

BOROUGH OF RAMSEY
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
May 14, 2008

Mayor Botta called the regular meeting of the Mayor and Council to order. Mayor invited the Captains of the Soccer Team to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor read the Open Public Meetings Law notice.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Botta, Councilmembers Dillon, Jachzel, Jones, Nalbandian, Siemsen, Vozech, Borough Administrator Nicholas Saros, Borough Attorney Peter Scandariato, and Borough Clerk Meredith Bendian.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Motion by Dillon, seconded by Siemsen to approve the following minutes:

[4/9/08](#) , [4/23/08](#), [WS 3/24/08](#), [ES 6/13/07](#), [7/25/07 Public Hearing](#), [WS / ES 9/12/07](#)

(Councilwoman Jachzel abstained from the meetings in 2007 as she was not a member of the Council at that time). Councilman Nalbandian abstained for April 23. Councilman Jones abstained for April 9 and April 23. Motion carried.

III. COMMUNICATIONS -

Motion by Dillon, seconded by Nalbandian, to receive and file the following Communications. Carried.

1. [Keith Flood, Ramsey Planning Board Member](#)
e-mail dated April 25, 2008, resigning from the Ramsey Planning Board
2. [Paul. R. Harris, 164 Surrey Court, Ramsey, NJ 07446](#)
letter dated April 29, 2008, regarding the recently defeated 2008 Ramsey School Budget.
3. [Joseph Reap, Grand Knight, Knights of Columbus, Council 3962](#)
letter dated April 28, 2008, recommending Thomas Larson for the Police Officer position.
4. [John Reinke, Director of Development, Inter-Religious Fellowship Program](#)
479 Maitland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 letter dated May 5, 2008, thanking the Mayor and Council for their support of their Annual Bike Bergen that was held on May 4, 2008.
5. [Dennis McNerney, County Executive, County of Bergen, One Bergen County Plaza, Hackensack, NJ 07601-7076](#) letter dated May 1, 2008, inviting the Mayor and Council to participate in celebrating the Volunteer of the Year Award.

6. [Sharon Rounds, Executive Director, Mahwah Regional Chamber of Commerce, 65 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430](#)
fax dated April 29, 2008, inviting the Mayor and Council to a lunch on Tuesday, May 13th.
7. [Farouk Ahmad, Director of BC Planning & Economic Development](#)
letter dated May, 2008, regarding the BC Open Space, Recreation, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund.
8. [Northwest Bergen County Utilities Authority, 30 Wyckoff Avenue, Waldwick, NJ 07463](#)
letter dated April 30, 2008, sewer connection fees for the first quarter of 2008.
9. [Sundermann Family, 19 Blauvelt Avenue, Ramsey, NJ](#)
Invitation received May 12, 2008, inviting the Mayor and Council to Brian Sundermann's Eagle Court of Honor.
10. [Ella Filippone, Executive Director, Passaic River Coalition, Warren, NJ 07059](#)
Letter dated May 6, 2008, asking for the support of the Mayor and Council of the Passaic River Coalition.
11. [New York Sports Club, 1150 Route 17 North, Ramsey, NJ 07446](#)
Letter dated May 9, 2008, requesting permission to erect a tent on their premises June 1, 2008 through September 14, 2008 for their summer program.
12. [ALS Association, Greater New York Chapter](#)
letter dated April 30, 2008, requesting permission to hang a banner on the fence at the tennis courts at Main St. and Franklin Turnpike.

Motion by Nalbandian, seconded by Siemsen, to go out of the normal order of business. Carried. Council President Vozeh joined the Mayor to present certificates to the members of the High School Soccer Team. Coaches Mike Argenio and Mike Saalfrank joined the group and acknowledged the fantastic season of the team and winning the State Championship. Mayor presented a certificate to each player, and the Coaches. Coaches presented a Championship ring to each player. Congratulations to all! At this point, Mayor announced a 5 minute recess.

IV. APPOINTMENTS – None

V. CONSENT RESOLUTION

Introduced by Siemsen, seconded by Vozeh

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:

- 104-2008 Resolution: [Payment of vouchers](#)
- 105-2008 Resolution: [Emergency Temporary Appropriations](#)
- 106-2008 Resolution: [Proclaiming the week of May 18th National Public Works' Week](#)
- 107-2008 Resolution: [Release of escrow in the amount of \\$462.91 to Brian Thompson, Block 1201, Lot 1.02](#)
- 108-2008 Resolution: [Authorizing the Borough's inclusion in the Bergen County Community Development Program](#)
- 109-2008 Resolution: [Authorizing a soil movement permit to J.P. Park Management, LLC](#)
- 110-2008 Resolution: [Awarding bid for the maintenance of borough lands to D'Onofrio and Sons Inc.](#)
- 111-2008 Resolution: [Authorizing the contract agreement with the Supervisory Employees](#)

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

A. SPECIAL PERMITS:

[Junior Woman's Club of Ramsey would like to hold a used book sale on Monday, May 26, 2008 during the parade and after the Memorial Day Ceremony at Veteran's Park.](#)

AYES: Dillon, Jones, Jachzel, Nalbandian, Siemsen, Vozeh NAYS: None

VI. COMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS

- A. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION -Councilman Andrew Siemsen
Congratulations to Ramsey High School Soccer Team.
- B. PUBLIC SAFETY – Councilman William Jones
Congratulations to the Soccer Team. This Friday night is the Shield Awards and I will not be able to attend but I would like to offer my congratulations to those honorees. Saturday night is the Ramsey DARE Idol competition.
- C. BUILDING PLANNING & ZONING – Councilman Arthur M. Nalbandian
I too would like to congratulate the Ramsey High School Varsity Soccer team on their State Championship. They did a great job. My thanks to the coaches, families, as well as the Hotspur group for all their support. They do a great job with the youth programs in town.
- D. UTILITIES, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS – Councilwoman Deirdre A. Dillon
Congratulations to the State Soccer Champions.
- E. PUBLIC & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS – Council President Bruce Vozeh
I would like to thank our Water/Road Departments in honor of Public Works' Week. They do an outstanding job throughout the year, in all seasons. Congratulations to the coaches and the athletes. My thanks to the Centennial Committee members for the event with the U.S. Air Force Band of Liberty last Friday at Smith School. I would like to thank the members of the Finance Committee for their work on the budget. They did a tremendous job. We had a resolution tonight regarding the contract for the Department Heads. Their contract achieved many of the things the Borough is looking to do with all of the union contracts in trying to mitigate some of the costs. We have achieved health insurance coverage of approximately \$300 per month for family coverage. Employees choosing less coverage will have a lower direct contribution, but more out of pocket costs. They can choose their plan. There have been reductions in sick leave, personal days as well as caps on sick leave payouts and retirement longevity. We are currently in arbitration with the police union and we are looking to standardize benefits on health insurance.
- F. HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES – Councilwoman Vanessa Jachzel
I would like to acknowledge Keith Flood's resignation from the Planning Board and to thank him for all of his hard work. He will be missed. Congratulations to the Ramsey High School Varsity Soccer team for winning the State Championship. The Centennial event on Friday night was excellent. The U.S. Air Force Band did a wonderful job. Out next event is Centennial Bingo on June 2 and Saturday, June 7, will be the Garden Tour.
- G. MAYOR CHRISTOPHER C. BOTTA
The Centennial event last Friday, the U.S. Air Force Band Concert, was a great free event. I would like to thank Gene Sobeck who got the band to come here and it was

not an easy task. Also, Councilwoman Jachzel and Deirdre Woodbyrne from the Centennial Committee spent a long day at Smith School setting up as well as Rudy Iorio. My thanks to everyone who made this a very special event. The contract for the maintenance of Borough lands is consistent with an ongoing policy of this Mayor and Council to privatize some services in order to get cost savings. We are entering into a two year contract for the maintenance of Borough lands and this will entail the grass cutting around Borough Hall and the Library, as well as other parks in the community. By outsourcing this maintenance, we are obtaining significant cost savings and reducing the manpower load of our own buildings and grounds department. It will save significant funds in the future. I would also like to acknowledge the fact that we will signing the contract for the supervisors tonight. This too will save taxpayer dollars. One of the driving forces was Councilman Vozech who spent tireless hours attending negotiations. This has been in the works since 2004. We did come to a compromise and it is an excellent agreement for everyone.

H. BOROUGH ATTORNEY – Peter A. Scandariato, Esq. No comments.

I. BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR – Nicholas C. Saros No comments.

J. BOROUGH CLERK – Meredith Bendian No comments.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

James Keeney, 655 Richmond Court, commended the governing body for continuing to address the health care issues and containing costs. There was a very disturbing article in the Bergen Record about moving the school board elections to November. I am in favor of doing this and saving costs of about \$10 million and increase participation. I saw that they also want to take away the ability for the citizens to vote on the budget. I am dead-set opposed to this. Once you begin to take away voting rights from the citizens, it is a very slippery slope. I believe in voting at every possible election and I think this is a very serious attack on our voting liberties. I think it is incumbent on the governing body to do everything in their power to prevent this from happening.

Mary Bowles, 95 Elbert Street, asked about the awarding of the bid for the maintenance. Is that in the way of a head count reduction? Mayor stated that we are not replacing employees in the Road Department. We have not replaced 2 people in the past 2 years. We already have achieved a savings by not hiring additional employees. Councilman Vozech stated that we did this last year. The cost of this contract is slightly above last year's contract. Ms. Bowles asked about who are the supervisory employees? Mayor stated that we are talking about 11 employees; they are department heads, such as the Borough Engineer, the Construction Code Official, Tax Assessor, DPW Superintendent, Court Administrator, etc. Councilman Vozech stated that we have six different unions, as well as non-union employees.

Guy Green, 56 Maple Street, asked about having a mailbox to collect flags somewhere in town which would be more convenient than having to come to Borough Hall. Superintendent Bill Horton had suggested the little park outside the DPW offices. Mayor stated that an inside location would probably be better, such as the post office. Mayor asked the Borough Administrator to work with Mr. Green to find a location.

Not seeing anyone else who wished to speak, Mayor closed the public comment.

VIII. ADVERTISED PUBLIC HEARING FOR FINAL CONSIDERATION OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance 04-2008- [An ordinance amending and supplementing the code of the](#) Borough of Ramsey, Bergen County New Jersey to create chapter XXVII, entitled Temporary Storage Containers

Resolution by Nalbandian, seconded by Siemsen

BE IT RESOLVED that an ordinance entitled: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF RAMSEY, BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY TO CREATE CHAPTER XXVII ENTITLED TEMPORARY STORAGE CONTAINERS having been brought up for public hearing and all persons interested having been given an opportunity to be heard, pass 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 a notice of the date of introduction and adoption of said ordinance.

Not seeing anyone who wished to speak on Ordinance 4-2008, Mayor closed the public hearing. Councilman Nalbandian stated that this is an ordinance that deals with the temporary storage containers that you see popping up and we didn't have anything on our books to regulate this issue. Planning Board has recommended adoption of ordinance 4-2008.

AYES: Dillon, Jachzel, Jones, Nalbandian, Siemsen, Vozeh
ABSENT: None

NAYS: None

IX. INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES - None

X. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

X. NEW BUSINESS

112-2008 [Board of Education School Budget Resolution](#)

Resolution by Siemsen, seconded by Dillon

WHEREAS, the Ramsey Board of Education proposed a school budget tax levy for 2008-2009 as follows:

General Fund	\$42,000,872.00
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WHEREAS, the General Fund portion of said proposed budget tax levy was defeated by the voters of the Borough of Ramsey at the annual school election on April 15, 2008;

WHEREAS, the governing body has reviewed such budget and has consulted with the Board of Education with regard to such budget through meetings between the finance committees of the respective bodies; and

WHEREAS, as a result of such review and consultation, the governing body in its judgment, has determined that the General Fund portion of the budget shall be modified and reduced; and

WHEREAS, the governing body has determined to make reductions in certain line items in the General Fund portion of the budget, the reasons for which are set forth on Schedule A which is attached hereto and made a part hereof; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the aforementioned, the General Fund portion of the budget shall be reduced by \$300,313.00 (as set forth in Schedule A) making a tax levy appropriation for said purpose in the amount of \$41,700,559.00;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the amount to be included in the taxes to be assessed, levied and collected in the Borough of Ramsey for school purposes for the year 2008-2009 which are sufficient to provide for a thorough and efficient education shall be as follows:

General Fund	\$41,700,559.00
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk be and she is hereby directed to forthwith forward a certified copy of this resolution to the Bergen County Board of Taxation, the Borough of Ramsey Board of Education, and the County Superintendent of Schools.

SCHEDULE A

Reduction	Line Items	
\$ 23,000.00	Guidance, Salaries of Secretarial/Clerical	11-000-218-105
\$150,000.00	Improvement of Instruction Svcs, Salaries Other Professional Staff	11-000-221-104
14,000.00	Educational Media Services, Supplies	11-000-222-610
21,000.00	Operations & Maintenance of Plant, Salaries	11-000-262-110
23,850.00	Employee Benefits, Health Benefits	11-000-291-270
24,363.00	Learning/Language Disabled, Other Salaries	11-204-100-106
39,500.00	Resource Room, Other salaries for instruction	11-213-100-101
4,600.00	Replace High School Floor Scrubber	12-000-261-732
\$300,313.00		

Councilman Siemsen stated that what we need to do on a defeated school budget is to specify the overall revised budget and tax levy. We have also specified the line item reductions on Schedule A. We still need to provide a thorough and efficient education level. We were constrained in making the cuts to areas that are not mandated by state or federal guidelines. Eighty-five percent of the Board of Education's budget is either mandated or required at fixed levels. Anything that was a discretionary capital expense was cut. The one capital item that was not cut was the replacement of a school bus which is mandated by the State because of the age of the school bus. That is basically the only capital item that it is still in the budget. There is a higher cost in the general operation; fuel costs, utilities. The Board of Education budget is about a 2% tax increase over last year and that is the lowest level that it has been at during the last 15 years.

Councilwoman Dillon stated that this was a difficult process, involving a lot of time and effort by many people. The Finance Committee were productive and we strived to make some meaningful cuts to the budget, however, we were careful not to make cuts that would impact the quality of the education provided to the students in Ramsey, as well as not hamper the Board of Ed's ability to prepare future budgets given the caps and other restrictions imposed upon the Board of Education by the State as well as the federal government. I think Superintendent Montessano and Assistant Superintendent Marcotulli should be commended for meeting with us, as well as the members of the Board of Ed.

Councilman Siemsen expressed his thanks to Councilman Dillon and Council President Vozeh. This took a lot of time. My thanks also to Roy Montessano and Bob Marcotulli for the time they prepared to provide us with the information.

Councilwoman Dillon stated that most of the cuts are for salaries and benefits.

Council President Vozech added that we have eliminated a lot of new positions that are not mandated with the exception of \$12,000 for the Guidance Counselor at Smith School and the High School to deal with higher student population numbers as well as some of the social initiatives that were recommended for this year. The other one involves a position at Hubbard. Those are the only new positions that are not mandated by law that got left in this budget when we finished our changes.

Mayor Botta thanked the Finance and Administration Committee for their hard work on this effort, as well as Nicholas Saros. Mayor also thanked the members of the Board of Education who participated in this process. It is a difficult process and they participated in good faith and I think the fact that we came to a solution that we did is a credit to both sides. Having been around when we went through this process in 2002, and having read the opinion from 1991 when all of the money was restored by Trenton, I think this was a positive approach to get this completed.

ROLL CALL

AYES: Dillon, Jachzel, Jones, Nalbandian, Siemsen, Vozech **NAYS:** None

113-2008 [Municipal Budget Introduction Resolution](#)

Resolution by Siemsen, seconded by Vozech

BE IT RESOLVED that the following statements of revenue and appropriations should constitute the municipal budget for the year 2008:

General Appropriations	\$16, 561,199.00
Appropriations excluded from Caps	\$ 3,052,694.29
Reserve for Uncollected Taxes	\$ 1,299,767.00
Total General Appropriations	\$20,913,660.29
Less the Anticipated Revenues	\$6,435,221.56
Amount to be raised by taxes	\$14,478,438.73

The Governing Body of the Borough of Ramsey does hereby approve the budget for the year 2008.

Comments

Councilman Siemsen thanked his colleagues, especially Council President Vozech and Councilwoman Deirdre Dillon, and Nicholas Saros, as well as our auditors, Paul Garbarini and

Co., for their help. This represents a local tax rate of just under \$.52 per \$100 which is an increase of 3.81%. Appropriations for 2007 came in at \$21,098,016.00 and for 2008 we are at \$20,913,660. That is a reduction on the appropriations side of just under 1%. The amount that we raised for taxes in 2007 was \$13,698,585.00. This year that has bumped by \$786,000 to \$14,478,439.00. We need to keep in mind that in the increase \$525,000 is mandated by the State. A portion of that amounting to \$176,000 was cut from our State Aid. Also, what we are looking at this year is increased pension contributions of just under \$350,000.00. Again, that is State mandated. If you look at the portion that we need to raise, keep in mind that \$525,000 of that is State mandated, about 67% of the increase. I think we are at a pretty modest rate with 3.8%.

Councilwoman Dillon stated that we looked at every single line in the budget and we made adjustments to many of them, based upon actual spending from last year, as well as current economic conditions such as increasing costs of fuel and energy. Basically, in addition, with this budget, we will continue to pay for many of the town's capital improvements out of the current operating budget instead of taking on long term debt which will help us save on future interest costs.

Council President Vozech stated that this budget does reduce our overall spending level appropriations. While there is a tax increase, it is related to loss of revenue from the State which would have offset the taxes and also we have gone through continually trying to reduce the use of surplus in our current budget to help balance them. In the long run, the thing that is important here is that we are actually reducing our overall spending level because that is what will actually transpire down the road into what actually goes into the budget, rather than year to year usages of surplus or any kind of reliance on state aid.

Councilman Nalbandian stated that Councilman Siemsen deserves a lot of credit for dealing with the process so well and I would like to commend him on his efforts with the school budget, as well as the municipal budget. I would also commend Council President Vozech and Councilwoman Dillon for time and effort they put into this budget. A 3.81% tax increase between 2007 and 2008 continues the trend and long-term practice of prudent fiscal management by this municipality. Given the restraints, restrictions, mandates and all the things that various other governmental entities impose upon municipalities like Ramsey coupled with the fact that Ramsey is almost 100% developed which means our ratable base is not increasing as it is in many other towns which substantially eases the burden on municipal officials in those towns during the budgeting process. At one point over the last few years, I compared it to being on a fixed income and maybe even a reduced income. Over the course of many years, the tax rate has been extremely low and stable, compared to other municipalities. Hopefully, our legislators in Trenton will take the lead from municipalities instead of tying our hands and adopt the same sort of principles in their fiscal management policy. I think this budget is worthy of passage.

Councilman Jones expressed his thanks to the Budget Committee and the Finance Committee. In my many years of public service, I think this is the most difficult thing any elected official can do. We walk a fine line between providing a level of service which in Ramsey is top notch, premium level, and the expectations of the tax payer to continue that service. At the same time,

we are faced with the question of how do we pay for it? I think this is an outstanding example of trying to walk that fine line and take the best of both worlds where we deliver the premium level and quality of services across the board and still give the people something for their tax dollars. We live here too and we pay the same taxes as all the residents. The younger families with jumbo mortgages have financial concerns as well as the senior citizens who are on fixed incomes. I think we have done an outstanding job of taking everyone into consideration. I would like to congratulate everyone. I know it is not easy.

Councilwoman Jachzel expressed her thanks to the members of the Finance Committee for all of their hard work in putting this budget together. It is a fiscally sound, well thought out, budget that was put together under a heavy burden of unfunded state mandates, loss of state aid to the tune of \$525,000 and that is no easy task. I would just echo my colleagues' comments and just say thank you for all of your hard work.

ROLL CALL

AYES: Dillon, Jachzel, Jones, Nalbandian, Siemsen, Vozeh

NAYS: None

Mayor stated that the introduction passes and the public hearing will take place on June 11 before final adoption. Copies will be available on the website, as well as at the Library, and here at Borough Hall.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Nalbandian, seconded by Jones, to adjourn the meeting. Carried.

Meredith Bendian
Borough Clerk

/ad