

MINUTES
Mayor and Council Regular Meeting
August 19, 2025
7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER –

A Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of River Edge was held in person at the River Edge Public Library located at 685 Elm Avenue, River Edge, NJ 07661 and virtually via Zoom on August 19, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Thomas Papaleo.

SILENT PRAYER – FLAG SALUTE

Mayor Papaleo asked for a moment of silence for the people of Ukraine and Europe. Councilman Glass then led those present in a salute to the flag.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE -

Mayor Papaleo read the Statement of Compliance into the record as follows:

Statement of Compliance with Open Public Meeting Act: This meeting complies with the Open Public Meeting Act by notification via the July 29, 2025 Sunshine Notice containing the location, date, time and access information to the Town News and the Record and by posting of same on the municipal bulletin board and Borough Website and filing a notice of the same with the Municipal Clerk.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Council President Montisano-Koen, Councilwoman Kinsella, Councilman Benson, Councilman Glass, and Mayor Papaleo.

ABSENT: Councilwoman Malellari and Councilwoman Dhariwal

ALSO PRESENT: Borough Administrator Lissette Aportela
Borough Attorney John Shahdanian, Esq.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

On a motion by Council President Montisano-Koen, seconded by Councilman Benson, and all members present voting in favor, that the Minutes of the Mayor and Council Regular Meeting and Closed Session of July 24, 2025 are hereby approved.

MAYOR’S APPOINTMENT –

Mayor Papaleo appointed Tracy Levine to the Land Use Board as Alternate #2 through December 31, 2026 (unexpired term) effective August 19, 2025 and administered the Oath of Office to Ms. Levine. He thanked her, noting that serving on this board is a big commitment.

FOR DISCUSSION –

KBG Field Improvement Project

Robert Costa and Jeyson Flores of Costa Engineering were present for this discussion. Mr. Costa provided background on the bidding process for this project. He advised that the lowest bidder, Gallen, submitted the bid one minute after the bid opening was scheduled to start and an objection was made by the second lowest bidder.

Borough Attorney Shahdanian added that the Borough Administrator was not present and had not started the bid opening when Gallen’s bid was submitted. He advised that this violation was de minimis and is one that can be waived.

Mr. Costa explained that he reviewed the bids with the Borough Administrator yesterday and is recommending that, in addition to the base bid, the Borough award alternates 1, 2, 5 and 9 also be d which brings the total project amount under \$1.5 million. He noted that there is a \$50,000 contingency for any unforeseen issues.

It was questioned when this project would start and when the fields would be ready.

Mr. Costa advised that the project can commence in the beginning of September as planned. He noted, however, that the only potential delay that may be posed is if the second bidder files an action to protest.

Borough Attorney Shahdanian explained the process should this action be filed and expressed his confidence that the Borough would ultimately be successful.

With respect to when the fields will be ready, Mr. Costa advised that they are anticipating that this project will be complete by May.

Borough Administrator Aportela explained that this project involves three grants from 2019, 2020 and 2024 amounting in approximately \$500,000. She detailed the various reasons why this project could not commence until this year and outlined what this project entails.

Construction Updates

Bogert Road Section 7 & 8

Mr. Costa advised that there are two different contractors involved in this project, Marini who was awarded section 8 and D&L who was awarded section 7. He noted that there have been many complaints regarding the restoration between the curb and sidewalk associated with the first section, and despite giving ample time and warning, the situation has not been rectified to date. He advised that this issue has been reported to the bonding company and recommended that a formal claim be made.

Motion by Councilwoman Kinsella, second by Councilman Benson, to authorize a formal complaint to be filed with the bonding company to ensure that this issue is rectified.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Montisano-Koen:	aye	Councilman Benson:	aye
Councilwoman Kinsella:	aye	Councilman Glass:	aye
Councilwoman Malellari:	absent	Councilwoman Dhariwal:	absent

Borough Hall Entrance & Police Parking Lot Improvements Project

Mr. Costa provided a status on this project, expressing his belief that a TCO will be issued by the end of next week and then work on the Police Department side would commence. He estimated that the entire front would be complete in three to four weeks after the Borough Hall side is done. He advised that the final phase would be to address the side and back of the Police Department and provided an overview of the work that would be entailed.

Prior to the Borough Engineer leaving the meeting, Councilwoman Kinsella asked for an explanation of Resolution #25-223.

Borough Administrator Aportela explained that this work involves the next set of NJ DOT roads. She advised that approval is awaited from the NJ DOT so that the project can go out to bid.

Short Term Rental

Mayor Papaleo explained the reason that the Borough is looking to put an ordinance in place to regulate short-term rentals.

Borough Attorney Shahdanian explained that, as the entire property is being rented, short-term rentals are permitted under the law. He explained that the Jersey City ordinance, which was upheld after a Federal challenge, implements rules and regulations for these rentals. He expressed confidence that, should the Borough move forward with adopting a similar ordinance, it would be successful should a challenge be filed.

It was the consensus of the governing body that the Borough Attorney is authorized to prepare an ordinance similar to Jersey City's ordinance regulating short-term rentals.

Bergen County Historical Society Requests – Banner and Reduced Outside Duty Rate

Borough Administrator Aportela advised that the requests to place a banner at the intersection of Main Street and Kinderkamack Road as well as the request for a reduced outside duty rate are made annually by the Bergen County Historical Society in connection with Baronfest.

It was the consensus of the governing body to approve both requests.

Busterstock Banner & Flyer Request

Mike Marri, 174 Wales Avenue, and Samantha Marri, 310 Spring Avenue, Ridgewood, father and sister of Buster Marri who passed away from a drug overdose in 2021, advised that they would like to place a banner on Continental Avenue near the Farmer's Market banner to advertise Buster Stock which will be held in Paramus. She provided details on this event, advising that it is the third year it is being held.

It was the consensus of the governing body to grant this request.

Buster Boxes

Ms. Marri explained that Buster Boxes are a newspaper box filled with free samples of Narcan. She advised that they would want to place these boxes in highly trafficked areas, noting that 9 towns so far have approved placing these boxes within their municipalities.

Lt. Joseph Zematies advised that the Municipal Alliance is in support of this request. He further advised that he spoke with Daragh O'Conner, Library Director, about placing a Buster Box in the Library which will need to be approved by the Library Board of Trustees. He explained why the Library would be an ideal location and noted that several other towns have also placed these boxes within the Library. He advised that they are looking for support to move forward at this point in time. He commented that there is no cost as it would be funded through the Buster Spike Lucky Elkin Marri Love and Luck Fund and 50 boxes of Narcan would be provided initially. He finished by stating that they are looking to get this program rolled out on September 18th.

Due to concerns regarding liability, it was advised that this request will be further discussed in Closed Session. Questions arose as to the cost for Narcan and why this box would not be placed, instead, in the Public Safety Building where there is 24/7 access.

It was relayed that the approximate cost per dose is \$300. With respect to why the Public Safety Building was not considered, it was explained that the Police Department being located in this building would be a deterrent to those who need this medication from going there to obtain it. The various benefits to having this medication readily available to the public were detailed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA –

On a motion by Councilwoman Kinsella, seconded by Councilman Benson, and all present voting in favor, to open for public comments on any item on the agenda.

Marge Burnes, 236 Wales Avenue, referred to the update on the Borough Hall Repair & Renovation project which is posted on the Borough website. She expressed her opinion that there was insufficient information included. She also expressed concern about the cost for this project as residents just received a tremendous increase in property taxes. She criticized the removal of the brick pavers and landscaping in the front of Borough Hall and asked for confirmation that heating elements are part of this work.

Ken Schuffenauer, 780 Millbrook, questioned whether solely the base bid determines the lowest bidder given that the KBG project includes alternates. He expressed concern over the timing of when fields will be playable as it will impact sports such as men's softball.

Claudia O'Neill, 911 Bogert Road, expressed support as a member of the Municipal Alliance Committee for the Buster Boxes. She noted that both the medication and hardware will be provided at no cost.

Stephanie Hartman, 144 Monroe Ave, explained that funds to make Narcan available come from opioid settlement dollars that came into the county and are being managed by the Center for Alcohol and Drug Recovery. This organization has also been partnering with the Marri family in their efforts with Buster Stock and to advance prevention and messaging throughout the County. She noted that funds from the Marri family's foundation are allowing the hardware to be provided at no cost. She expressed her hope that everyone supports this box being placed in this community.

On a motion by Councilman Glass, seconded by Councilman Benson, and all present voting in favor, to close public comments on any item on the agenda.

Mayor Papaleo explained the reason that Borough Hall needed to be repaired and noted that there was the option to either tear down and rebuild at a much higher cost or rehab the existing building. He explained that the work being done outside must be done to meet ADA requirements and the building is unable to be occupied until this work is completed.

Borough Administrator Aportela reported that the cost for the interior part of project including the most recent Change Order is approximately \$3.2 million and the exterior is approximately \$815,000. With respect to the KBG project, she explained the bid review process and confirmed that, subject to weather, the work is to be completed within 120 days of the Notice to Proceed. She commented that the inspection team from Costa Engineering will be onsite and Joseph Ricca, Recreation Superintendent, will keep the organizations updated on the progress.

Councilman Glass confirmed that the company being awarded the project was the lowest bidder with or without the alternates.

Mayor Papaleo added that, with respect to the Borough Hall project, there were multiple meetings at which both the interior and exterior aspects were discussed which can be viewed on YouTube.

MONTHLY REPORTS –

Mayor Papaleo advised that the following reports are on file in the Office of the Borough Clerk and available for review:

Tax Collector	-	July 31, 2025
Land Use Board	-	July 23, 2025
Land Use Board	-	July 9, 2025

RESOLUTIONS - By Consent

Council President Montisano-Koen noted that the purpose of Resolution #25-228 is to move the first meeting in September from September 11th to September 4th.

- a. **#25-219** Resolution Permitting the Possession and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages at a Block Party on Berkeley Road
- b. **#25-220** Resolution Permitting the Possession and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages at a Block Party on Van Saun Drive
- c. **#25-221** Confirm Appointment Substitute Building Inspector
- d. **#25-222** Appoint Borough Representatives to the Community Development Regional Committee
- e. **#25-223** Approve Additional Engineering Services – Bogert Road – Section 9
- f. **#25-224** Authorize Auction of Surplus Property No Longer Needed for Public Use on an Online Auction Website
- g. **#25-225** Refund of Performance Escrow for the Property Located at 429 Windsor Road, Block 809, Lot 25
- h. **#25-226** Approve Refunds – Recreation Department
- i. **#25-227** Authorize Rejection of Bids – FY19, FY20 & FY24 KBG Field Improvements Project
- j. **#25-228** Amend 2025 Meeting Schedule
- k. **#25-229** Resolution Permitting the Possession and Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages at a Block Party on Bogert Road
- l. **#25-230** Authorize Tax Collector to Refund 2nd Quarter 2025 Tax Overpayment
- m. **#25-231** Authorize Renewal of ABC Liquor License for 2025-2026

Motion by Councilman Glass, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, that the Consent Agenda be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Montisano-Koen:	aye	Councilman Benson:	aye
Councilwoman Kinsella:	aye	Councilman Glass:	aye
Councilwoman Malellari:	absent	Councilwoman Dhariwal:	absent

#25-232 Payment of Bills

Councilwoman Kinsella read resolution #25-232 into the record:

At a Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of River Edge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, held on August 19, 2025.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Borough of River Edge approve the following expenditures.

CURRENT FUND	\$	7,459,159.80
GENERAL CAPITAL FUND	\$	828,373.06
GRANT FUND	\$	132,108.82
ANIMAL CONTROL	\$	7.80
TRUST OTHER	\$	278.78
PAYROLL	\$	23,531.32
DEVELOPER’S ESCROW	\$	3,236.50
RECREATION TRUST	\$	14,020.99

Motion by Councilman Glass, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, to approve Resolution #25-232.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Montisano-Koen:	aye	Councilman Benson:	aye
Councilwoman Kinsella:	aye	Councilman Glass:	aye
Councilwoman Malellari:	absent	Councilwoman Dhariwal:	absent

NEW BUSINESS –

There was no New Business.

OLD BUSINESS –

Proposed Resolution to Authorize Purchase of License Plate Readers for the Police Department

Motion by Councilwoman Kinsella, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, to reconsider the request to authorize the purchase of license plate readers for the Police Department.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Montisano-Koen:	aye	Councilman Benson:	aye
Councilwoman Kinsella:	aye	Councilman Glass:	aye
Councilwoman Malellari:	absent	Councilwoman Dhariwal:	absent

Resolution #25-233 Authorize Purchase of Automated License Plate Recognition Units for the River Edge Police Department

Motion by Councilman Glass, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, that Resolution #25-233 be approved.

Councilman Benson asked for confirmation that the Outside Duty Trust will be utilized to pay for this equipment. It was confirmed that this cost would be covered by the trust.

One a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Montisano-Koen:	aye	Councilman Benson:	aye
Councilwoman Kinsella:	aye	Councilman Glass:	aye
Councilwoman Malellari:	absent	Councilwoman Dhariwal:	absent

PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Motion by Councilwoman Kinsella, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, and all members present voting in favor, to open public comments.

Marge Burnes, 236 Wales Ave, questioned whether Borough Hall sustained any damage from the recent earthquake. She asked for an update on the Liberty Travel building as well as the Asian Market on Kinderkamack Road. She questioned whether the Police Department has a drone and whether the Borough monitors the use of homes for commercial purposes.

Motion by Councilman Glass, second by Councilman Benson, and all members present voting in favor, to close public comment.

Mayor Papaleo confirmed that there was no structural damage. With respect to Sweetspot, he reported that they received final approval from the State on Friday and they have been issued a Certificate of Occupancy. He advised they will need to wait 30 days before opening. He noted that the Asian Market does not need to come before the Land Use Board unless they are looking to make a substantial change.

Lt. Zemaites confirmed that the Police Department does not have a drone.

Mayor Papaleo advised that, should they learn that a resident is running a business out of their home, the Code Enforcer will order them to cease from doing so.

COUNCIL COMMENTS –

Councilwoman Kinsella announced that one of the Borough's great residents, Mary Davis, was honored as a Hometown Hero on behalf of River Edge in July. She thanked former Councilwoman Davis for all she has done for the town.

On a motion by Council President Montisano-Koen, second by Councilwoman Kinsella, and all members present voting in favor, to reopen public comments.

Stephanie Hartman, 144 Monroe Avenue, advised that she works in the mental health field and recently took a training on CALM which is meant to reduce access to lethal means of suicide. She noted that the most common means of suicide is access to medication. She, once again, expressed support for the community offering access to harm reduction for those dealing with a substance use disorder.

Motion by Councilwoman Kinsella, second by Councilman Benson, and all members present voting in favor, to close public comments.

CLOSED SESSION –

On a motion from Councilman Glass, seconded by Councilman Benson, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Executive Session via Resolution #25-234 at 8:37 pm.

#24-234 Resolution to Go Into Closed Session and Exclude Public

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-12 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of River Edge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. That the public shall be excluded from the August 19, 2025 regular meeting and discussion of the hereinafter specified subject matter:
 - A. Attorney-Client Privilege – N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(7)
 1. Garbage Contract
 2. Buster boxes
2. Formal action may/may not be taken.
3. Minutes will be kept and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes can be made public.

The meeting reopened at 9:03 p.m.

Buster Boxes (continued)

Mayor Papaleo advised that, although the majority of the governing body members are in support, they have no jurisdiction due to the proposed location. He explained that the Library Board is an autonomous body and it would be their decision as to whether to approve the boxes being placed there. He added that they can come back before the governing body in the future if they would like to place a box in a

location over which the governing body has jurisdiction.

ADJOURNMENT –

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilman Benson, second by Council President Montisano-Koen, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Dodd, RMC
Borough Clerk