comments regarding health benefits for widows and surviving spouses.
- Clarifies that the goal is to ensure eligible individuals retain benefits and ineligible individuals are removed to promote responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

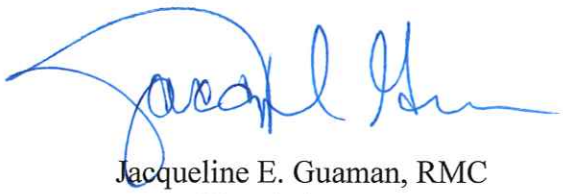
Executive Session:

Motion to Enter Executive Session at 9:02pm for litigation, attorney-client privilege, negotiation and deliberations by Councilwoman Wells; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None **Motion Carries (Voice Call Vote)**

Motion to Exit Executive Session at 9:58pm by Councilwoman Wells; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco.
Ayes: Cozzarelli, Graziano, Guardabasco, Muldrow, Rodriguez, Wells and Mayor Velez.
Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None **Motion Carries**

Adjournment:
Motion to Adjourn at 9:59pm by Councilwoman Wells; Seconded by Councilwoman Guardabasco. All-In-Favor

Respectfully Submitted,



Jacqueline E. Guaman, RMC
Township Clerk

The next Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2026.