



**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF CLOSTER**

WORK SESSION MINUTES: WEDNESDAY – MAY 28, 2025

THIS REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE CLOSTER MAYOR AND COUNCIL WILL BE HELD IN-PERSON, TELEPHONICALLY, and VIA ZOOM VIDEO. You may join the Zoom meeting including video by accessing the information posted in the **Borough Calendar** on the Borough website by visiting www.closterboro.com and clicking the link on the left sidebar for **Calendars and Notice of Meetings** and click on the corresponding date. **To join via Telephone Audio Only: +1 301-715-8592; MEETING ID: 864 2063 3673; PASSWORD: 8675309**

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
2. **OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT**

Mayor Glidden opened the meeting at 7:03 P.M. with the following announcement: This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, was included in the Notice of 2025 Mayor and Council Meetings which was published in The Record on December 29, 2024 and The Star-Ledger on December 30, 2024, was posted on the Municipal Clerk's bulletin board and on the Borough website, and has remained posted as the required notices under the Statute. In addition, a copy of the notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

3. **ROLL CALL**

| GOVERNING BODY | PRESENT | ABSENT |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Mayor Glidden | ✓ | |
| Councilwoman Amitai | ✓ | |
| Councilman Cho | ✓ | |
| Councilwoman Chung | | ✓ |
| Councilwoman Latner | ✓ | |
| Councilwoman Maroules | ✓ | |
| Council President Yammarino | ✓ | |

Also present: James Winters Borough Administrator, Borough Clerk Mari J. Margiotta, Nick DeNicola Borough Engineer, and Director of Information Technology Kevin Whitney

The Mayor spoke very highly about the Memorial Day weekend events. He said that every year there is a Reservoir Challenge hosted by the Hackensack Riverkeeper. Part of it is a special race mostly for Mayors. This year the organizers are looking for teams to be put together beyond Mayors. Several members of the Borough staff and Council are participating. The race will be on June 7.

The auditor, Gary Vinci, was introduced to speak about the budget, which has been introduced and now must be approved at a hearing. Mr. Vinci shared that the budget is about \$1.4 million higher than last year and that the prior year. The tax levy will be \$14.9 million. The challenges Closter is realizing in the budget are similar to those of other municipalities, including health insurance, labor costs, sewer charges, pension increases, and debt service increases. Additionally, two revenues available in 2024 are no longer available in 2025: Federal funds intended to assist during the pandemic and State tax relief funds. The Borough's values have increased by a 7% increase in valuation. A self-examination resolution is on the Agenda; the self-examination will be done locally. The tax rate

for Borough Operations in 2024 was .495. In 2025 it will be .502. The Mayor and Council asked questions of information and clarification. Discussion.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions and comments concerning the budget.

Irene Panessa (100 Blanch Avenue) asked whether the contracts that are increasing area available for the public to view. The auditor explained that some of the costs do not have an actual contract because the Borough has no choice but to pay these fees and that the invoices and payments would be available. The Administrator joined the conversation. The resident asked why there are two pension systems, which was explained, and also asked whether the budget was available to residents, which it is.

Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus) asked what the average tax increase will be. The Auditor explained the difficulties in giving an exact number. Mr. Isaacson also asked whether Borough employees could contribute to their health costs and was told that they have been contributing for a number of years.

Todd Bradbury (292 West Street) asked for a discussion about the Shade Tree budget and its decrease in budget. Discussion involved the fact that the tree removals line item was moved to the DPW budget as they are solely responsible for tree removals now. Also, all line items had a 5% decrease. Discussion. Mr. Bradbury shared that he would appreciate more earlier communication on the budget.

The meeting was closed to the public for discussion. The Auditor exited the meeting at 7:33.

4. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF COMMUNICATION ITEMS:

- a. MAIL LIST of May 16, 2025 Mayor Glidden spoke about the Town Cup Kayak race on June 7. The Duck Derby is on that date at a different time.
- b. MAIL LIST of May 23, 2025 Councilwoman Latner spoke about Item #6 for Older American's month and Asian American Pacific Islander heritage month and hoped that Closter could pass these resolutions that were passed at the County level. Councilwoman Amitai spoke about Safe Streets and said that she and Councilman Cho had filled in as much as possible, requesting that the intersection of Knickerbocker and Demarest be looked at for safety. Councilwoman Latner spoke about Item #11, an email sent by Jeanne Stella about the pride flag raising event to be held on Monday. Councilwoman Latner will send a flyer to be posted on the website. Councilwoman Amitai spoke about Item #1 and asked if the Historic Preservation Commission felt it was good or not. This will be discussed at the Commission's next meeting.

5. 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION – LERCH, VINCI & BLISS, LLP (addressed earlier)

6. 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET RESOLUTIONS (to be addressed in the regular meeting)

- *25-145 BUDGET BY TITLE ON FINAL
- *25-146 SELF EXAMINATION OF 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET
- *25-147 ADOPT 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

None were pulled for discussion.

7. ORDINANCES

ADOPTION:

- a. ORDINANCE NO. 2025:1364

**AMEND CHAPTER 59 OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE BOROUGH OF CLOSTER, ENTITLED:
SHADE TREE COMMISSION** No Councilmember wished to discuss.

8. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS FOR REGULAR MEETING

- *25-148 REFUND OF REAL ESTATE TAX OVERPAYMENT
- *25-149 REFUND OF OVERPAYMENT OF TAXES
- *25-150 WAIVING THE REQUIREMENT OF THE CLOSTER CODE TO INSTALL UTILITY LINES UNDERGROUND FOR THE PROPERTY AT 124 DURIE AVENUE
- *25-151 AUTHORIZING THE AMENDMENT OF THE INTER-LOCAL AGREEMENT WITH THE BOROUGH OF PARAMUS TO INCLUDE REHABILITATION SERVICES
- *25-152 HIRING A TEMPORARY CLERK FOR THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT – MARIA TRIMARCHI
- *25-153 RENEWING BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR CONTRACT – JAMES WINTERS
- *25-154 HIRING PART-TIME FIRE INSPECTOR FOR 2025 - ANTHONY PADILLA
- *25-155 AUTHORIZING THE TOWN-WIDE GARAGE SALE ORGANIZED BY CLOSTER TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CLOSTER FOOD & ASSISTANCE BOARD AND WAIVING PERMIT FEES FOR PARTICIPANTS

No items were pulled for discussion.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY – YAMMARINO (Cho/Maroules)
Committees - Finance & Technology Commission Liaison - Recreation, Shade Tree, Food & Assistance
Concerning the budget, the Mayor and Council had a 10% budget cut; most other departments had a 5% budget cut. This allowed those departments that could not be cut to remain flat. The Technology Committee will try to meet next month. Thanks are due to countless volunteers for the success of the Memorial Day weekend events. The trees that were donated from clubs and organizations to the Shade Tree Commission have already been assigned spots. Dolores Witko is running for County Commissioner. She could be a voice for towns like Closter.
- b. PUBLIC SAFETY - LATNER (Chung/Amitai)
Committee - Public Safety Liaison - NVRHS Board of Education & Library Board of Trustees
The 2025-2026 School budget was passed. Northern Valley School District students have won recognition awards and membership to prestigious musical ensembles. The NV Theater director responded positively about students participating in the 250th US anniversary. An employee at the Closter Library has won a BCCLS award. The Book Sale is June 14. Many events are happening at the Library. The Pride Flag will be raised June 2 at 6:00 at Schauble Park.
- c. PUBLIC WORKS - CHUNG (Yammarino/Cho) no report
Committee - Public Works Liaison - Closter Board of Education, Board of Health
- d. ORDINANCES - CHO (Amitai/Latner)
Committee - Ordinance & Legislative Commission Liaison-Environmental, Zoning, Fire
The swimming pool at 6 Willow has been approved. The fence that is on Borough property will be moved.

There have been 29 Fire calls this month. Volunteers are needed. The Duck Derby will be at the corner of Harrington and Closter Dock Road. The Lions Club supports many groups and organizations.

e. HUMAN RESOURCES – MAROULES (Latner/Yammarino)

Committee - Personnel Liaison- Historic Preservation

The Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission has won an award for his work in preservation.

f. LAND USE AND CONSTRUCTION - AMITAI (Chung/Maroules)

Building Liaison - Closter Improvement, Planning Board, Senior Citizens

There is 1 application for the Planning Board. The Affordable Housing subcommittee met (to be discussed in Closed Session). The Art in the Park display is up now. The tree lighting will be at the Senior Center. The Lions club will sponsor a performance of The Christmas Carol. The Closter Improvement commission will meet in early June. The Building Department is busy. Flowers have been planted in the pocket park.

g. MAYOR'S REPORT

Ambulance Corps Northern Valley Mayor's Association

Ambulance calls are up slightly from last year. The Northern Valley Association has an upcoming meeting.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Councilwoman Maroules asked about putting a resolution on the agenda to appoint Francesca Costa to the Historical Society. This will be on the next agenda.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Councilwoman Maroules asked the attorney about specific purchase orders. He and she will discuss.

Councilwoman Amitai asked about the deer management grant. Discussion.

12. OPEN MEETING FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS (5 MINUTE LIMIT)

Steve Blechman (5 Union Street) Early voting starts June 3.

Al Fonesa (100 Blanch Avenue) asked to have a constructive work meeting concerning the new nursery where Lupardi's used to be. He cited several statutes concerning the ownership transfer. He specifically mentioned 200-43 and suggested that the business might need to apply for a new variance as the general nature of the business has changed. He suggested that as such it might be operating without a legitimate license. The Mayor suggested that he start by speaking with the Zoning Officer. He also asked about street cleaning in that area. This is being worked on. The Mayor will arrange for a meeting. Also, the street there is being torn up. Councilwoman Maroules suggested that this business might need to abide by Blue Laws as it is not a farm.

Paul Chung (84 Blanch Avenue) spoke about Victoria's Farm. He said that trucks are being parked on the corner. The Administrator said that they were told not to park there. He followed up on the topics discussed at an earlier meeting, such as speed limit and other signs, which could take a while. Discussion about whether trucks could be limited. He also stated that his property values would be damaged and that it would be difficult to sell his home. Discussion about filing tax appeals.

Irene Fonesa (100 Blanch Avenue) asked whether the Borough did research on Victoria's Nursery. She said that their website clearly states that they are a large distributor. She stated that her way of life has changed and that her children cannot play outside.

Steve Isaacson (97 Columbus) asked whether a background check on Victoria's and what was done in Paramus. The Mayor said that the licensing process was undergone. Mr. Isaacson asked about the tax impact. He voiced his fear that this was a setup for building and that MacBain would be next. He then spoke about 124 Durie—a discussion ensued about the pole and the electric service. The railroad area downtown is deteriorating. MacBain asked for mulch that wasn't delivered. According to Jeanne Stella, the mulch was delivered. A lot of dump trucks

are coming out of Demaree Farm. The Administrator said that a business at that location has a DEP permit. Kudos to the Ambulance Corps for their good work on Memorial Day during an emergency.

Todd Bradbury (292 West Street) spoke about the Alice Barkley Square in downtown Closter and that the Shade Tree Commission helps keep it up. It was in need of plant materials; he had reached out to the Improvement Commission. The DPW was asked to give materials, which they did. He stated that there is poison hemlock in the Compost facility and creeping down to the wetlands, and there are other invasive weeds in town. Discussion. The lighting seminar at the Nature Center was great but poorly attended.

Jeanne Stella (479 High Street) The Pride Flag raising is Monday, June 2. Mulch was delivered to MacBain Farm, from what she understands. June 7 9-11 the Farm will be open for registration. Regular hours will begin June 14.

13. CLOSED SESSION – AFTER REGULAR MEETING

*25-156 CLOSED SESSION – MAY 28, 2025

14. ADJOURNMENT

| COUNCILMEMBER | MOTION | SECOND | YES | NO | ABSENT | ABSTAIN |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-----|----|--------|---------|
| Councilwoman Amitai | | | ✓ | | | |
| Councilman Cho | | | ✓ | | | |
| Councilwoman Chung | | | ✓ | | | |
| Councilwoman Latner | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| Councilwoman Maroules | | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Council President Yammarino | | | ✓ | | | |

Work Session adjourned at **8:28 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Mari J. Margiotta, RMC, CMR
Borough Clerk



