

BOROUGH OF RAMSEY  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES  
Wednesday, March 22, 2023  
7:00pm

Budget  
Intro

This meeting is also being conducted telephonically. The Dial-In Number (425)436-6365 Access Code 213563#. The meeting may also be viewed on Ramsey YouTube Channel [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeBnVXBwSn\\_ILMuAGkSin9w](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeBnVXBwSn_ILMuAGkSin9w)

Mayor Dillon called the meeting to order at 7:03pm, asked Rescue Chief Keosayian to lead the flag salute. Mayor Dillon read the Open Public Meetings Act notice.

I. ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Dillon, Councilpersons Cusick, Kilman, Gutwetter, Popolo and Poppe

Also Present: Borough Clerk Bendian, Borough Administrator Vozeh and Borough Attorney Scandariato

Absent: Councilwoman Woods

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 03-08-23

Motion to approve and file by Councilman Kilman, seconded by Councilwoman Cusick. All in favor. Carried.

III. COMMUNICATIONS -

Motion to receive and file by Councilwoman Cusick, seconded by Councilman Popolo Mayor Dillon accepted with regret, Norm Andersen's retirement. All in favor. Carried

1. Norman Andersen, Borough of Ramsey DPW Laborer  
letter dated March 14, 2023, informing of his retirement effective April 1, 2023

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Anyone wishing to address the governing body please give your name (spelling the last name) and address. Please speak in an audible tone and address your comments to the Chair. There will be a five-minute time limit per speaker, unless reduced because of the volume of business on the agenda. Please note, public comment is your time. Out of respect and fairness to all, there will be no interruptions or questions answered during your time. No time shall be ceded to anyone else and no time shall be saved for later use. Any responses may be given during the governing body's comments later in the meeting, or as directed by the Chair. The Borough Clerk is the official time keeper.

Mayor Dillon opened public comment. With no one in chambers or on the telephone wishing to be heard, Mayor Dillon closed public comment.

V. ADVERTISED PUBLIC HEARING FOR FINAL CONSIDERATION OF ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE 03-2023 - AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE VACATION OF DUMONT AVENUE IN THE BOROUGH OF RAMSEY, BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Motion by Councilwoman Cusick, seconded by Councilman Kilman

BE IT RESOLVED that an Ordinance entitled An Ordinance Providing for the Vacation of Dumont Avenue in the Borough of Ramsey, Bergen County, New Jersey Amending Chapter 10 of the Code of the Borough of Ramsey, Bergen County, New Jersey, final reading by title and that said ordinance be adopted as an ordinance of the Borough of Ramsey and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk be and she hereby is, directed to cause a copy of the title of said ordinance to be published in an official newspaper of the Borough in the manner provided by law together with notice of the date of introduction and adoption of said ordinance.

Mayor Dillon asked for council comments on Ordinance 03-2023.

Councilwoman Cusick stated that this borough property is a 50' wide "paper street" between Franklin Turnpike and Route 17 just north of the Franklin Turnpike overpass. This ordinance vacates that paper street and splits the property between the three adjacent property owners. Having been reviewed by the Borough Attorney and the Planning Board Attorney, they have no legal issue with the vacation of the property.

Mayor Dillon opened the public hearing on Ordinance 03-2023. With no one in council chambers or on the telephone wishing to be heard, Mayor Dillon closed the public hearing on Ordinance 03-2023.

Roll Call:

YAY: Cusick, Gutwetter, Kilman, Popolo, Poppe

ABSENT: Woods

VI. APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Dillon made the following appointments

Jordan Miller, Ramsey Rescue Squad

Glenn Veprek, Ramsey Rescue Squad

Mayor Dillon asked for a motion to go out of the regular order of business in order for Administrator to give his report. Motion by Councilman Kilman, seconded Councilwoman Cusick.

Roll Call:

YAY: Cusick, Gutwetter, Kilman, Popolo, Poppe

ABSENT: Woods

Administrator Vozeh

Resolutions 80 & 81 – Award of a contract for professional services for Architectural and Design Services for Ramsey Fire Department, Ramsey Rescue Squad and Office of Emergency Management new Station Project and appropriation of funds for said services: The Borough has over the last year or more been reviewing options for a renovation or replacement of the existing Fire Dept and Rescue Squad buildings on South Island Ave. The Borough engaged Colliers Engineering and Design as an independent engineer to perform review of current conditions, from a structural, mechanical, ADA and overall perspective of the current building. In its report, Colliers recommended against a renovation or retro fit of the existing structure. In order to meet current standards, building codes and operational issues the most long-term cost-effective way to put in place the necessary infrastructure for supporting the operations of these emergency services was to construct a new shared station house. The Borough sent a Request For Proposals (“RFP”) out on December 13, 2022 for professional services for Design Consulting Services on a new complex. The RFP was sent to four firms with experience in emergency service building design. Proposals were due on January 27, 2023 and 3 firms submitted proposals. Each of the firms were interviewed by the Building Committee. After review it was the consensus and recommendation of all involved that the Borough retain Netta Architects, LLC as the firm to be awarded the Design Services. The proposal is for four main phases of services from project initiation to construction documents as well as construction observation and administration through completion. There are lump sum payments for the various phases of the project with a cumulative total of the services to completion of \$1,152,000. Resolution 80 sets in place funding for such services and Resolution 81 awards the contract for only the first phases 1A & 1B which constitute \$230,400 of the total cost of services. The remainder of the contract for services of \$921,600 will be on the agenda at the April 26th meeting.

Resolutions 82 – Approval for Ramsey Fire Department to work with the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety to become an eligible organization and implement firefighter certification program in the Borough of Ramsey: This resolution approves of the Ramsey Fire Department working with the NJ Division of Fire Safety to become an eligible organization to conduct firefighter certification programs locally in Ramsey.

Resolution 83 – Confirming the award of contract for HVAC replacement for the Ramsey Free Public Library to ACP Contracting in amount of \$597,000. The Ramsey Library went out to public bid for replacement of the HVAC system at the library. ACP Contracting was the low bidder. The Library Board at its meeting on March 13th, approved award of the contract subject to approval of its design consultant/architect, The Goldstein Partnership. Subsequent to the meeting, Goldstein Partnership completed its review and project references and concurred with award to ACP Contracting. In addition, the Borough Qualified Purchasing Agent and Borough Attorney have reviewed the bid for technical and legal compliance and the bid is compliant on both fronts. This resolution confirms the Library Board’s award of contract to ACP Contracting, Inc.

Resolution 84 – Accepting the retirement of Norman Andersen with regret: Norm Andersen has worked for the DPW since 1989. His over 33 years of service to the Borough and its residents is greatly appreciated. We thank Norm for all his years of service and wish him well in his retirement.

Resolution 85 – Awarding a contract to Schumacher Chevrolet in amount of \$55,050 for purchase of a pickup truck: The Borough went out to bid for a pickup truck for the use of the Ramsey Police Department and its Patrol Services Unit. The public bid resulted in Schumacher Chevrolet submitting the low bid. Bid has been reviewed by the Borough Qualified Purchasing Agent and Borough Attorney for technical and legal compliance respectively. Recommendation is to award to Schumacher as the low bid.

Resolutions 86 & 87 – Amendments to the 2023 temporary budgets: By law, the temporary budget is put in place at the Reorganization Meeting in January and is a statutory calculation of a percentage of prior year's budget (26.25%). This is in place until the current full year budget is adopted but the temporary budget may be modified by resolution prior to adoption of full year budget. These resolutions, #86 for the general municipal budget and #87 for the Board of Public Works budget, modify the temporary budgets as outlined in the resolution

Mayor Dillon asked for a motion to return to the regular order of business. Motion by Councilman Kilman, seconded by Councilwoman Cusick.

Roll Call:

YAY: Cusick, Gutwetter, Kilman, Popolo, Poppe

ABSENT: Woods

## VII. CONSENT RESOLUTION

Motion by Councilman Gutwetter, seconded by Councilwoman Poppe

BE IT RESOLVED that the following resolutions herewith listed having been considered by the governing body of the Borough of Ramsey be and are hereby passed and approved:

- |          |             |  |
|----------|-------------|--|
| 074-2023 | Resolution: | payment of vouchers  |
| 075-2023 | Resolution: | ratifying the actions of the governing body for payroll number six   |
| 076-2023 | Resolution: | authorizing the tax refund and exemption for Block 1902, Lot 49, for disabled veteran  |
| 077-2023 | Resolution: | budget self-exam   |
| 078-2023 | Resolution: | confirming the appointment of Jordan Miller to the Ramsey Rescue Squad   |
| 079-2023 | Resolution: | confirming the appointment of Glenn Veprek to the Ramsey Rescue Squad  |
| 080-2023 | Resolution: | establishing reserve for preliminary expenses for the Ramsey Fire Department, Heavy Rescue Squad and Office of Emergency Management Station Project” in the amount of \$230,400  |
| 081-2023 | Resolution: | confirming the professional architectural Services for the New Complex for Ramsey Fire Department, Rescue and OEM to Netta Architects, LLC in the amount of \$230,400 as set forth in the proposal dated January 27, 2023 and attached hereto. |
| 082-2023 | Resolution: | confirming the creation of a voluntary program to certify Firefighters in the Borough of Ramsey  |
| 083-2023 | Resolution: | confirming the award of a contract for HVAC replacement for the Ramsey Free Public Library be and hereby is awarded to ACP Contracting, Inc., 25 Just Road, Fairfield, New Jersey in the amount of \$597,000                                   |

VII. CONSENT RESOLUTION (cont'd)

- 084-2023      Resolution:    accepting the retirement of Norman Andersen effective April 1, 2023, with regret
- 085-2023      Resolution:    awarding a contract for a Chevrolet 2500 4 Wheel Drive Pickup Truck to Schumacher Chevrolet Inc., 8 Main Street, Little Falls, New Jersey in the amount of \$55,050 for the Police Department
- 086-20233     Resolution:    amendment Number 2 to temporary budget
- 087-2023      Resolution:    amendment to the temporary budget for water/sewer
- 088-2023      Resolution:    authorizing the liquor license transfer from Wine Forever Inc. 0248-44-002-004 for premises located at 47 W. Main Street, Ramsey, NJ 07446 to Ramsey Wine and Liquor Inc., with new License Number designated as 0248-44-002-005, effective March 24, 2023

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the following applications and/or recommendations hereby be approved:

A. SPECIAL PERMITS:

Ramsey VFW Post 12148 is requesting permission to collect funds May 1 – June 30, 2023. They will be at Ramsey Liquors, B&G Bagels, Brady's, LaGondola, Lotito's, Walgreens, Uncle Giuseppe's, Shop Rite, Post Office, Bottle King, Chick-Fil-A, Ramsey Gourmet. They have received permission from store owners.

B. BLOCK PARTY REQUESTS:

Roll Call:

YAY: Cusick, Gutwetter, Kilman, Popolo, Poppe

ABSENT: Woods

## VIII. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Dillon announced the Introduction of the 2023 Municipal Budget  
Councilman Gutwetter commented on the 2023 municipal budget

- The 2023 municipal budget has similar economic challenges to those all households and businesses are facing. The inflationary and in some cases skyrocketing costs in our economy. These economic challenges in 2023 are not unique to Ramsey. Due to these inflationary cost increases the State of New Jersey has taken unprecedented action in granting one-year exceptions in budget year 2023 only for expenditures of Garbage Removal and Disposal, Recycling, Health Insurance and Employer Pension Contributions. These also are the largest cost drivers in Ramsey's 2023 budget.
- Regarding Borough debt levels, the 2023 Budget includes principal paydown on debt of \$1.3 million, just under 50% of it from grants the Borough, sought out and received, for these needed improvements, mitigating the cost to residents. Ramsey's municipal debt level remains one of the lowest among the 13 Northwest Bergen municipalities. This strong low leveraged financial standing, leaves Ramsey in position to utilize the long-term debt markets for large capital infrastructure projects.
- For the last twelve years Ramsey has kept municipal tax rate increases below 2% including a 0% increase in 2021 as the community dealt with the impact of COVID and economic loss. Unfortunately, 2023 will be different. As mentioned earlier the four expense line items discussed account for an 8.55% rate increase with the rest of the budget representing a 0.25% increase for an 8.80% increase. Including 2023, the seven-year average municipal annual rate increase is 2.52%.
- The impact of the proposed budget on municipal portion of property taxes for 2023 would be a total increase of \$3.75 monthly, or about \$45 for the year for every \$100,000 of a property's assessed value. For the Borough's average home assessed at \$533,096 in 2023, the impact would be \$19.99 monthly or approximately \$240 annually.
- Ramsey ranks in the lowest tier of municipal tax rates in Bergen County with the 11<sup>th</sup> lowest of 70 municipalities municipal tax rate and the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest of 70 towns in terms of the share of tax dollars going to municipal services for 2022. Both of these figures are at least 29% below County wide average.
- Ramsey maintains favorable ranking for municipal tax rates, debt and surplus levels with other Northwest Bergen municipalities. For example, Ramsey is 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest of 13 towns in total amount of municipal debt as % of equalized valuation basis. The State allows up to 3.5% net debt as a % of equalized valuation, Ramsey at Year End 2022 is at 0.29% or less than one tenth of the State limit.
- While it is obvious, it does bear mentioning, all of the Governing Body as well as the Borough Administrator and Borough Attorney up here are Ramsey residents and taxpayers, so no one takes raising taxes lightly. We all feel the same impact as residents in our household budgets. Unfortunately, in today's inflationary economy, the Borough is not immune to the impact of rising costs. We look forward to continuing to work toward providing a high level of service to our residents and taxpayers in 2023.

- The full budget document is posted on the Borough website along with the Municipal Budget Presentation from the March 8<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting updated for the final budget being introduced tonight. Also, a Municipal Budget Brochure will be sent out to residents prior to the Mayor & Council meeting of April 26<sup>th</sup> when the public hearing of the municipal budget will be held and subsequently the budget will be considered for a vote on adoption.

089-2023      Resolution:    Introduction of the 2023 municipal budget

Roll Call:

YAY: Cusick, Gutwetter, Kilman, Popolo, Poppe

Absent: Woods



## IX. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

### A. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION – Councilman Michael Gutwetter

Ramsey Library – The annual report was presented to the board highlighting the many events over the last year. They also discussed 2023 goals that have been established. Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> is NJ Makers Day focusing on STEM from 12 noon to 3pm. Glow in the Dark Egg Hunt is April 1<sup>st</sup> 11am-3pm.

Pool Commission – Early Bird registration is open until April 30<sup>th</sup>. The pool opening is May 27<sup>th</sup>.

Ramsey Recreation – The Spring Egg hunt is April 1<sup>st</sup> at 9am at the Ramsey High School front lawn. Spring sports are beginning and Finch Park Summer Camp is June 26 through July 28<sup>th</sup>. Registration opens April 18<sup>th</sup> at 9am for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. The RBSA parade is April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### B. PUBLIC SAFETY – Councilman Peter Kilman

VFW Post 12148 – At the April meeting they will have their annual election for their new slate of officers. The post will be represented at the Wyckoff YMCA 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Veteran’s Initiative entitled Roll Call for Veterans Program on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Board of Health – Discussed 2022 Bergen County report and discussed a local public health funding bill.

Reminded everyone to please clean up your dog’s waste. There is an ordinance on the books and please be mindful as it is unsanitary.

### C. BUILDING, PLANNING & ZONING – Councilwoman Jane Woods

Reported by Councilwoman Cusick in Councilwoman Woods’ absence.

Seniors – The Municipal Pool has early bird pricing for seniors until April 30<sup>th</sup>.

The high school tennis courts are being refinished and the HS team will use the courts across from the senior center for practice in March, April and May.

A hands-on CPR class is being offered with registration through the Board of Health. The seniors stuffed 3000 eggs for the Spring Egg Hunt with lots of help and thanked the Recreation Commission for lunch.

The Book Club, Reiki, “Ask the Nurse” and computer and phone help classes continue to be successful. The seniors are looking to take a boat trip to Lake Hopatcong in lieu of a Broadway show in NYC. They are looking to start a woman’s Bocce group in May.

At the March 15<sup>th</sup> Zoning Board meeting, one residential application was heard for a front yard setback and the board heard testimony on the variance application for Ramsey Housing, which is continued to the April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Congratulated Jordan and Glenn on their appointments to Ramsey Rescue and wished Norman Anderson well in his retirement from the DPW.

D. UTILITIES, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Councilwoman Judy Cusick  
Wished Ramadan Mubarak to those who celebrate.

Offered condolences for Bob Jewett, former Ramsey Police Officer.

Wished Norman Andersen the best in his retirement.  
Congratulated Jordan Miller and Glenn Veprek on their appointments to the Ramsey Rescue Squad.

The Planning Board last met on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting is cancelled.  
The next Planning Board Meeting is in person on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Shade Tree Commission - The Shade Tree Commission met on March 16<sup>th</sup>. There will be an article in the Ramsey Journal from our Shade Tree Commission. There will be a dedication of a Tree to Jim Rogers at Finch Park in conjunction with Arbor Day celebrations. There is information on Our Borough's website regarding the Shade Tree Commission. The next Shade Tree Commission meeting is April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Board of Public Works - The Ramsey Board of Public Works last met on March 20<sup>th</sup>.  
The next meeting is April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Lead Service Line Replacement - The Board of Public Works continues planning regarding the NJDEP's Lead Service Line replacement legislation. This project requires that all Lead Service Lines served by the water system be replaced by the year 2031. The project is currently in phase 1B which includes work on test pits to identify locations of service lines throughout the Borough to identify the type of material for the water service line, and the replacement of any discovered LSLs for the Ramsey-owned portions in the street. The bid was awarded at the March 20<sup>th</sup> BPW meeting. The Water Department will be preparing for the Springtime Fire Hydrant flushing in April. The Borough Website will have a schedule and updates will be posted throughout the process.

E. PUBLIC & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS – Councilwoman Sara Poppe  
Congratulated the new appointees.

Municipal Alliance – The next is Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm.

The Chamber of Commerce will hold their networking event on April 19<sup>th</sup> at Houlihan's.

Ramsey Journal – All organizations have submitted articles and we are hoping to get the journal out by mid-April. Offered a special thanks to Kelly Sylvester for all of her help on the journal.

There will be an invitation going out to new residents for the new resident mixer on June 20<sup>th</sup>. Organizations will be invited to participate in the mixer.

- F. HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES – Councilman Glen Popolo  
Congratulated the new appointees to Ramsey Rescue.

Wished Norm Andersen a happy retirement and thank him for his service.

RIFE – Basketball finished up last week with a special thank you to Mayor Dillon and Councilwoman Cusick for helping. On March 24<sup>th</sup> there will be karaoke at the Community Center. April 28<sup>th</sup> is the Spring Dance at the Ramsey High School Cafeteria due to the overwhelming attendance expected.

Board of Education – Submitted their tentative budget for approval on April 25<sup>th</sup>. They recognized two educators of the year from Smith School, Jennifer Fisher and Jennifer Roberts. They also recognized Ryan Esdale, the new Smith School Principal. There was discussion about a co-op for the Ramsey High School hockey team to combine with Indian Hills. The head coach will be Ramsey and the Assistants will be Ramsey for a two-year contract.

Environmental Commission – Ramsey Clean Up Day will be April 22<sup>nd</sup> and the toy collection for plastic and the electronic car show on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Farmers' Market. Discussion about Styrofoam recycling have come up. All future meetings will be held in the community center.

- G. MAYOR DEIRDRE DILLON

Thanked Administrator Vozech, Councilman Gutwetter, CFO Denise Bartalotta for all of their hard work and expertise on the municipal budget.

Recognized the hard work of Greg Hewitt, Jonathan Krehel, Joe Manfredonia and Chris Keosayian on the proposed new emergency services building.

Congratulated and thanked Jordan and Glenn on joining the Ramsey Rescue Squad.

Sent condolences to the family of Bob Jewitt, a retired Ramsey Police Officer, as well as the family of Dr. Botta, the father of former Mayor Chris Botta.

- H. BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR – Bruce Vozech

Commented on Councilwoman Cusick's report about the next phase for lead service replacement. The contract was awarded to the low bidder, work is expected to start around May and be completed by June.

- I. BOROUGH ATTORNEY – Peter A. Scandariato, Esq. – No report

- J. BOROUGH CLERK – Meredith Bendian - No report

X. INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES - None

XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

XII. NEW BUSINESS - None

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilman Popolo, seconded by Councilwoman Poppe. All in favor.  
Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.

Meredith Bendian, RMC  
Borough Clerk