

COUNTY OF BERGEN  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY  
PUBLIC MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2024  
COMMENCING AT 7:04 P.M.

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COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

- GERMAINE M. ORTIZ, CHAIRWOMAN
- MARY J. AMOROSO, VICE CHAIRWOMAN
- DR. JOAN M. VOSS, CHAIR PRO TEMPORE
- RAFAEL MARTE
- THOMAS J. SULLIVAN
- TRACY SILNA ZUR

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

- STEVEN A. TANELLI

KIM O. FURBACHER, C.C.R., R.D.R.  
P.O. BOX 213  
ROCHELLE PARK, NEW JERSEY 07662-0213  
201-336-6200

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ALSO PRESENT:

THOMAS J. DUCH, ESQUIRE  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR/COUNTY COUNSEL

EDWARD J. FLORIO, ESQUIRE  
COUNSEL TO THE BOARD

LARA L. POLLITT  
CLERK TO THE BOARD

STEVE SPOTO  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & POLICY

KIM O. FURBACHER, C.C.R., R.D.R.  
P.O. BOX 213  
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I N D E X

PAGE NO.

Roll Call	5
Pledge of Allegiance	6
Announcement	6
Minutes (None)	
Hearing of the General Public	6
Review of Resolutions	15
Resolutions of Unanimous Consent	15
Resolutions of Nonconsent (None)	
Ordinances (None)	
Committee Reports from Commissioners (Suspended)	
Adjournment	19

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HEARING OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Isidor Farash	7
Patrick DiRoma	8
Marlene Puntasecca	11

1 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: The meeting is  
2 called to order at 7:04 p.m.

3 Before we begin our meeting, I ask that  
4 everyone please silence their cellphones.

5 Thank you.

6 Will the Clerk please read the Sen.  
7 Byron Baer Open Public Meetings Act.

8 CLERK POLLITT: In accordance with  
9 Section 5 of the Sen. Byron Baer Open Public Meetings  
10 Act, adequate notice of this meeting has been  
11 provided in the Annual Notice Schedule which  
12 contained the time, date, and location of this  
13 meeting, copies of which Notices were forwarded to  
14 the official County newspapers, to wit: The Herald  
15 News and The Record, and a copy of which was posted  
16 on the bulletin board in the Bergen County Justice  
17 Center and Administration Building, One Bergen County  
18 Plaza, Hackensack, New Jersey, and filed with the  
19 Office of the Bergen County Clerk.

20 Roll Call

21 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Will the Clerk  
22 please call the roll.

23 (At this point in the proceeding roll  
24 call is taken with Commissioners Marte, Sullivan,  
25 Voss, Silna Zur, Vice Chairwoman Amoroso and

1 Chairwoman Ortiz present, with Commissioner Tanelli  
2 absent.)

3 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Evidence of a quorum  
4 is present.

5 Pledge of Allegiance

6 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Commissioner  
7 Sullivan, would you like to lead us.

8 COMMISSIONER SULLIVAN: Oh, thank you.  
9 Please join me in honoring America.

10 (At this point in the proceeding all  
11 rise for a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance,  
12 led by Commissioner Sullivan.)

13 Announcement

14 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: I would like to  
15 remind everyone that next Wednesday, September 11th,  
16 is Patriot Day. The Work Session of that day was  
17 rescheduled and advertised with an early start time  
18 of 3:00 p.m. We invite the public to join us at the  
19 9/11 Memorial Ceremony in Overpeck County Park at  
20 4:30 p.m.

21 Hearing of the General Public

22 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: I now move we open  
23 the Commissioners meeting to the general public.

24 COMMISSIONER SILNA ZUR: Second.

25 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: All in favor?

1                   (All present Commissioners respond in  
2 the affirmative.)

3                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Opposed?

4                   (No response.)

5                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: We will now have the  
6 Hearing of the General Public, with a three-minute  
7 time limit in effect, in accordance with Bergen  
8 County Commissioner bylaws.

9                   For those members of the public who  
10 would like to participate during the public comment,  
11 please fill out a sheet to be recognized.

12                   Would the counselor please explain the  
13 process by which the public will be recognized.

14                   MR. FLORIO: Thank you, Chairwoman.

15                   If you're recognized by the Chair to  
16 speak, please come to the podium, state your name,  
17 spell your last name. I'll let now when your three  
18 minutes have expired.

19                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

20                   We'll start with Isidor Farash.

21                   MR. FARASH: Farash, F-A-R-A-S-H.

22                   Thank you, Chairwoman Ortiz.

23                   So I really didn't have much to say  
24 when I walked in, but I've been speaking with Patrick  
25 and I decided to try to back him up, even though I'm

1 going first.

2                   What occurred to me is that over the  
3 past few years, particularly since COVID, but it's an  
4 expeditious growth, is these eBicycles, which by the  
5 way, they get better every few months, less  
6 expensive, more features, longer distance, better on  
7 hills, everything. They're just attracting more and  
8 more customers who would not be on bicycles if not  
9 for the electric feature. So what we have now is a  
10 tidal wave of new bicyclists on the road.

11                   I would just ask the Commissioners that  
12 when they're considering what Patrick is talking  
13 about as far as allocating space and resources for  
14 the bicyclists, that they also consider the increased  
15 volume which is, in my opinion from what I've seen,  
16 enormous over the past few years.

17                   Thank you very much.

18                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you, Mr.  
19 Farash.

20                   Patrick DiRoma.

21                   MR. DiROMA: Hi.

22                   Today I'd like to talk about the recent  
23 tragedy that happened in Oldmans Township. I'm sure  
24 most people are aware, but for anyone who isn't, on  
25 Thursday, September 29th, an NHL player, Johnny

1 Grudreau, and his brother, Matthew Grudreau, were  
2 struck and killed while cycling on a rural road.  
3 This is not in Bergen County, but it does teach us a  
4 lot of lessons.

5           This heartbreaking loss underscores the  
6 urgent need for comprehensive street safety measures  
7 to protect all road users, people walking, people  
8 cycling and driving alike. One problem that is  
9 particularly clear, after the last week, is the fact  
10 that bikes and cars being asked to share the road is  
11 a policy choice that leaves cyclists at the mercy of  
12 drivers in an environment that has been designed  
13 entirely for the safety and comfort of drivers.

14           With regards to driver safety, when we  
15 design roadways, we install guardrails around curves,  
16 in case somebody loses control of their vehicle; we  
17 install large signage to direct traffic; and we  
18 install concrete barriers on highways that are  
19 designed to reduce the severity of crashes.

20           With regards to driver comfort, we take  
21 every opportunity to design turns for vehicles to be  
22 wide and smooth, reducing the need for cars to slow  
23 down at intersections, when turning into store  
24 parking lots or even when making turns onto  
25 residential streets, all while expanding the distance

1 needed for pedestrians and cyclists to cross those  
2 same spaces.

3 In short, we spend millions upon  
4 millions of dollars to make driving as safe,  
5 comfortable and convenient as possible. On the other  
6 hand, we spend next to no money on protections for  
7 cyclists in these same environments. Then we tell  
8 them via a state statute that they have "equal rights  
9 to the roadway."

10 Asking bikes to share the road with  
11 cars is akin to asking a mouse to share a cage with a  
12 cat. It is setting up an environment where tragedy  
13 such as what happened last week are as inevitable as  
14 they are unacceptable. It is long past time for us  
15 to treat the safety of all road users at least as  
16 seriously as we treat the safety and comfort of  
17 drivers. That means that we need an end to road  
18 designs that ask pedestrians to cross four lanes of  
19 traffic to access a public park, that means an end to  
20 overly wide lanes and wide turns that encourage high  
21 driver speed while pretending that a road sign that  
22 says 25 miles an hour will meaningfully change driver  
23 behavior, and that means an end to expecting cyclists  
24 to ride in spaces where a single mistake or bad  
25 behavior from a driver can end their life.

1 I obviously know that Bergen County is  
2 in the process of developing a Local Safety Access  
3 Plan and a proposal for a Complete and Green Streets  
4 Policy. These are both excellent first steps that we  
5 at Bergen County Complete Streets have applauded. It  
6 is our sincere hope that these plans are not just  
7 checking a box, but rather a real commitment to  
8 ending the violence that takes place on our streets.

9 MR. FLORIO: Three minutes, Patrick.

10 MR. DiROMA: One sentence.

11 We need to recognize that the status  
12 quo of our road design is inefficient, and that  
13 actual infrastructural changes are required, if we  
14 claim to be serious about protecting our most  
15 vulnerable group.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you, Patrick.

18 Marlene Puntasecca.

19 MS. PUNTASECCA: Thank you.

20 Marlene Puntasecca, 217 Bell Avenue,  
21 Lodi.

22 Good evening, Commissioners. How am I  
23 going to talk in three minutes? I talk too much for  
24 that.

25 Anyway, I'm here on behalf of our stray

1 cats. We have a really big problem. Somewhere along  
2 the line between COVID, a lot of changes were made.

3 Now we were told that you have to get  
4 on the list with Animal Control to have any of the  
5 cats at your house, property or whatever, spayed and  
6 neutered. We call it TNR. I don't know if you're  
7 all familiar with it. It's not working. It's  
8 impossible. I'm sure they're trying to do their  
9 best, but the list is like forever long.

10 I speak to people. I'm in rescue  
11 myself for 25 years. I trapped cats all around this  
12 area. I used to live on Meadow Street. You probably  
13 know that name Puntasecca.

14 Anyway, it's not working. They can't  
15 keep up. All of the rescue groups are so packed and  
16 understaffed and everybody is out of money. We're  
17 all spending our own money. We're going to New York  
18 to get these cats spayed and neutered at People for  
19 Animals in Hillside, if we can get an appointment.

20 It's exhausting.

21 If you knew how hard trappers and  
22 rescue groups work, you'd hire all of us. We all  
23 work very hard on trying to keep the population down.  
24 I talk to people every day. They call me all the  
25 time. I try to lead them, you know, in the right

1 direction. "This cat is in my garage. There's cats  
2 under my car. There's cats on top of the roof. What  
3 do I do? Nobody will help. Nobody can help."

4 We're just simply overwhelmed.

5 I don't do a lot of it myself right  
6 now, because after 25 years of doing it has killed my  
7 body. But it is really a serious problem all over,  
8 and our group gets calls, all these groups. We just  
9 can't keep up. We need help. We need either an  
10 extra day at the shelter for spay/neuter. You need  
11 the community's help. Animal Control, a few people  
12 cannot do all these towns. It's impossible. You  
13 know, so we just need help. It's going to become a  
14 big problem, because we just had like another baby  
15 kitten boom, and I've been on the phone for three  
16 days trying to guide people. I'm exhausted just from  
17 the phone calls.

18 And that's basically it. But, you  
19 know, we work hard at it, very hard. And a couple of  
20 years back, before COVID, it was like pretty caught  
21 up.

22 Just for instance, if I have another  
23 minute, I used to work with my girlfriends all down  
24 River Street in Hackensack, before this was built.  
25 When they started building by The Record, we had four

1 cats left there. There must have been 50, 60  
2 animals. One of the girls took the last four cats,  
3 brought them home, put them in the yard, took care of  
4 them there because the building was going to start.

5 When I lived on Meadow Street, when I  
6 first moved there, if I count correctly, 75 cats I  
7 trapped, spayed and neutered.

8 When I moved there, because my parents  
9 died, I went back to Lodi, I left one cat spayed and  
10 she has now passed. And I still go back and make  
11 sure no new ones come, all these years later. I've  
12 been back in Lodi since 2017. That's how dedicated  
13 we are.

14 MR. FLORIO: Three minutes, Ms.  
15 Puntasecca.

16 MS. PUNTASECCA: That's about it.  
17 Please help.

18 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: I guess you know we  
19 had recently cleared the shelter, where we had a lot  
20 of cats and dogs that were adopted. We waived the  
21 fees, because we had been getting an abundance of  
22 cats and dogs and even rabbits I think we had that  
23 day. So I know we have been doing this. I think  
24 it's until September 10th. But I will bring it to  
25 their attention. But thank you so much for coming

1 here.

2 MS. PUNTASECCA: Sure. Sure.

3 And just one more thing. If we work on  
4 the outside, we can control the inside.

5 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: If not, they go to  
6 Dr. Voss' house.

7 MS. PUNTASECCA: And my house.

8 COMMISSIONER VOSS: I love cats.

9 MS. PUNTASECCA: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

11 I move we close the hearing to the  
12 public.

13 VICE CHAIRWOMAN AMOROSO: Second.

14 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: All in favor?

15 (All present Commissioners respond in  
16 the affirmative.)

17 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Opposed?

18 (No response.)

19 Review of Resolutions

20 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: We will now review  
21 the resolutions to be voted on this evening.

22 CLERK POLLITT: You have resolutions  
23 #967-24 through #1037-24.

24 Resolutions of Unanimous Consent

25 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: We need a motion.

1                   COMMISSIONER SILNA ZUR: Chairwoman,  
2 before the motion, I'd just like to bring attention  
3 to Resolution #981. I didn't want to put it on  
4 Nonconsent because I know we are all so passionate  
5 about it, but I really just wanted to draw attention  
6 to the fact that September is Hunger Action Month.

7                   This resolution is an innovative  
8 program that we are doing with New Bridge Medical  
9 Center to fund shopping carts for folks who are  
10 dealing with food insecurity and newfound health  
11 challenges.

12                   This will dramatically improve health  
13 outcomes for our residents who are struggling.

14                   I just want to say thank you to all my  
15 colleagues for your support. Thanks to the  
16 administration as well for the partnership to make  
17 sure that this program can get off its feet and help  
18 so many of our residents to eat.

19                   Thank you.

20                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

21                   Can I have a motion, please?

22                   COMMISSIONER VOSS: So moved.

23                   COMMISSIONER MARTE: Second.

24                   CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: All in favor?

25                   (All present Commissioners respond in

1 the affirmative.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Roll call, please.

3 (At this point in the proceeding roll  
4 call is taken and the Consent Agenda is passed by a  
5 vote of six in favor, with Commissioner Tanelli  
6 absent.)

7 CLERK POLLITT: With six yeses, the  
8 Consent Agenda is approved.

9 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Are there any  
10 Resolutions of Nonconsent, tabled or pulled?

11 CLERK POLLITT: There are none.

12 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

13 I guess it's time now for our committee  
14 reports.

15 COMMISSIONER SULLIVAN: I make a motion  
16 we suspend reports.

17 COMMISSIONER MARTE: Second.

18 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: All in favor?

19 (All present Commissioners respond in  
20 the affirmative.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Okay. I'm going to  
22 take a vote.

23 Amoroso?

24 VICE CHAIRWOMAN AMOROSO: I vote yes to  
25 suspend.

1 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Marte?

2 COMMISSIONER MARTE: I vote yes to  
3 suspend.

4 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Sullivan?

5 COMMISSIONER SULLIVAN: Yes.

6 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Voss?

7 COMMISSIONER VOSS: Yes.

8 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Commissioner Zur?

9 COMMISSIONER SILNA ZUR: Yes.

10 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: I know you wanted to  
11 say something.

12 COMMISSIONER SILNA ZUR: I did, and I  
13 just want to also add that it is Hunger Action Month.  
14 Please volunteer at your local pantries, donate.  
15 They are now equipped with refrigeration so they can  
16 accept healthy food. Please make sure our kids get  
17 off to the right start.

18 Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER SULLIVAN: I do want to  
20 point out before be close, Patrick brought up the  
21 incident on the bicycles. Just so everyone knows,  
22 those individuals were struck by a drunk driver. I  
23 don't think any other safety measures other than  
24 taking the bottle out of somebody's irresponsible  
25 hands could have prevented that. So I just want to

1 put that on the record.

2 Thank you, Chairwoman.

3 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: And I want to invite  
4 everyone next week for our county event for 9/11,  
5 that will be held at Overpeck Park at 4:30. Please  
6 join us.

7 Thank you.

8 Adjournment

9 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: There being nothing  
10 further to come before this meeting, I move to  
11 adjourn.

12 COMMISSIONER MARTE: Second.

13 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: All in favor?

14 (All present Commissioners respond in  
15 the affirmative.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: Opposed?

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN ORTIZ: We are adjourned at  
19 7:19 p.m.

20 (Whereupon, the Public Meeting is  
21 adjourned at 7:19 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, KIM O. FURBACHER, License No. XIO1042, a Certified Court Reporter, Registered Diplomate Reporter, Certified Realtime Court Reporter, and Notary Public of the State of New Jersey, hereby certify that the foregoing is a verbatim record of the testimony provided under oath before any court, referee, board, commission or other body created by statute of the State of New Jersey.

I am not related to the parties involved in this action; I have no financial interest, nor am I related to an agent of or employed by anyone with a financial interest in the outcome of this action.

This transcript complies with Regulation 13:43-5.9 of the New Jersey Administrative Code.



KIM O. FURBACHER, CRCR, CCR, RDR  
License #XIO1042, and Notary Public  
of New Jersey

My Commission Expires:  
7/11/2029