

Minutes of the 1929th Regular Meeting of October 1, 2025

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Sarlo called the Borough of Wood-Ridge Council meeting to order at 7:00 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: led by Councilperson Azzolini

ROLL CALL:

Mayor:	Paul Sarlo – present
Council President:	Michele Mabel – present
Council:	Ezio Altamura – present
	Dominick Azzolini – present
	Philip Romero – present
	Michael Donato – present by telephone
	Richard Wall – present
Borough Attorney:	Paul Barbire – present
Borough Engineer:	Brian Intindola – excused
Borough Clerk:	Gina Affuso – present
Borough Administrator:	Chris Eilert – present

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT:

This meeting is being held in accordance with Public Law 1975 Chapter 231, the Open Public Meetings Act, also known as the “Sunshine Law”. The public meeting notice stating the date, time and place of this meeting was posted on the town bulletin board and the town website and was forwarded to the Record and the Star Ledger.

CEREMONIAL PRESENTATIONS:

None

ADVERTISED PUBLIC HEARING:

None

ORDINANCES ON SECOND READING AND FINAL PASSAGE:

BOND ORDINANCE 2025-17

BOND ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE MAKING OF VARIOUS PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS AND ACQUISITIONS IN, BY AND FOR THE BOROUGH OF WOOD-RIDGE, IN THE COUNTY OF BERGEN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, TO APPROPRIATE THE SUM OF \$5,000,000 TO PAY THE COST THEREOF, TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT, TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO FINANCE SUCH APPROPRIATION AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS.

BE IT ORDAINED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Wood-Ridge, in the County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, as follows:

Section 1. The Borough of Wood-Ridge, in the County of Bergen, State of New Jersey (the "Borough") is hereby authorized to make the following public improvements and acquisitions in, by and for the Borough, including all work, materials, equipment and appurtenances necessary and suitable therefor: (A) improvements to public buildings and property, including, but not limited to, upgrading of computer, communication and security systems; and (B) acquisition of new additional or replacement equipment and machinery and new automotive vehicles, including original apparatus and equipment, for the use of various Borough departments, offices and agencies.

Section 2. The sum of \$5,000,000 is hereby appropriated to the payment of the cost of making the improvements described in Section 1 hereof (hereinafter referred to as "purpose"). Said appropriation shall be met from the proceeds of the sale of the bonds authorized and the down payment appropriated by this ordinance. Said improvements shall be made as general improvements and no part of the cost thereof shall be assessed against property specially benefited.

Section 3. It is hereby determined and stated that (1) said purpose is not a current expense of the Borough, and (2) it is necessary to finance said purpose by the issuance of obligations of the Borough pursuant to the Local Bond Law (Chapter 2 of Title 40A of the New Jersey Statutes Annotated, as amended; the "Local Bond Law") and (3) the estimated cost of said purpose is \$5,000,000, and (4) \$250,000 of said sum is to be provided by the down payment hereinafter appropriated to finance said purpose, and (5) the estimated maximum amount of bonds or notes necessary to be issued for said purpose is \$4,750,000, and (6) the cost of such purpose, as hereinbefore stated, includes the aggregate amount of \$500,000, which is estimated to be necessary to finance the cost of such purpose, including architect's fees, accounting, engineering and inspection costs, legal expenses and other expenses, including interest on such obligations to the extent permitted by Section 20 of the Local Bond Law.

Section 4. It is hereby determined and stated that moneys exceeding \$250,000, appropriated for down payments on capital improvements or for the capital improvement fund in budgets heretofore adopted for the Borough, are now available to finance said purpose. The sum of \$250,000 is hereby appropriated from such moneys to the payment of the cost of said purpose.

Section 5. To finance said purpose, bonds of the Borough of an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$4,750,000 are hereby authorized to be issued pursuant to the Local Bond Law. Said bonds shall bear interest at a rate per annum as may be hereafter determined within the limitations prescribed by law. All matters with respect to said bonds not determined by this ordinance shall be determined by resolutions to be hereafter adopted.

Section 6. To finance said purpose, bond anticipation notes of the Borough of an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$4,750,000 are hereby authorized to be issued pursuant to the Local Bond Law in anticipation of the issuance of said bonds. In the event that bonds are issued pursuant to this ordinance, the aggregate amount of notes hereby authorized to be issued shall be reduced by an amount equal to the principal amount of the bonds so issued. If the aggregate amount of outstanding bonds and notes issued pursuant to this ordinance shall at any time exceed the sum first mentioned in this section, the moneys raised by the issuance of said bonds shall, to not less than the amount of such excess, be applied to the payment of such notes then outstanding.

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Section 7. Each bond anticipation note issued pursuant to this ordinance shall be dated on or about the date of its issuance, shall be payable not more than one year from its date, shall bear interest at a rate per annum as may be hereafter determined within the limitations prescribed by law and may be renewed from time to time pursuant to and within the limitations prescribed by the Local Bond Law. Each of said bond anticipation notes shall be signed by the Mayor and by a financial officer and shall be under the seal of the Borough and attested by the Borough Clerk or Deputy Borough Clerk. Said officers are hereby authorized to execute said notes in such form as they may adopt in conformity with law. The power to determine any matters with respect to said notes not determined by this ordinance, and also the power to sell said notes, is hereby delegated to the Chief Financial Officer who is hereby authorized to sell said notes either at one time or from time to time in the manner provided by law.

Section 8. It is hereby determined and declared that the period of usefulness of said purpose, according to its reasonable life, is a period of five years computed from the date of said bonds.

Section 9. It is hereby determined and stated that the Supplemental Debt Statement required by the Local Bond Law has been duly made and filed in the office of the Borough Clerk of the Borough, and that such statement so filed shows that the gross debt of the Borough, as defined in Section 43 of the Local Bond Law, is increased by this ordinance by \$4,750,000 and that the issuance of the bonds and notes authorized by this ordinance will be within all debt limitations prescribed by said Local Bond Law.

Section 10. Any funds received from private parties, the County of Bergen, the State of New Jersey or any of their agencies or any funds received from the United States of America or any of its agencies in aid of such purpose shall be applied to the payment of the cost of such purpose, or, if bond anticipation notes have been issued, to the payment of the bond anticipation notes, and the amount of bonds authorized for such purpose shall be reduced accordingly.

Section 11. The capital budget is hereby amended to conform with the provisions of this ordinance to the extent of any inconsistency therewith and the resolutions promulgated by the Local Finance Board showing full detail of the amended capital budget and capital program as approved by the Director, Division of Local Government Services, is on file with the Borough Clerk and is available for public inspection.

Section 12. The Borough intends to issue the bonds or notes to finance the cost of the improvements described in Section 1 of this bond ordinance. If the Borough incurs such costs prior to the issuance of such bonds or notes, the Borough hereby states its reasonable expectation to reimburse itself for such expenditures with the proceeds of such bonds or notes in the maximum principal amount of bonds or notes authorized by this bond ordinance.

Section 13. The full faith and credit of the Borough are hereby pledged to the punctual payment of the principal of and interest on the obligations authorized by this ordinance. Said obligations shall be direct, unlimited and general obligations of the Borough, and the Borough shall levy ad valorem taxes upon all the taxable real property within the Borough for the payment of the principal of and interest on such bonds and notes, without limitation as to rate or amount.

Section 14. This ordinance shall take effect twenty days after the first publication thereof after final passage.

Advertisement of the above Ordinance has been made according to law and a copy of the Ordinance was posted on the bulletin board.

Mayor Sarlo called for a Hearing of Citizens on Ordinance #2025-17

Mayor Sarlo closed Hearing of Citizens on Ordinance #2025-17

Motion: Councilperson Azzolini, seconded by Mabel, moved to the adoption of Ordinance #2025-17

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Discussion: Administrator Eilert explained this bond was to pay for the 2nd phase of the technology and security upgrades throughout the borough. All the servers, security cameras and access controls at the buildings and parks.

Roll Call: Mabel yes, Altamura yes, Azzolini yes, Romero abstain, Donato yes, Wall yes

ORDINANCES ON FIRST READING:

None

PETITIONS:

None

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications and correspondence received are identified on this evening's agenda has been distributed to all Council for appropriate action.

REPORTS OF GOVERNING BODY:

Chairs of Council Committees and Council Liaisons to Boards, Commissions, Committees & Constituencies

Council President Mabel

No report

Councilperson Altamura

No report

Councilperson Azzolini:

No report

Councilperson Romero:

Fire Department inspection on Saturday.

Councilperson Donato:

No report

Councilperson Wall:

No report

REPORTS OF OFFICERS:

Administrator Eilert: No report
Borough Clerk Affuso: No report
Attorney Barbire: progress
Engineer Neglia: on file

REPORTS OF DEPARTMENTS: If any, on file in clerk's office

FIRST HEARING OF CITIZENS:

Mayor Sarlo declared the Hearing of Citizens to be open.

Patrick DiRoma of 115 Truman Drive thanked the council for the new striping in the development. He asked for an update on the additional signs. Administrator Eilert stated he is waiting for the Engineer's report which will identify the areas that will benefit from additional stop signs. Mr. DiRoma asked for an update on the Passaic Avenue "road diet" of eliminating a lane of traffic in each direction. Administrator Eilert stated he spoke with new building's management and they are currently at 50-60% occupancy. He added that any decisions on this would be premature until the building is more fully occupied, all the related road work is completed and the traffic volume and pattern can be assessed properly.

With no other citizens wishing to speak, the hearing of citizens was closed.

CONSENT AGENDA:

All matters listed below are considered to be routine in nature and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If any discussion is desired by Council, that particular item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered separately.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the September 17, 2025 Meeting.

RESOLUTIONS: Adoption of the following

**RESOLUTION NO.: 119-2025
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FAIR AND OPEN PROCESS FOR 2026 REQUEST FOR
QUALIFICATION OF PROFESSIONALS**

WHEREAS, pursuant to the New Jersey Local Unit Pay-To-Play Law, N.J.S.A. 19:44a-20.4 et seq., the Mayor and Council may decide to use a "fair and Open Process" in awarding certain professional service contracts for which public bidding is not required by the Local Public contracts Law; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.7, the Mayor and Council's decision as to what constitutes a fair and open process if final.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Wood-Ridge, County of Bergen, and State of New Jersey that the Borough of Wood-Ridge shall use as its Fair and Open Process criteria in 2026 the Request of Qualification criteria on file with the Borough Clerk, the terms of which are incorporated herein by reference.

RESOLUTION NO.: 120-2025
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LIEN AGAINST 348 INNES ROAD, BLOCK 316 LOT 23 FOR
THE COST OF PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

WHEREAS, the Borough of Wood-Ridge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, is in receipt of a report by the Superintendent of Public Works in connection with the property maintenance performed by the Borough DPW on the premises located at 348 Innes Road, also known as Block 316, Lot 23, on the Tax Map of the Borough of Wood-Ridge; and

WHEREAS, Borough of Wood-Ridge Department of Public works personnel performed the required grass mowing; and

WHEREAS, Section 230-8 B of the Code of the Borough of Wood-Ridge provides that the cost of property maintenance shall be charges against the land and shall be a first lien upon said lands and premises in the nature of taxes assessed against said lands; and

WHEREAS, the total cost of the work performed by the Borough DPW from May 5, 2025, through September 8, 2025, is \$4,750 which sum shall be added as a first lien against the premises in the nature of taxes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Wood-Ridge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, that pursuant to Section 230-8 B of the Borough Code, the sum of \$4,750.00 shall be added as a lien on the premises know as Block 316 Lot 23, on the Tax Map of the Borough of Wood-Ridge, the owner of record of which is William Crane, deceased; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the said sum shall be added to and become part of the taxes assessed against said lands and premises and shall be collected with and in the same manner and bear interest at the same rate as taxes upon said premises; and shall bear interest at the same rate as taxes upon the property; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council find that it was necessary for the Borough DPW to perform the required maintenance work so as to maintain neighborhood and property values, and further protect and foster public health, safety and welfare within the Borough; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution shall be provided to the Director of Public Works, Tax Collector, and record property owner.

ADOPTED, at a regular meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Wood-Ridge on Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

APPLICATIONS:

None

APPOINTMENTS:

None

HIRINGS:

None

Motion: Councilperson Altamura, seconded by Wall moved to the adoption of all matters on the above **CONSENT AGENDA.**

Roll Call: Mabel yes, Altamura yes, Azzolini yes, Romero abstain, Donato yes, Wall yes

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilman Altamura stated there are several events coming in October and they are posted on our website.

Administrator Eilert stated the October 15th council meeting will be held at the High School Auditorium in order to present the all the spring and summer sports teams with certificates.

SECOND HEARING OF CITIZENS:

Mayor Sarlo declared the Hearing of Citizens to be open.

Dana Wefer of 478 Innes Road asked for clarification of what is going to happen with the property at 505 Marlboro Road.

Mayor Sarlo thanked Ms. Wefer for coming this evening. I will say there's been no decision with that location. Unfortunately, the owner has struggled with a lack of parking and not taking proper care of the building as they should be. There's an opportunity for this community to do something special there and we welcome ideas on that. If anything, it would be open space, whether it would be a parking lot or just a pocket park that would be a passive park, but there are no plans yet.

Administrator Eilert explained in detail what is going on with the property. The borough is not the owner of the property. The owner of the property is an LLC called Woodridge Realty Commons, that a man named Joseph Schwartz, is the managing partner of. Prior to the owner having criminal legal troubles, the property had various maintenance issues. For some time, for bills were not paid for PSEG and other utilities where the fire department or health department had to go there because of no water or power and health issues.

Mr. Schwartz owns a chain of nursing homes that were national and were involved in defrauding Medicaid and Medicare programs. He was convicted and is currently in jail. Our Special Counsel for Land Use, Gerald Salerno, is handling this matter for the Borough. He informed the Borough that the Superior Court has appointed a Rent Receiver to manage the property because the owner is in jail. That rent the receiver has the authority to take any action an owner would. About two or three years ago is property started to go into default on property taxes for about \$200,000 owed to the Borough and they also defaulted on a mortgage of about \$600,000. The legal advice that we were given and collective judgement of the governing body, was that it was prudent for the town to step in and participate in the auction of the mortgage in order to protect the Borough's interests.

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Mayor Sarlo interjected that the Administrator's explanation is going into a lot of details but because there is some confusion in the community of whether the Borough owns the property or not, it is important to get the information out into the public domain and make it a part of our meeting minutes.

Administrator Eilert continued that through the sheriff's auction the Borough acquired the mortgage. Our concern was that if a 3rd party had acquired the mortgage, they could take all the property and continue operating as a slumlord or could propose a significant development that would be a negative impact on our High School which is located across the street.

Administrator Eilert explained that the building is over 100 years old and in poor condition. He also clarified that the property is only the 100 x 100 lot on the corner of Marlboro Road. It is not the entire strip of Hackensack Street. It does not include the doctors' office, the realty garage, Justin's Restaurant, the print shop or the juice cafe.

He further explained that the Borough Special Counsel has been in contact with the Court Appointed Rent Receiver to get updates on the property. The second-floor apartments are all vacant and have been for many years. Several of the businesses are not performing business or not operating in any way. There's only one business that still has a lease and is still paying their rent. Most of the businesses are at least 6 months overdue on rents and some are more than 12 months behind. Because of the non-payments of rents, the Rent Receiver started issuing eviction notices in the hope that the tenants will start paying the rent.

The governing body, adopted an ordinance at the end of last year that authorized the Borough to acquire the property. If and when the Borough was to ever become the owner, then the Borough can decide what's best to do with it. The ordinance must define a public purpose in order for the Borough to acquire the property, but the purpose was written very broadly. It says that the public purpose would be to expand open space, green spaces, streetscapes, parking or other public purposes.

To summarize, the Borough is not the owner but is monitoring the situation and the actions of the court-appointed Rent Receiver. However, we don't know what's going to happen although we want to see the property cleaned up because there is a lot of debris and garbage in the back. Thankfully, now there are dumpsters in the back and there's a lot of cleanups going on.

Ms. Wefer stated that the explanation was very informative and really appreciates the details given here tonight.

Patrick DiRoma of 115 Truman Drive asked if would be developed into businesses or anything.

Mayor Sarlo stated that it is a very small property that probably can't support development, but that we really have not made any decisions.

Administrator Eilert added that parking is a big issue with the property, especially with respect to any residential apartments, because of the Borough's no on-street overnight parking restriction. The building currently has no off-street parking and the apartment building across the street, which is also over 100 years old, has no parking. As a result, tenants from both buildings park in the High School and Senior Center parking lots. Additionally, the other businesses on Hackensack Street do not have any customer parking and many customers park in the High School and Senior Center lots or the business district lot that the Borough built on the corner of Innes Road. If development was to be allowed on the property it would need to provide off-street parking for tenants.

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He further explained that this parking issue is why the Borough over the years adopted daytime parking restrictions in that neighborhood because the neighbors complained that the employees and customers of the businesses, and the students and teachers from the High School would park in front of their homes all day making it so that they can't park in front of their own homes. That's always been the balancing act that we've had to deal with over the years in the neighborhood around Hackensack Street.

With no other citizens wishing to speak, the hearing of citizens was closed.

ADJOURNMENT:

Since there was no further business to come before the Council, Councilperson Azzolimi, seconded by Councilperson Mabel moved for adjournment. By unanimous vote of the members of the Council present, the Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Wood-Ridge held on October 1, 2025 was duly adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Affuso, RMC
Borough Clerk