



**LAKE COMO BOROUGH
1740 MAIN STREET
LAKE COMO, NJ 07719
MINUTES**

**DATE: AUGUST 20, 2024
REGULAR MEETING**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Higgins called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

SALUTE TO FLAG AND MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SUNSHINE LAW

Introduction as required under the Sunshine Law: Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by the adoption of a Resolution by the Mayor and Council on the second day of January 2024 in which Resolution the time and place of Agenda and Regular Meetings commencing with January 2, 2024 were set forth. Notice of same was delivered to the Asbury Park Press the Coast Star and TAPinto and a copy of the notice was posted on the borough website at www.lakecomonj.org and on the bulletin board in Borough Hall. All meetings are open to the public.

ROLL CALL

Douglas Witte	Present
Hawley Scull	Present
Christopher D'Antuono	Present
Nick DeMauro	Present
Peter Ventrice	Present
Heather Albala-Doyle	Present

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes for approval at this meeting

COMMUNICATIONS

Email from Allison Krilla regarding parking/one way ordinance discussion

- Borough Clerk Amy Boney read an email from Allison Krilla of Bradley Terrace regarding the Council's discussion pertaining to parking and one-way streets and the issues she has on Bradley Terrace. Ms. Krilla's email is attached.
 - o Mayor Higgins commented that the feedback he has received regarding the one-way on 18th Avenue has been that it has helped but the two-way traffic pattern is still a problem. Mayor Higgins feels there is not a need to do a new traffic study that the recommendations can be based off the study done in 2021. Mayor Higgins suggested the Council have Borough Administrator Andrew Huisman and Borough Engineer Avakian make recommendations off the 2021 traffic study.
 - o Councilwoman Albala-Doyle stated in response to the letter from Ms. Krilla that even with one-way traffic, people are still turning the wrong

way, there is minimal off-street parking, accidents, road rage incidents and it can lead to dangerous situations. Councilwoman Albala-Doyle also expressed her concerns with emergency vehicle access, it's not just congestion, it's a space issue.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- Councilwoman Albala-Doyle reported that under recreation, Winter Basketball signups start September 1st through December 10th for grades 2nd through 8th and they are looking for coaches and team sponsors. Fall soccer registration is happening now, grades k-1st can register by Friday and 2nd through 8th ends the 30th. Belmar Youth Club signups begin September 1st and end January 31st and meet every Saturday from November 16th through March 29th. All other matters are in order.
- Councilman Ventrice reported that all matters are in order.
- Councilman DeMauro reported that he has noticed several towns have live music outdoors in the warmer months and recommended to Councilwoman Scull that Lake Como look into this as well. Mayor Higgins said this will be a great idea once the park project is finished. All other matters are in order.
- Councilman D'Antuono reported that all matters are in order.
- Councilwoman Scull reported that Lake Como Day is set for September 21st from 4:00pm – 9:00pm and we have a great line up of vendors but there is still room for a few more. All other matters are in order.
- Councilman Witte added to Councilwoman Scull report that on the morning of Lake Como Day, the 100th Anniversary 5k will begin at McCann's and following that, the Belmar PD will be hosting a fishing tournament for children 15 years and under. All other matters are in order.
- Mayor Higgins gave the following report:

On Thursday August 15, Council President Witte and I met with 25 or so residents of North Blvd, to discuss the significant increase in their property assessment from 2023 to 2024. I have also spoken with and emailed other residents who could not be at the meeting.

First, I want to thank the residents that I met with. Some have seen their property values increase 50% or more. Even so, the discussion was productive and insightful. That being said, there are a lot of questions that need to be answered.

For those that do not know, Lake Como is a part of the Monmouth County Tax Board Assessment Demonstration Program (ADP) and has been since 2015. As a brief history of the program, it began in Monmouth County as a pilot program under then Governor Christie. The program was intended to assess properties at the fair market value each year, ensuring taxpayers paid their fair share of municipal, school, and county tax. Since its inception, the program has been met with controversy and scandal. In 2017, municipalities in the county had the opportunity to withdraw from the program, some did, including Belmar, Wall

Township, and Manasquan to name a few. Some towns, such as Red Bank, left the program and then rejoined after they determined the program fixed the issues they were concerned with. Lake Como chose not to leave the program in 2017.

The program calls for 100% reassessment of all properties in the borough each year. Another intent of this program was to see small increases in property values over the course of five-year cycles to avoid massive increases in property assessments over many years. The five-year cycle includes 20% of the town being inspected, but 100% of the town being assessed.

In my opinion, the program itself did not hurt the borough of Lake Como. There were many years that this town was hurting and had difficulty even staying solvent. This program contributed to the town in maintaining the tax rate while continuing services for the borough. This year there was an obvious anomaly. The property assessment on North Blvd, specifically, increased greatly from last year to this year.

While there is nothing the borough can do about this specific problem, I believe it is our duty to discuss this openly with representatives from the county. It will give us the opportunity to discuss the program and ask for the answers demanded by our residents. I have invited the borough tax assessor, the county tax assessor, and Commissioner Arnone to the first Council Meeting in September. We will schedule a workshop meeting so they can educate the council better on what the program is, and we can question them about the advantages and disadvantages moving forward.

I ask the council to spend some time over the next two weeks learning what they can about the program and develop some questions on their own, to ask our guests. If they wish, I encourage them to reach out to residents on North Blvd to listen to their concerns.

I sent the email invitation yesterday but have not heard back from anyone as of this meeting. I will check back with them later this week. All other matters are in order.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No Unfinished Business

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NEW BUSINESS & CONSENT AGENDA

Councilman DeMauro made a motion to open the meeting to the public, seconded by Councilwoman Albala-Doyle, all are in favor.

- Clare Hayner of 18th Avenue and B Street commended the Mayor and Council for revisiting the parking ordinance and stated that safety is a concern, and the changes proposed to Newman Street will be the biggest impact.

Councilman Witte made a motion to close the meeting to the public, seconded by Councilwoman Scull, all are in favor.

CONSENT AGENDA

All items listed under this section are considered to be routine by the Borough Council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered separately.

Raffle License 2024-21

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Gift Auction

Raffle License 2024-22

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention 50/50

Councilman Witte made a motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Scull, all are in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 2024-08

Second Reading and Public Hearing

Amending Chapter 9 – Lead Paint Inspection Program

Offered by Councilman Witte and seconded by Councilman Ventrice.

No Public Comments on this Ordinance

Roll call vote as follows:

Yes: Councilmembers Witte, Scull, D’Antuono, DeMauro, Ventrice and Albala-Doyle

No: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Ordinance 2024-09

First Reading and Introduction

Amending Chapter 7 – Traffic

- Councilman DeMauro stated he is very much opposed to this ordinance. This will cause the loss of 4 spots on Newman Street and cause a major parking issue. He understands the need for a thoroughfare but can’t understand why the one-way can’t be turned the other way to save parking. Councilman DeMauro understands Newman Street is narrow but losing parking is not fair.
- Councilwoman Scull stated that it is difficult getting out of town any other way than Main Street and changing this would make it easier.
- Councilwoman Albala-Doyle stated that the one way from New Bedford Street to Greenwood created more traffic on 17th Avenue and this could help that.
- Mayor Higgins responded that the Council is who will be voting on this and can try anything however what’s proposed in this ordinance seems easier than flipping a one-way around and flipping it back if it doesn’t work.
- Councilman Ventrice recommended tabling this until we get the recommendation from the Engineer and Borough Administrator Andrew Huisman at the next meeting. Councilwoman Scull doesn’t feel this needs to be tabled since these changes are based on the recommendations from the traffic study.

Councilman Witte made a motion to table this until the September 3rd workshop meeting, seconded by Councilman DeMauro, roll call vote as follows:

Yes: Councilmembers Witte, D’Antuono, DeMauro, Ventrice & Albala-Doyle

No: Councilwoman Scull

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Resolution 2024-119

Payment of Bills

Offered by Councilwoman Scull, seconded by Councilman DeMauro, roll call vote as follows:

Yes: Councilmembers Witte, Scull, D'Antuono, DeMauro, Ventrice and Albala-Doyle

No: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Resolution 2024-120

Executive Session

Offered by Councilman Ventrice, seconded by Councilman DeMauro, roll call vote as follows:

Yes: Councilmembers Witte, Scull, D'Antuono, DeMauro, Ventrice and Albala-Doyle

No: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Councilwoman Albala-Doyle made a motion to open the meeting to the public, seconded by Councilwoman Scull, all are in favor.

- Clare Hayner of 18th Avenue and B Street came before the Council and invited the Governing Body to North Blvd. and Ocean Avenue on September 29th at approximately 9:00am for the NJ Run for the Fallen where participants run one mile for every service member killed in the Global War on Terror.
- Wendy Buchanan of North Blvd. thanked Mayor Higgins and Councilman Witte for meeting with the residents on Thursday and stated her taxes went up 62.85% and asked if the Mayor and Council were aware of the increase. Mayor Higgins stated he was not aware of the increases until the assessment postcards were sent out in November. Ms. Buchanan ask who sets the tax rate? Mayor Higgins responded that the County sets theirs, the School Board is set by the Board of Education budget and the Borough's is set by the municipal budget. Ms. Buchanan stated she appreciates everything the Mayor is doing.
- Michelle Davis of North Blvd. stated that she is upset about the taxes and feels North Blvd. is being targeted. She spoke to Matt Clark from the County and sent him an email. The homes on North Blvd. were increased 40-60% and Mr. Clark told Michelle her would look into this with Mark Fitzpatrick and she hasn't heard back from him.
- Jim Nugent of North Blvd. came before the Council and thanked Mayor Higgins for listening to the concerns of the residents of North Blvd. This increase in taxes is money out of his and his neighbors' pockets and is hard to swallow. Mr. Nugent stated he has to budget \$500 more a month to pay for the increase and hopes the town can get to the bottom of it.

- June Truesdale of North Blvd. stated that her taxes, like her neighbors, went up significantly and anything the Council can do is appreciated.
- Joe Stutto of North Blvd. stated he is going to be going before the planning board soon to add onto his house and move here full time and is scared about future tax increases.
- Jim Buchanan of North Blvd. came before the Council to go over a spreadsheet he sent to the Governing Body. In this spreadsheet, he compared the average assessments from 2019-2023 between Belmar, Spring Lake and Lake Como as well as the tax rates between the towns. Mr. Buchanan stated he feels the ADP program takes advantage of the voters.
- Bob Rumsby of 18th Avenue thanked the Mayor and Council and stated he understands that the Council does not control the entirety of the taxes, that they are made up of 3 major components, the town, county and school. Mr. Rumsby asked if he can look at the County and School lump sum numbers. Mr. Rumsby also asked if the stop sign on 18th Avenue can be policed because he feels like a lot of cars aren't obeying that sign.
- Michelle Davis of North Blvd. came back before the Council and asked if someone can look at the curb in front of her neighbors house, she believes it was damaged by a plow back in February.

The Council entered into executive session at 8:55pm reconvening at 9:15pm with nothing to report.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, at 7:30 PM in the Lake Como Meeting Room. All meetings are open to the public.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Councilwoman Albala-Doyle made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Ventrice, all are in favor.

Respectfully Submitted
 Amy L. Boney. RMC
 Borough Clerk

The minutes of this meeting are not verbatim. Please call Borough Hall at (732)681-3232 to schedule an appointment to hear the recording(s) of this meeting in its entirety. All recordings are subject to being destroyed 80 days after the approval of the Minutes.