

Mayor Sheinfield opened the meeting by leading the Pledge of Allegiance and giving the Open Public Meeting Statement. This is a Regular Meeting of the Hillsdale Borough Council on this 4th day of March, 2025. 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.

Borough Clerk Kohan took roll call - Mayor Michael Sheinfield, Council President Osso, Councilmembers Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Ruocco, Trochimiuk (Borough Administrator Mike Ghassali, Borough Clerk Denise Kohan, Borough Attorney Mark Madaio)

RECOGNITION/OATH OF OFFICE:

BOARD, COMMISSION, AND TRUSTEE APPOINTMENTS:

Mayor Sheinfield presents the names of the following individuals for appointment to the indicated positions and the specified terms of office.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION:

Zarah Thanasides

Term Expiring 12/31/27

David Cooper – Alternate #2

Term Expiring 12/31/26

Motion to Record: Colletti Second: Ruocco

Ayes: Councilmember Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk

Nays: none

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Council Meeting Minutes February 4, 2025

Motion Trochimiuk Second Osso

Ayes: Councilmembers Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti

Nays: none

Abstain: Fox

Council Meeting Minutes February 11, 2025

Motion Trochimiuk Second Ruocco

Ayes: Councilmembers Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti, Mazza-Chiong

Nays: none

Abstain: Fox

INITIAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Sheinfield opened the Initial Public Comment Period. Seeing no one wishing to address the Mayor and Council, he closed this portion of the meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Email received from Glenn Morton requesting travel through the Borough for their annual go the Distance for Autism Charity Bike Ride

Motion to Receipt and File Ruocco Second Trochimiuk

Ayes: Councilmembers Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti, Fox

Nays: none

PROFESSIONAL MONTHLY REPORTS:

[Borough Engineer Report – February 2025](#)

Colliers Engineering

Nick Chelius from Colliers Engineer presented his report for the month of February.

The NJDOT Fiscal Year 2024 project, which was paused due to weather at the end of last season, is set to restart soon. Discussions with the contractor are ongoing, and work will resume as soon as weather permits. This project is focused on Melville Road.

For Fiscal Year 2025, the Riverside Co-op Paving program will be awarded in April, with construction starting in May. Roads to be paved include:

- Baylor Ave (Ruckman Road to Wierimus Lane)
- Cambridge Road (Arcadia Way to Kent Road)
- Saddle Ranch Lane (Hillsdale Ave to Pascack Road)
- Colonial Village Drive (Parkview Drive to Clinton Ave)
- Clinton Ave (Colonial Village Drive to Broadway)
- Wierimus Lane (Pascack Road to Stony Ridge Drive)

For Centennial Field, discussions with the contractor Dakota indicate that construction will likely start in April, possibly by the end of March, with about three weeks of work remaining. The completion of construction at Centennial Field is expected to be followed by approximately 4 weeks, give or take a week or two, before it can reopen. While the field might be playable within a month due to the use of high-quality sod, allowing a bit more time will help ensure the sod fully takes. The field is anticipated to reopen around the end of May, depending on the weather and sod's condition.

For Memorial Field, ongoing discussions about the project are happening. However, the next steps are currently on hold as the team is waiting for direction from the Council on how to proceed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Council President – Clemente Osso

At the recent Recreation Commission meeting, it was noted that summer camp registration will open on March 11th for grades K-4 and on March 12th for grades 5-9, exclusively for Hillsdale residents until March 21st. The camp has a limit of 335 children, after which registration will open to River Vale residents. The spring brochure has been released and is available via the weekly "What's Happening" email and the borough website. The Rec Director will also apply for a Bergen County Open Space Grant of \$100,000 for Beechwood Park, with the application due by the end of April. Additionally, the annual egg hunt is scheduled for April 19th. Lastly, a discussion about the fields originally planned for the next council meeting has been postponed until next month due to the need for additional work.

Councilman – Justin Fox

For Stonybrook, the new main pool pump and motor were installed at the end of February, and new umbrellas have arrived. An open house for the pool will be held on May 17th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with new members receiving a 10% discount. The official pool opening is scheduled for May 24th.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) will be hiring two seasonal employees in the coming weeks. Due to weather conditions, more salt was acquired from the county. Maintenance on the baseball field has started, and pothole repairs will begin soon. If you spot any potholes, you can report them to the BA.

Councilman – Robert Colletti Jr.

The Environmental Commission welcomed Zarah Thanasides and David Cooper to the committee, who were appointed by the mayor. The recruitment process also identified other individuals willing to volunteer in associate roles.

At the Pascack Valley Regional Board of Education meeting, Mr. Usami discussed their budget, highlighting rising health insurance costs, declining enrollment, and potential state aid reductions. They plan to use surplus funds, extraordinary aid, and maintenance reserves to manage the budget.

The Fire Department collaborated with neighboring towns for mutual aid and rescue operations, addressing staffing issues. A new box alarm plan will assist with manpower challenges, and if successful, it will become permanent by mid-year. The ladder truck was recently out of service for a week, underscoring the need for the new ladder truck scheduled for delivery in 2026.

Councilman - John Ruocco

At the Access for All meeting on February 24th, they reiterated their request for the Borough to appoint representatives from the Police, Recreation, and Board of Health to the advisory board. There were discussions about whether unfilled seats could remain vacant if no volunteers come forward. The group also announced plans for an art show on May 1st at the library and a craft workshop on March 15th. The Councilman gave them an update on the search for a grant for an accessible playground in Beechwood Park. They requested a copy of their budget by line item.

The Board of Health is dealing with a public health situation in a home where gas was detected last fall. They are waiting for clarification from the Borough on how to address the situation.

The Finance Committee met on February 20th and reviewed the budget, which will require a 4.9% overall tax increase, approximately \$553,000, to fund the borough including the library. The total budget, including the library, is nearly \$19 million. This will result in an increase to the average homeowner of about \$3,284, up \$154 from last year. The committee agreed that this budget was necessary and fiscally sound, addressing rising costs and past M&C decisions..

Council President Osso asked that Councilman Ruocco discuss the library funding and how it comes about. Councilman Ruocco's discussion highlighted that the library's funding is calculated by the county using a formula known as the "one-third mil," which is based on property valuation, not a flat amount. The library budget, which is around \$825,000, is viewed as an unavoidable expense, similar to other costs like BCUA fees and pensions, where the Borough has limited control. While healthcare costs can be adjusted to some extent by choosing providers, most of these expenses are beyond local control. The committee stressed the importance of understanding the full budget and will await a presentation from the CFO, David Young, for further details.

Councilwoman – Janetta Trochimiuk

At the recent Library Committee meeting, it was announced that the library now offers online access to The Wall Street Journal with a library card. Soon, access to the New York Times will also be available. The library's

website also features a museum pass program, allowing you to borrow passes for places like the Museum of Natural History, the Intrepid, and Storm King Art Center for up to three days. Additionally, there is a part-time library assistant position available, and interested individuals can check the website for more details.

As for the Wall Street Journal, it can be accessed via phone or tablet through the library's website, and you don't have to be in the library to read it. However, there was a question raised about downloading it to read offline, and it's suggested you could try printing it or access it later, but clarification from the library director, David, would be needed for detailed instructions on offline use.

Councilwoman – Melissa Mazza-Chiong

At the February 18th ambulance meeting, it was reported that call volume has significantly increased. In January 2025, the ambulance responded to 75 calls, a notable rise from 46 calls in January 2024. By February 18th, they had already handled 46 calls, surpassing the total number of calls for all of 2024, which was 35. This trend suggests that call volume will continue to outpace last year, and the ambulance team is prepared to manage the growing demand with their expanding team. Mayor Sheinfield clarified that these calls are in total for the per-diem staff and volunteers. There was a membership update stating that in the past two months, five new members have completed the EMT course, which provides additional support to the team as call volumes increase

Borough Administrator – Mike Ghassali

An employee fell on black ice two weeks ago and may need surgery, likely being out for a few months. The team is working on dividing her duties and possibly hiring a part-timer to fill in.

The Police Chief's Public Hearing has been postponed to March 20th and March 21st, both from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Borough Hall.

The budget handouts will be available on the website after the meeting or by tomorrow morning. After the CFO's presentation, the budget will be introduced on March 11th and adopted on April 15th.

Wi-Fi is being added to the irrigation system for control at Centennial Field. The contractor is working on the fields, with plans to reconstruct pitcher mounds and add clay, ensuring the fields will be ready for play this season, hopefully around the same time as the main Centennial Field.

A walkthrough with fire departments occurred at the Patterson Street Development to familiarize themselves with the building. The development is expected to be ready for residents by February 2026. An issue was found regarding the length of one of the fire hoses inside the stairwell, which is being addressed.

The public presentation for Memorial Field is scheduled for March 11th. There is a financing plan and bond proposal in place, but there are more details to clarify regarding materials and the turf maker. If postponed, the bond schedule would change, affecting other projects, including the fire truck bond and capital projects. Postponing could lead to delays in accessing funds for Memorial Field, potentially pushing the project timeline into July. The council will need to decide whether to proceed with the scheduled presentation or postpone it. The

Mayor Sheinfield stated that the BA has given the council the parameters of what can and cannot go into this project. The BA responded that he has been working closely with the Borough Engineer and the CFO to finalize the financial details for a 15-year bond, which includes understanding both the total cost and the down payment involved. The goal is to determine how much the municipality can afford in terms of both the upfront down payment and the ongoing bond payments over the 15-year period.

Once the breakdown is complete, you'll have a clearer picture of what can be funded, what the ongoing costs will be, and how it fits into your financial strategy.

In regards to the home that has the gas leak that was reported by Councilman Ruocco, the BA will follow up

with the Police Department and then follow up with the Board of Health, who were concerned with the condition of the home.

Both Council President Osso and Councilman Ruocco have concerns about the timing and public access to information regarding the design changes made to meet a \$5.8 million budget limit. There is a need to make the information available quickly, ideally before the 11th, for public discussion. They also discuss the importance of understanding the potential costs of delaying the project or adjusting its scope. The CFO will address the budget and potential financial impacts, including the costs if there is a delay.

2025 BUDGET

- [2025 Budget Presentation](#)
- [Revenues](#)
- [Appropriations](#)

The CFO focused on the budgeting process for the current year, which has been a collaborative effort involving the finance committee, the CFO, department heads, and volunteers. The budget process started in September and culminated with a responsible, solid budget despite significant challenges in both revenue and expenses.

Key points included

- **Salary and Wages:** There's an 8.6% increase in salaries, largely due to police wages, which have risen by \$365,000 due to a new contract and staffing changes.
- **Insurance and Pensions:** These are up 9%, with the most notable increase being a 133% rise in health insurance costs.
- **Departmental Operations (OE):** While overall departmental operations are slightly down, there was a significant \$200,000 increase in solid waste costs, but departments have done well to trim excess spending.
- **Library:** The library budget is up 10% as it is statutorily required to be a third of the mill rate.
- **Grants:** While grants are anticipated, the budget can only account for those already known. Some grants, like the Bergen County open space grant, require matching funds.
- **Capital Improvements:** There is a decrease in capital funding by a million dollars this year, following a significant increase last year to catch up on field reserves.

Overall, the budget is a product of careful planning, with some tough increases balanced by efficiencies and collaboration across departments. The goal is to provide essential services while addressing financial challenges.

The CFO then turned to the revenue and taxes portion of the budget where he discussed several factors impacting the budget for the year:

1. Revenues:

- Grants: As with expenses, grants are offsetting both revenue and appropriations.
- Delinquent Taxes: Slight increase in anticipated revenue from delinquent taxes, based on receivables.
- Surplus: A reduction of \$1 million in surplus usage compared to the previous year, as reserves were used for field improvements last year.
- State Aid: A decrease of \$120,000, which needs to be made up elsewhere in the budget.
- Miscellaneous Revenue: A \$200,000 increase from shared services, including agreements for services like the school safety officer and the bus driver.

2. Taxes:

- The budget's overall increase will be covered by a tax increase of \$553,000.

- The reliance on taxes is evident, especially as some revenue sources like state aid are decreasing.
- There's an ongoing effort to increase ratables (new taxable properties) to alleviate future tax burdens, with expected help from developments like Patterson Street.

3. Budget Drivers:

- Police Salaries: The police contract is driving salary and wage increases, with little control over these costs for the next four years.
- Health Insurance: Rising costs from the state's insurance plan, with limited ability to reduce these.
- Library & Solid Waste: Increases are largely statutory or contractual (library's 10% increase, and solid waste's \$200,000 increase due to contract terms).
- Accumulated Absences: A significant one-time expense due to an individual contract, requiring an increase in appropriations to pay for it.

In conclusion, the key drivers of the budget's increase are contractual obligations and state-mandated expenses, totaling \$837,000. Efforts to manage the budget include reducing other areas by \$285,000 and finding shared service agreements to mitigate costs.

The overall message is that the budget's challenges come from fixed costs like police salaries, state mandates, and health insurance, but efforts are being made to balance the budget and reduce other costs where possible.

Councilman Osso asked the CFO to discuss interest rates and how much money we are down from last year.

In response the CFO stated that the town's interest earnings this year will be lower than last year due to two main factors: spending some of the surplus funds, leaving less money in the bank, and reductions in the federal interest rates. As a result, the town expects to earn about 75% of last year's interest, leading to a \$200,000–\$300,000 decrease in revenue.

Additionally, several budget increases (like for police officers and construction costs) are offset by corresponding revenues, balancing the impact. Similarly, a reduction in capital funding comes with a decrease in revenue, so overall, the net effect is neutral despite the significant figures.

In short, while interest rates and other factors are influencing revenue, the budget is being managed with offsets to balance out the changes. The tax levy increase is 4.9%, largely driven by high increases in solid waste and health insurance costs. If these costs had risen at a more typical 6%, the tax increase would have been around 2.2%. Since 2014, the average municipal tax increase has been 2.4%, below the 3.5% inflation rate, but recent years have seen higher increases to cover rising costs.

Council President asked if the CFO could anticipate the revenue and when it would hit the budget for the Patterson Street Redevelopment Project? The CFO anticipates some relief from inflationary pressures through the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) program, but the revenue is highly variable and depends on occupancy and revenue data. If the revenue isn't fully realized, any income will go to surplus. 2027 is expected to be a much better year for the budget, with projected revenues offering more stability and the potential for a normal 2% tax levy increase in the following years. This would also help rebuild reserves.

The CFO clarified the residential tax increases shown. This year's tax increase is 4.9%, while the average increase over the last 10 years has been 2.4%. The higher increase this year is part of the trend due to rising costs, but the historical average is much lower. This is just for the municipal portion of the taxes, he has nothing from the schools yet.

The introduction is scheduled for March 10th and the adoption is scheduled for April 15th. We are under state review this year so we will need to wait for the state to approve it, but there is no reason we should have as we are compliant to all the caps, both the levy and the appropriations caps.

ORDINANCES:
[25-07 \(Adoption\)](#)

Capital Ordinance of the Borough of Hillsdale, in the County of Bergen, State of New Jersey Authorizing the Undertaking of Various Improvements to Stonybrook Swim Club In, By and For the Swim Pool Utility of the Borough, Appropriating Therefor the Sum of \$93,000.00 and Providing that Such Sum So Appropriated Shall be Raised from the Swim Pool Utility Capital Fund Balance

BE IT ORDAINED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, in the County of Bergen, New Jersey, as follows:

Section 1. The Borough of Hillsdale, in the County of Bergen, New Jersey (the "Borough") is hereby authorized to undertake various improvements to Stonybrook Swim Club in, by and for the Swim Pool Utility of the Borough. Said improvements shall include all work, materials and appurtenances necessary and suitable therefor.

Section 2. The sum of \$93,000 is hereby appropriated to the payment of the cost of the improvements authorized and described in Section 1 hereof (hereinafter referred to as "purpose"). Said appropriation shall be raised from Swim Pool Utility Capital Fund Balance. The sum of \$93,000 is hereby appropriated from Swim Pool Utility Capital Fund Balance to the payment of the cost of said purpose.

Section 3. Said improvements are lawful capital improvements of the Borough having a period of usefulness of at least five (5) years. Said improvements shall be made as general improvements, no part of the cost of which shall be assessed against property specially benefited.

Section 4. The capital budget is hereby amended to conform with the provisions of this capital ordinance to the extent of any inconsistency therewith and the resolutions promulgated by the Local Finance Board showing full detail of the amended capital budget and capital program as approved by the Director, Division of Local Government Services, is on file with the Borough Clerk and is available for public inspection.

Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect at the time and in the manner provided by law.

Motion to open public hearing on Ordinance 25-07 Ruocco Second Trochimiuk

Ayes: Council President Osso, Councilmembers Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong

Nays: none

I will now open the meeting to the public. If anyone desires to be heard regarding Ordinance No 25-07, 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. 25-07 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 25-07 Ruocco Second Mazza-Chiong

Ayes: Councilmembers Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso

Nays: none

Motion to adopt Ordinance No. 25-07 Ruocco Second Osso

Ayes: Councilmembers Trochimiuk, Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco

Nays: none

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): 25086 through 25091:

[25086](#) Resolution to Support Publishing Legal Notices on Official Government Websites

WHEREAS, the sunset provision of March 1, 2025, imposed under P.L. 2024 c.106 is fast approaching in what was a temporary solution that allowed local governments to comply with the public notice requirements under the law in time for annual reorganization meetings in January; and,

WHEREAS, local government officials serve as the stewards of property taxpayer dollars and should no longer be required to subsidize the newspaper industry with revenues collected from publishing legal notices in the press; and,

WHEREAS, long before NJ Advanced Media’s announcement that it was terminating daily print publications in January of 2025, local government officials found it increasingly difficult to comply with the public notice requirements under the law as the media has become almost exclusively digitized and struggled to retain staff, resources, and publications; and,

WHEREAS, legislation that will authorize local governments to publish legal notices on a local government’s official website will streamline an antiquated and overly burdensome process and save valuable time, resources, and property taxpayer dollars; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the **BOROUGH OF HILLSDALE** does in fact, hereby urge state leaders to pass legislation that will authorize municipalities, counties, school districts, and all local governments to publish legal notices in a clear, transparent, and timely manner on a local government’s official website.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be sent to Governor Phil Murphy, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Speaker of the General Assembly Craig Coughlin, Senator Holly Schepisi, Assemblymembers Robert Auth and John Azzariti Jr. and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

25087 was pulled by Councilman Colletti

[25088](#) Resolution Authorizing the Return of Unused Escrow Funds

WHEREAS, the following applications have been made to the Borough of Hillsdale for approvals and has since received such approval; and

WHEREAS, requests were made by the applicants to have any unused escrow funds be returned; and

WHEREAS, it was reported by the Finance Department that a balance does remain in each of the listed 2025 General Trust Escrow Accounts below and funds may be refunded to each applicant; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Governing Body of the Borough of Hillsdale, that the funds on deposit in the 2025 General Trust Account in connection with the properties listed below in Hillsdale, NJ 07642; be released/refunded by the Borough.

<u>BLOCK LOT</u>		<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>REFUND AMOUNT</u>	<u>PROJECT #</u>
407	5	Planning Board Escrow	\$410.00	LEU0020002
403	11	Soil Movement	\$296.25	BOR0030002

[25089](#) Resolution Authorizing a Contract with RER Supply for the Use of the Leaf Disposal Facility

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council recognize that the Borough needs a facility to drop off mixed yard waste, grass, and leaves collected each year; and

WHEREAS, the DPW Superintendent have sought various vendors to price the cost of this service; and

WHEREAS, it is the recommendation that the Borough hire RER Supply, LLC located at 4 South Corporate Drive Riverdale, NJ who will charge the following prices for 2025 at \$21.00 (Twenty-One Dollars) per yard for yard waste leaves \$13.00 (Thirteen Dollars) per yard, logs and/or \$18.00 (Eighteen Dollars) per yard and brush at \$15.00 (Fifteen Dollars) per yard that are delivered to their composting facility pursuant to their February 2025 proposal; and

WHEREAS, since this is a recycling contract it is an exception to the Local Public Contracts Law and no public bid is required.

WHEREAS, RER Supply, LLC, has completed and submitted a Business Entity Disclosure Certification which certifies that they have not made any reportable contributions to a political or candidate committee in the Borough of Hillsdale in the previous one (1) year, and that the contract will prohibit them from making any reportable contributions through the term of the contract; and

WHEREAS, the mandatory equal employment opportunity language N.J.S.A. 10:5-31 et seq., N.J.A.C. 17:27 is hereby incorporated into the contract; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council that the Mayor and or Borough Administrator is authorized to sign purchase orders between the Borough of Hillsdale and RER Supply LLC for the above services at the prices listed in the February 2025 proposal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that notice of this action as an exception to the Local Public Contracts Law be published in the newspaper of record within ten (10) days from adoption.

[25090](#) Resolution Authorizing a Contract with Organic Recycling, Inc for Use of the Leaf Disposal Facility

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council recognize that the Borough needs a facility to drop off leaves collected each year; and

WHEREAS, the DPW Superintendent have sought various vendors to price the cost of this service; and

WHEREAS, it is the recommendation that the Borough hire Organic Recycling, Inc located at 121 Route 303 Bldg #1 Orangeburg, NY 10962, who will charge the price of \$14.75 (Fourteen Dollars and Seventy-Five Cents) per cubic yard for compacted leaves or \$11.50 (Eleven Dollars and Fifty Cents) per cubic yard for loose leaves that are delivered to their composting facility pursuant to their February 4, 2025 proposal; and

WHEREAS, since this is a recycling contract it is an exception to the Local Public Contracts Law and no public bid is required.

WHEREAS, Organic Recycling inc., had completed and submitted a Business Entity Disclosure Certification which certifies that they have not made any reportable contributions to a political or candidate committee in the Borough of Hillsdale in the previous one (1) year, and that the contract will prohibit them from making any reportable contributions through the term of the contract; and

WHEREAS, the mandatory equal employment opportunity language N.J.S.A. 10:5-31 et seq., N.J.A.C. 17:27 is hereby incorporated into the contract; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council that the Borough Administrator is authorized to sign purchase orders between the Borough of Hillsdale and Organic Recycling at a price of \$14.75 (Fourteen Dollars and Seventy-Five Cents) per cubic yard for compacted leaves or \$11.50 (Eleven Dollars and Fifty Cents) per cubic yard; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that notice of this action as an exception to the Local Public Contracts Law be published in the newspaper of record as soon as possible.

[25091](#) Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Management for Grants under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) Public Assistance And/or Hazard Mitigation Programs for Presidentially Declared Major Disasters

WHEREAS, the Borough of Hillsdale (hereinafter the “Borough”) desires to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (hereinafter “NJOEM”); and

WHEREAS, the NJOEM, on behalf of the State of New Jersey, is the Grantee receiving funding under the FEMA Public Assistance and/or Hazard Mitigation programs as authorized under the Stafford Act and has the fiduciary responsibility to ensure those funds are spend on eligible facilities and activities and are properly reimbursed to the Borough; and

WHEREAS, under the current information provided, FEMA has determined that the Borough is eligible to apply for and/or receive FEMA funding under the Public Assistance and/or Hazard Mitigation programs, subject to approval of a Project Worksheet for Public Assistance or application for a Hazard Mitigation grant; and

WHEREAS, the agreement is part of the application for Disaster Assistance and will become effective and binding upon approval of a Project Worksheet or Hazard Mitigation Grant and signature on behalf of NJOEM; and

WHEREAS, the Borough and NJOEM wish to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding outlining their duties and obligations, which is enclosed hereto.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey hereby authorizes Mayor Michael Sheinfeld to sign said Memorandum of Understanding with the New Jersey, Office of Emergency Management, subject to any de minimis revisions from Counsel, and to take any and all other appropriate steps necessary to effectuate the purposes of said document.

Motion Osso Second Ruocco

Ayes: Councilmembers Colletti, Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk

Nays: none

OFF-CONSENT:

[25087](#) Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection for the Blue Acres Program

WHEREAS, the Borough of Hillsdale (hereinafter the “Borough”) desires to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection (hereinafter “DEP”) pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:8C-49, the Blue Acres Program which has dedicated funding to acquire properties statewide for flood mitigation and climate resilience purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Acres Program is administered by DEP for the purposes of helping New Jersey residents whose homes have been damaged in flooding events and contributing to New Jersey’s climate change resiliency strategy through the strategic acquisition of lands that have been damaged or may be prone to future damage as a result of sea-level rise, storms, or storm-related flooding or that may protect other lands from such damage; and

WHEREAS, such acquisitions and the removal of improvements situated on properties acquired for flood mitigation and climate resilience purposes will alleviate adverse physical, social, and economic impacts that beset the residents of the immediate area during periodic flooding and also will result in lessening the intensity of periodic flooding by increasing the area of absorption of flood waters; and

WHEREAS, such acquisitions and the removal of improvements situated on properties acquired for flood mitigation and climate resilience purposes will reduce the need for municipal services to the properties acquired; and

WHEREAS, upon acquisition of the properties referenced herein by DEP, it is the intention of the Municipality and DEP that said properties shall be managed by the Municipality pursuant to the terms of this Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Borough and DEP wish to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding outlining their duties and obligations, which is enclosed hereto.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Hillsdale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey hereby authorizes the mayor to sign said Memorandum of Understanding with the New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, subject to any de minimis revisions from Counsel, and to take any and all other appropriate steps necessary to effectuate the purposes of said document.

Motion Ruocco Second Osso

Councilman Colletti states that the memo of understanding outlines the Blue Acres Program between the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Hillsdale. The program focuses on acquiring flood-

prone homes from willing homeowners, demolishing them, and converting the land into open green space to serve as a buffer against future floods. The loss of tax revenue from the homes being acquired by the state will affect the town financially, as these properties will no longer contribute to the tax base. After the properties are demolished, the municipality will likely take on the responsibility of maintaining the land, which could impose additional costs. And finally, the transformation of these properties into open space could alter the character of the neighborhoods, possibly leading to vacant properties every few homes, which may have a visual and social impact.

He is concerned about whether the program could expand beyond the identified properties, with the possibility of losing more homes and further tax revenue. The list of properties for Hillsdale is currently capped at 10-11 homes, and there is no expectation that the program will expand much beyond that. Six of these properties have already been closed, so we are really talking about 4 properties at this point.

The Borough Attorney suggests to develop a comprehensive plan to address the financial implications and long-term effects on the town, as this program will change the landscape permanently. However, it was also noted that the program is unlikely to expand dramatically, as it is not a high funding priority for the state. Councilman Colletti added that his concern is proactively planning for a potential financial burden down the road. The Borough Attorney added that there would be no changes to the number of houses unless the DEP decides to change the flood maps. Councilman Ruocco added that this is consistent with what the council did in 2018 which was to do a Flood Acquisition Plan, which allowed people in the flood zone to exit out and the DEP picks up the cost and the town gets the responsibility of maintaining the land. However, the DEP limits what the town can do with the property.

Ayes: Councilmembers Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti
Nays: none

PUBLIC COMMENT: (time limited to 3 minutes any topic-please state your name and town of residence for the record)

Patty Mauro – Hillsdale

She brought attention to potential cost-saving opportunities for the Memorial Field project. She stated that Olympia Lighting offers LED lighting products and can help the town save money on the project. They are a part of ESCNJ (Educational Services Commission of New Jersey), which means the town can procure their LED products through this contract without needing to go out to bid. Additionally, PSE&G is offering rebates for sports lighting, which could significantly reduce the cost of the project. Olympia Lighting has helped other municipalities take advantage of these rebates.

Rick Savino – Hillsdale

He thanked the council, mayor, and Denise for their efforts in improving transparency by posting meeting minutes. He also commented on the Blue Acres program, stating that while it's helpful, the impact of the small number of lots being purchased is minimal compared to the floodwaters coming from upstream in Rockland County. He emphasized that the real source of flooding lies further upstream, and the local efforts, while beneficial, are small in the larger context of the watershed.

Chris Martin – Hillsdale

He acknowledges the earlier comment about the lighting, noting that while the financial aspect is significant, the primary concern is the quality of life for those living near Memorial Park. He also expresses concern about the town's budget and the rising costs. Regarding parking, the speaker asks for updates on a possible solution,

such as a parking sticker system for residents without enough parking on their property. He hopes the council is considering a solution.

Audra Landau – Hillsdale

She expresses excitement about the new visions for Memorial Field but also raises concerns about artificial turf versus grass. She mentions the growing body of evidence linking artificial turf to soft tissue injuries and, more troublingly, the exposure to harmful chemicals such as PBAs and microplastics, that leach into the environment. These chemicals pose long-term health risks like cancer, neurological disorders, and reproductive problems. In addition, the temperature increase caused by artificial turf, which can be 50 to 70 degrees hotter than natural grass, creating hazardous conditions. This issue is backed by various professional organizations, including the NFL Players Association, FIFA, and others, who have raised concerns and, in some cases, taken action against turf use. She references a lawsuit involving athletes and notes that FIFA has banned turf in certain World Cup venues, with states like New York prohibiting its use in new fields. She offered to provide further articles and information on these concerns.

Seeing no one else wishing to address the mayor and council, Mayor Sheinfield closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

COUNCIL COMMENTARIES:

Mayor Sheinfield –

He expressed his gratitude to the CFO and the budget committee for their hard work, acknowledging that their efforts are critical to the town's success and future planning. He also mentioned the recent Ramadan event, which was a success, with a large turnout. The event was held at Veterans Park for the first time, and it was a positive experience. He highlighted the importance of welcoming diverse cultures. He expressed his support for continuing it in the future.

Councilmember Mazza-Chiong-

She had the honor of attending the first annual Crescent Lighting Event, celebrating Ramadan in Hillsdale. It was standing-room-only crowd and a lot of energy. She expressed gratitude to the DPW for their support in making the event successful. Additionally, she thanked the BA Mike Ghassali and the Recreation Director, Dan Conte for their hard work in planning and organizing the event.

Councilmember Ruocco-

He also attended the Ramadan event, describing it as heartwarming and unifying for the community, especially amidst national discussions. He appreciates the opportunity to work with the CFO, praising him as possibly one of the best he's ever worked with. He wished his granddaughter, Hannah a happy 4th birthday. Lastly, he reminded everyone that Daylight Saving Time begins this Sunday.

Councilmember Colletti –

He expressed his gratitude to the Finance Committee and especially David Young, appreciating the opportunity to work with him during the budgeting process. He highlighted David's long-term approach, noting that he's not only focused on the current year but also setting the town up for success over the next two to three years, which they consider crucial.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn Ruocco Second Mazza-Chiong

Ayes: Councilmembers Fox, Mazza-Chiong, Council President Osso, Ruocco, Trochimiuk, Colletti

Nays: none

Denise Kohan, Municipal Clerk

Approved as Presented