

BOROUGH OF FAR HILLS
Borough Council Reorganization Meeting
MINUTES
January 7, 2019

CALL TO ORDER

Clerk Hicks called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Far Hills Municipal Building and read the open public meetings statement in accordance with the law.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Clerk Hicks led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Carty, Chimenti, Hand, Karner, Surks, Tweedie, Vallone

Absent, as Excused:

Absent:

Also Present: Clerk Hicks, Attorney Sordillo, Chief DeCarolis

HONORED GUESTS

Senator Thomas Kean, Jr., Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, Somerset County Freeholder Brian G. Gallagher, and Somerset County Sheriff Frank Provenzano.

OATH OF OFFICE

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick administered the Oath of Office to Paul J. Vallone, MD as Mayor of the Borough of Far Hills for a four-year term expiring December 31, 2022.

Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz and Assemblyman Jon Bramnick respectively, administered the Oath of Office to Mary Chimenti and Richard Hand as members of the Borough Council for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2021.

ELECTION OF BOROUGH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Motion by Councilwoman Tweedie and seconded by Councilman Carty to nominate Councilman Karner as Council President for a one-year term expiring December 31, 2019.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, Hand, Surks, Tweedie

Nay:

Abstain: Karner

Motion Carried.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, neighbors and friends, good evening. On behalf of the Far Hills Borough Council I welcome you to this, the 2019 Reorganization Meeting for the Borough of Far Hills.

I would like to acknowledge our distinguished guests this evening the Honorable Senator Tom Kean Jr., Assembly Leader Jon Bramnick, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, Somerset County Freeholder Brian G. Gallagher, and Somerset County Sheriff Frank Provenzano and I thank them for their continued support and friendship to all of us here in Far Hills.

As we begin 2019, I want to thank you, the residents of Far Hills who have once again given me your support and re-elected me as your Mayor. I am grateful for your continued trust and support. I want to congratulate Councilwoman Chimenti and Councilman Hand on their re-election victories this past November. Running a municipality, similar to running a business or household requires planning, dedication, devotion and vision. As Mayor, I am proud of this Council who has and continues to work together for the betterment of all of our residents and I commend this Council for their commitment to Far Hills. I would also like to congratulate Ms. Jamie Leiss, who was elected as President of the Somerset Hills School Board this past November, which is the first time that a Far Hills resident has been elected to this position.

Before I say a few words about where we are going in 2019, I would like to say a few words about where we have been in 2018 and what a year it has been!

As anyone who lives in our area knows, the affordable housing mandates have been an all-consuming process during 2018. This process was front and center and saw multiple presentations, twists and turns, spawned numerous newspaper articles and was the topic of conversation on an almost daily basis. These mandates required a tremendous amount of time from myself and this Council, our administrative staff, our professionals especially our lead attorney, Joe Sordillo and our Borough Planner, David Banisch and has required substantial resources. It was decided early on that our process in making decisions would be open, transparent, invite comments from our residents and would be a model of the democratic process despite the efforts needed to make this happen. In the end, I am very proud to say that our efforts were commended and referenced by local newspapers, by other municipalities, by the court and most importantly by you, our residents and has resulted in the Superior Court of Somerset County approving our affordable housing plan on December 20, 2018 with a public statement by Judge Thomas C. Miller commending Far Hills for its exemplary efforts to satisfy these requirements; a great achievement. To be sure, there is work to be done as we move forward but we have jumped this high hurdle and together, are ready for any challenges that lie ahead.

Here in the municipal building, we have continued to build a strong team dedicated to serving our residents. We have implemented a new computer program for the building and construction departments to streamline the application process. Our new Zoning Officer, Ms. Kim Coward has been very effective and we welcome her to our team.

Our Borough Clerk, Dorothy Hicks continues to lead the administrative team and on behalf of the Council, I thank her for all of her efforts and suggestions throughout the year.

Working with our Chief Finance Officer, Debi Stern, we once again managed to keep our taxes low and build our reserves. We will continue to make every effort to keep our taxes and our tax rate one of the lowest in the State of New Jersey, which is something we are very proud of.

Despite a very rainy year, the fourth wettest in the history of New Jersey weather, 2018 saw two successful VNA sales, allowing the VNA to continue their work in and around Far Hills serving those in need. We look forward to our continuing and mutually beneficial relationship going forward for years to come.

Large events also included a very well received Essex Horse Trials in June, incorporating equestrian events with a car show and musical entertainment. The annual Far Hills Steeplechase event on October 20, 2018 welcomed nearly 32,000 attendees and for the first time, state sanctioned legalized wagering was very well received and will continue to be a beneficial relationship to the Borough.

This event saw a dramatic reduction in unruly behavior with arrests cut nearly in half and the lowest number of arrests in the last 10 years. It has once again become an event that families and friends can and do enjoy and I and the Council will continue to encourage this direction. We thank our law enforcement team for their good work and again to this Council for working with the Far Hills Race Association stressing the importance of safety while embracing a signature equestrian event in our area.

Our Memorial Day parade as well as our Veterans Day ceremony was again a moving and wonderful tribute to our fallen heroes and I want to thank our shared Far Hills-Bedminster Fire Department for contributing so greatly to make these events something we are proud of. I also commend the FHB Fire Department for their organization of the annual Easter Egg Hunt which was a family fun day enjoyed by over 500 children and their parents.

As you can see, 2018 was busy, to be sure one that saw Far Hills moving forward proudly and with so many accomplishments.

So as we begin 2019, here are some of our goals benefitting our Borough and our residents.

Working with our Borough Clerk and our Chief of Police Michael DeCarolis, we will be updating our computer systems and have engaged a new information technology company who will work to further streamline communications and make our systems even more efficient and will allow cataloguing and storage of our municipal information. New police software technology currently allows our department to communicate instantly and effectively with other regional as well as national agencies.

We will continue to explore shared services opportunities as we have done for years with great examples such as our shared fire department, our shared EMS services, our public library the Clarence Dillon Public Library, which is truly a great resource, and membership in many purchasing cooperatives. Combined road projects this year with our neighbor Bernards Township are in the works, which saves great amounts of money for our residents by working collaboratively. We have also approached the New Jersey Department of Transportation and New Jersey State officials to improve and repave Route 202 and I will continue to encourage the NJDOT to support this project.

This year we continue to renegotiate our contract with our police department. Our police expenditure is the Borough's largest singular expense consuming over 40 percent of our revenue. Council President Karner and Councilman Carty have had and, continue to have meetings to support our police but also to achieve a fiscally responsible agreement, one that the Borough can support and I am hopeful that once again this can be achieved in short order.

Our court system continues to perform wonderfully and is fiscally positive for the Borough. I commend Judge Mark Adler and our Court Administrator, Marjorie Freeman and Deputy Court Administrator, Brenda Zimmerman who have worked tirelessly for many years for the Borough and we will ensure that our system remains fiscally positive.

I have met with and have invited the new Superintendent of the Somerset Hills Regional School District, Ms. Gretchen Dempsey to address our residents concerning any school issues along with our school board representative and now, President Ms. Jamie Leiss and have stressed the importance of quality education going hand in hand with cost containment which will happen in the coming months and throughout the year, as necessary.

The offshoot of the affordable housing plan will enable us to improve our downtown with redevelopment of the old fire house and financial support of our fairgrounds, which will benefit all our residents, and we will continue to move this agenda forward.

We will continue to preserve and safeguard the charm, character and bucolic nature of this great Borough and to remember the storied history of this wonderful Borough we call home and why we all choose to live here in Far Hills.

We here at Town Hall will continue to do what we have done since I had the honor of becoming your Mayor eight years ago, that is to work with the best Council and Administration a Borough can have and to listen to you, our residents, to hear your ideas and suggestions in a positive and forward looking manner so that together we can surmount any challenges that come our way as we move into 2019 proud that Far Hills is our home.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Janis who has been my greatest supporter and her wisdom and advice is invaluable. She is my best friend and for whom I am forever grateful.

So let us all move into 2019 confidently and proudly that Far Hills is our home.

Thank you all very much.

Paul J. Vallone, MD
Mayor

**NEW BUSINESS
RESOLUTIONS
CONSENT AGENDA**

The items listed within the consent agenda portion of the meeting have been referred to the Borough Council for reading and study and are considered routine and will be enacted with one motion of the Borough Council with no separate discussion. If separate discussion is required, the item may be removed from the agenda by Borough Council action and placed on the regular agenda under new business.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 19-001 – Establishing Rules and Procedures for the Conduct of Business at Borough Council Meetings
2. Resolution 19-002 – Establishing 2019 Borough Council Meeting Dates
3. Resolution 19-003 – Designation of Official Newspapers
4. Resolution 19-004 – Temporary Appropriations for Operating Purposes
5. Resolution 19-005 – Tax Grace & Interest on Delinquent Taxes
6. Resolution 19-006 – Designation of Depositories for Borough Funds
7. Resolution 19-007 – Designation of Signatories for Borough Accounts
8. Resolution 19-008 – Authorization of Payroll Signatures
9. Resolution 19-009 – Authorizing Opening of Petty Cash Account
10. Resolution 19-010 – Authorizing Mileage Reimbursement
11. Resolution 19-011 – Authorizing Municipal Attorney to File Corrective Appeals with the Somerset County Board of Taxation
12. Resolution 19-012 – Authorizing Flexible Spending Account
13. Resolution 19-013 – Authorizing Mileage Stipend

14. Resolution 19-014 – Authorizing the CFO to Approve Payment of Bills
15. Resolution 19-015 – Authorizing Tax Collector to Cancel Tax Payments/Refunds
16. Resolution 19-016 – Appointment – Personnel
17. Resolution 19-017 – Accepting Resignations – Board of Health
18. Resolution 19-018 – Appointment – Boards, Committees and Commissions
19. Resolution 19-019 – Appointment – Recommendations to the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders
20. Resolution 19-020 – Appointment – Somerset County Wastewater Management Planning Committee
21. Resolution 19-021 – Professional Services Contract, Administrative Consultant Searing Associates, LLC
22. Resolution 19-022 – Professional Services Contract, Alternate Municipal Public Defender Kuchinsky and Rotunno, PC
23. Resolution 19-023 – Professional Services Contract, Bond Counsel Hawkins Delafield & Wood, LLP
24. Resolution 19-024 – Professional Services Contract, Borough Attorney McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP
25. Resolution 19-025 – Professional Services Contract, Borough Engineer Ferriero Engineering
26. Resolution 19-026 – Professional Services Contract, Borough Labor Counsel Trimboli & Prusinowski, LLC
27. Resolution 19-027 – Professional Services Contract, Borough Planner Banisch Associates, Inc.
28. Resolution 19-028 – Professional Services Contract, Certified Municipal Recycling Coordinator Kevin Murray
29. Resolution 19-029 – Professional Services Contract, Court Interpreter Haydee Ballester
30. Resolution 19-030 – Professional Services Contract, Employee Assistance Program Hunterdon Behavioral Health
31. Resolution 19-031 – Professional Services Contract, Environmental Engineer Natural Systems Utilities, Inc.
32. Resolution 19-032 – Professional Services Contract, Information Technology Services ATON Computing, Inc.
33. Resolution 19-033 – Professional Services Contract, Municipal Accountant/Auditor Nisivoccia, LLP
34. Resolution 19-034 – Professional Services Contract, Municipal Prosecutor DiFrancesco, Bateman, Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, PC
35. Resolution 19-035 – Appointment, Alternate Municipal Prosecutor DiFrancesco, Bateman, Kunzman, Davis, Kehrer & Flaum, PC
36. Resolution 19-036 – Professional Services Contract, Mitzner & Mitzner, PA
37. Resolution 19-037 – Professional Services Contract, Reassessment Services Assessor Services, LLC
38. Resolution 19-038 – Professional Services Contract, Special Counsel Jeffrey R. Surenian and Associates, LLC
39. Resolution 19-039 – Award of Contract – Community Health Services - VNA of Somerset Hills
40. Resolution 19-040 – Award of Contract – Animal Control Solutions, Inc.
41. Resolution 19-041 – Adoption of Amended Employee Handbook

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Carty that Resolutions 19-001 through 19-041 be approved.

Roll Call:

Aye: Carty, Chimenti, Hand, Karner, Surks, Tweedie

Nay:

Abstain:

Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION

Borough Council Committee Appointments for 2019

Mayor Vallone reviewed the appointments for 2019 and it was the consensus of the Borough Council that the appointments be accepted.

PUBLIC COMMENT – *The Mayor and Council welcome comments from any member of the public. To help facilitate an orderly meeting and to permit the opportunity for anyone who wishes to be heard, speakers shall limit their comments to 5 minutes.*

Motion by Councilman Surks, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie to open the meeting to public comment.

Taylor Meytrott of Nisivoccia, LLP expressed his appreciation on behalf of the entire firm for being afforded the opportunity to work with the Borough of Far Hills.

There were no further comments from the public.

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilwoman Tweedie to close the meeting to public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council President Karner, seconded by Councilman Surks and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Dorothy S. Hicks
Borough Clerk

APPROVED – 1/28/19