

Minutes of the Council Meeting of the Borough of Hillsdale held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, December 27, 2023

**CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Ruocco called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:**

This is a meeting of the Hillsdale Borough Council on this 27<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2023. Notice of the time and place of this meeting has been provided to The Ridgewood News and The Bergen Record; a copy was posted on the bulletin board outside of this meeting room and provided to any interested parties.

Please silence all cell phones. Please wait to be recognized by the Mayor during the Public Hearing and the Public Comment part of the meeting. You will need to state your name and town of residence for the record.

**ROLL CALL:**

Council President DeRosa, Council Members Escobar, Fox, Horvath (absent), Lundy, Trochimiuk (absent), Mayor Ruocco (Borough Administrator Mike Ghassali, Borough Clerk Denise Kohan, Borough Attorney Mark Madaio)

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

[Council Meeting Minutes November 9, 2023](#)

Closed Session Minutes November 9, 2023

[Council Meeting Minutes December 5, 2023](#)

Closed Session Minutes December 5, 2023

[Council Meeting Minutes December 12, 2023](#)

Motion Lundy Second DeRosa

Ayes: Council President DeRosa, Councilmember Escobar, Fox, Lundy

Nays: none

Absent: Horvath, Trochimiuk

**PUBLIC COMMENT** (Time limited, new topics only, one topic per speaker):

Mayor Ruocco opened the public comment period. Seeing no one wishing to speak, Mayor Ruocco closed the public comment period.

**ORDINANCES:**

[Veto Notification](#)

[Ordinance 23-21](#)

**Ordinance 23-22 (Adoption)**

**An Ordinance Amending and Supplementing Chapter 63 of the Code of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, In Order to Revise the Table of Organization of the Police Department**

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 63 of the Code of the Borough of Hillsdale established the Table of Organization for the Hillsdale Police Department; and

**WHEREAS**, the current Table of Organization needs to be revised in order to accommodate the needs of the Borough of Hillsdale and the Hillsdale Police Department.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, as follows:

§ 63-3 of Chapter 63 of the Borough Code, entitled “Composition”, be and hereby is amended in its entirety to read as follows:

**§ 63-3 Creation and composition.**

A. Pursuant to the authority granted by N.J.S.A. 40A:14-118, the Borough of Hillsdale hereby establishes a Police Department in and for the Borough of Hillsdale, New Jersey, to consist of the following positions, and the maximum number of individuals assigned to each respective rank, as follows:

- (1) Chief of Police: one.
- (2) Captain: one.
- (3) Lieutenant: two.
- (4) Sergeant: five.
- (5) Patrol officers: 14.
- (6) Class I Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO I), who are special law enforcement officers authorized to perform routine traffic details, spectator control and other similar duties. Class I officers shall be empowered to issue summonses for disorderly persons and petty disorderly person's offenses, violations of municipal ordinances and violations of Title 39. Class I officers are not authorized to carry a firearm and shall not be assigned to any duty which may require the carrying of a firearm. Such officers are subject to the qualifications and provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:14-146.10 et seq., including terms of office.
- (7) Class II Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO II), who are special law enforcement officers authorized to exercise full police powers and duties similar to those of a permanent, regularly appointed full-time police officer. Class II officers may only carry a firearm while engaged in the actual performance of the officer's official duties and when specifically authorized by the Chief of Police. Such officers are subject to the qualifications and provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:14-146.10 et seq., including terms of office.
- (8) Class III Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO III), who are retired regular police officers and who may from time to time be appointed and shall serve at the pleasure of the governing body for a term

not to exceed one year, which officers shall not be members of the regular police force but shall nevertheless be under the control and supervision of the Chief of Police for use solely as school security officers as detailed in N.J.S.A. 40A:14-146.10 et seq., as necessary.

B. This section shall not be construed as establishing any right on the part of any member or members of the Police Department to appointment to any position within the Department, nor shall it be construed as terminating or interrupting any period of service or tenure of any member of the Hillsdale Police Department. The existence and continuance of any of the above-specified offices and the number of appointees to each such office shall be determined by the governing body as it may, from time to time, in its sole discretion, deem reasonably necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the Department.

C. The Borough Administrator of the Borough of Hillsdale shall be deemed to be the "appropriate authority" for purposes of the Borough Code and N.J.S.A. 40A:14-118.

§ 63-9 of Chapter 63 of the Borough Code, entitled "Creation and Composition", is amended in its entirety to read as follows:

**§ 63-9 [Reserved]**

Except as specifically amended or modified hereinabove, all provisions of Chapter 63 of the Code of the Borough of Hillsdale shall remain in full force and effect.

This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption and publication as required by law.

Motion to open public hearing on Ordinance 23-22 DeRosa Second Lundy

Ayes: Councilmember Escobar, Fox, Lundy, Council President DeRosa

Nays: none

Absent: Horvath, Trochimiuk

I will now open the meeting to the public. If anyone desires to be heard regarding Ordinance No 23-22, please say your name and wait to be recognized, once recognized state your name and address for the record.

I will now entertain a motion that the public hearing on Ordinance No. 23-22 be closed and that it be resolved that this ordinance was posted on the bulletin board on which public notices are customarily posted and published in the Ridgewood News. Copies of said ordinance were made available to the general public.

Motion to close public hearing on Ordinance 23-22 Escobar Second DeRosa

Ayes: Councilmember Fox, Lundy, Council President DeRosa, Escobar

Nays: none

Absent: Horvath, Trochimiuk

Motion to adopt Ordinance No. 23-22 Lundy Second DeRosa

Councilmember Horvath, Lundy, Trochimiuk, Council President DeRosa, Escobar, Fox

Mayor Ruocco summed up the ordinance as it permits an additional Lieutenant as well as allowing expansion of the department from 20 to 23 officers. Mayor Ruocco spent time with the Police Captain and he now has a better understanding as to why this is needed due to increased administrative burdens and flexibility demands driven by

legal and regulatory requirements. The residents should know that this is not due to a rise in crime in the area, but an investment in safety. The addition of two officers comes with a cost of about 13 million over 25 years. Councilmember Lundy reminded the mayor that even though he puts a cost factor on the hiring of 2 more officers, there is breakage within that cost and that the cost he is giving a gross number not a net number.

Ayes: Councilmember Lundy, Council President DeRosa, Escobar, Fox

Nays: none

Absent: Horvath, Trochimiuk

Now, therefore, be it resolved that this ordinance is adopted and the Borough Clerk is authorized to advertise the same according to law.

**RESOLUTIONS:(Consent Agenda): R23313 through R23315:**

[R23313](#) Resolution Recommending the Hiring of Probationary Officer Brianna Alfieri

**WHEREAS**, there exists a vacancy in the Hillsdale Police Department for a police officer; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Borough has gone through the process of applications and interviews to employ the services of a police officer; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Police Captain of Police has recommended the hiring of a probationary police officer for the Hillsdale Borough Police Department.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Borough Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey that the recommendation of Captain Sean Smith to employ Brianna Alfieri as a Probationary Police Officer with the Hillsdale Police Department and Brianna Alfieri is hereby appointed to Probationary Police Officer with the Hillsdale Police Department, at a salary of \$52,459.00, effective approximately January 2, 2024.

[R23314](#) Resolution Recommending the Hiring of Probationary Officer Mario Vdovjak

**WHEREAS**, there exists a vacancy in the Hillsdale Police Department for a police officer; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Borough has gone through the process of applications and interviews to employ the services of a police officer; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Police Captain of Police has recommended the hiring of a probationary police officer for the Hillsdale Borough Police Department.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Borough Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey that the recommendation of Captain Sean Smith to employ Mario Vdovjak as a Probationary Police Officer with the Hillsdale Police Department and Mario Vdovjak is hereby appointed to Probationary Police Officer with the Hillsdale Police Department, at a salary of \$52,459.00, effective approximately January 2, 2024.

[R23315](#) Resolution Authorizing a Transfer Between Budget Appropriations

**WHEREAS**, it has become necessary to expend funds in excess of the amounts approved in the Calendar Year 2023 budget of the Borough of Hillsdale; and

**WHEREAS**, there exist certain budget expenditures with funds available in excess of the amounts approved in the Calendar Year 2023 budget of the Borough of Hillsdale; and

**WHEREAS**, N.J.S.A. 40A:4-58 permits the transfer of such funds during the last two months of the fiscal year;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Hillsdale that, based on the recommendation of the Chief Financial Officer, the following transfers be made to the Calendar Year 2023 Current Fund budget:

| <u><b>Current Fund</b></u>                               | <b>From</b>         | <b>To</b>           |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3-01-28-370-011 Rec S&W Regular                          | \$ 40,000.00        |                     |
| 3-01-28-375-038 Parks - New Equipment                    | \$ 7,000.00         |                     |
| 3-01-20-130-011 Fin Admin S&W Regular                    | <u>\$ 1,100.00</u>  |                     |
| <br>   |                     |                     |
| <b>Sub-total</b>   | <b>\$ 48,100.00</b> |                     |
| <br>   |                     |                     |
| 3-01-20-150-010 ASSESSMENT OF TAXES S&W                  |                     | \$ 500.00           |
| 3-01-27-330-010 BOARD OF HEALTH S&W                      |                     | \$ 100.00           |
| 3-01-26-290-103 ROADS & MAINT OE - Prune & Removal Trees |                     | \$ 15,000.00        |
| 3-01-26-306-103 RECYCLING OE - Leaf Disposal             |                     | \$ 25,000.00        |
| 3-01-26-310-024 B&G OE - Building Maintenance Other      |                     | \$ 7,000.00         |
| 3-01-36-474-000 DCRP                                     |                     | \$ 200.00           |
| 3-01-42-250-010 Hillsdale BOE Class III Officers S&W     |                     | <u>\$ 300.00</u>    |
| <br>   |                     |                     |
| <b>Sub-total</b>   |                     | <b>\$ 48,100.00</b> |

Motion Lundy Second DeRosa

Mayor Ruocco stated that both candidates seem very well qualified. He also noted that he was made aware that Council members were present during the hiring process, which is a process that he does not agree with because it creates the impression that elected officials have input to the choice of candidates, and is a form of political interference in the hiring process.

Council President DeRosa stated that this is common practice to have multiple people interview candidates and he feels this is a good process and he is very happy with the candidates that were chosen.

The Administrator added that at the end the Council Members asked questions after the interview process, but were not law enforcement specific questions.

Councilmember Lundy stated that they were not involved in the selection process, but more of a meet and greet process.

Councilmember Escobar stated this is a common practice throughout the state and his opinion is noted.

Ayes: Councilmember Lundy, Council President DeRosa, Escobar, Fox

Nays: none

Absent: Horvath, Trochimiuk

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn Lundy Second Escobar

All in favor: Councilmember Fox, Lundy, Council President DeRosa, Escobar

Absent: Horvath, Lundy

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL WILL BE  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2023 – REORGANIZATION MEETING 6:00 PM**

Denise Kohan, Municipal Clerk

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APPROVED AS PRESENTED