



## BOROUGH OF LEONIA

COUNCIL- Regular Meeting  
~ Minutes ~

Trina Lindsey, Borough Clerk

312 Broad Avenue  
Leonia, NJ 07605  
<http://www.leonianj.gov/>

---

**September 6, 2023**

**7:30 pm**

**Leonia Senior Center**

---

A Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Leonia was held in person at the Leonia Senior Center at 305 Beechwood Place, Leonia, NJ, and virtually via GoToMeeting on September 6, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Council President Grandelis.

Those present were led in the Flag Salute by Councilman Fusco.

Mayor Zeigler read the following statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Notice of this meeting by the January 8, 2023 Sunshine Notice containing the time, date, and access information was published in the Record, Star Ledger and has been posted at Borough Hall and on the Borough website."

**PRESENT:** Council President Grandelis, Councilwoman Maureen Davis, Councilman Pasquale Fusco, Councilman Christoph Hesterbrink, and Councilman William Ziegler

**ABSENT:** Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilwoman Joanne Terrell

**ALSO PRESENT:** Borough Attorney Brian Chewcaskie  
Borough Administrator Andrea Wardrop  
Borough Engineer Drew Di Sessa  
Chief Financial Officer Issa Abbasi  
Borough Clerk Trina Lindsey  
Deputy Borough Clerk Jonathan Mandel

### ***Public Comment***

The record will reflect that no such comments were entered into the chat window accessible through GoToMeeting nor via the United States Postal Service or Email.

### ***Appointments***

**RES. 2023-192 Appointment of Class I Special Law Enforcement Officers**  
[2023-192\\_Appoint SLEO I Officers\\_09.06.23.pdf](#)

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Hesterbrink, that Resolution #2023-192 be approved.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	absent
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

Council President Grandelis thanked Police Chief Scott Tamangny and the Police Committee for their efforts in acquiring SLEO I candidates.

### ***Approval of Minutes***

Motion by Councilman Fusco, second by Councilwoman Davis, and all members present voting in favor, that the Minutes of June 19, 2023 Work Session Meeting were approved.

### ***Reports***

#### **Council President Grandelis**

##### Fire Department

The Fire Department Committee met on August 31, 2023, with September 21, 2023 scheduled for its next meeting.

The Fire Department responded to 25 alarms in August.

The Fire Department Committee is discussing topics such as the 2023 Capital Budget, Enrollment, and Ladder Truck repairs.

Council President Grandelis attended the Fire Company meeting and thanked them for their hospitality.

##### Recreation

Council President Grandelis was unable to attend the August meeting of the Leonia Recreation Commission, the next meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2023.

The 2023 Swim Club Season has ended. There have been several public comments about rules and regulations not being enforced and about cleanliness. More signage has been placed around the pools and efforts are underway to alleviate all concerns.

Events being planned and assisted with are the Annual Halloween Treat Street, Turkey Trot 4K, and Oktoberfest.

The Senior Center Bathroom Project has begun, with programs not expected to be affected by the construction.

Councilman Ziegler questioned if the membership goals for the swim club have been met. Council President Grandelis responded that the Swim Club exceeded its goals of membership.

EMS

79 incidents required responses from EMS.

Finance & Human Resources Committee

The Finance & HR Committee met on August 8, 2023 with the next meeting scheduled for September 12, 2023.

Capital Budget was the focus of the Finance and HR Committee's discussions, with PBA Discussions to begin again in September.

Board of Health

The Board of Health did not meet.

**Councilwoman Davis**Police Department

Councilwoman Davis spoke as to the necessity of appointing the SLEO I Officers as they must be enrolled in the Police Academy for training. Councilwoman Davis spoke about the hard work of the Police Committee to ensure this recruitment process was a success.

The August report shall be provided at the next Mayor and Council Regular Session.

**Councilman Fusco**Department of Public Works

Please see attached the Department of Public Works Monthly Report for August 2023.

[August 2023 Department of Public Works Report](#)

Building Department

Councilman Fusco provided the Building Department's Construction Report for August 2023.

Planning Board

The Planning Board met in August; Councilman Fusco was unable to attend.

A resolution was approved for the use of 2 Christie Heights for Senior Daycare services.

On September 13, 2023, there will be a special meeting of the planning board to discuss the amended draft redevelopment plan.

**Councilman Hesterbrink**Library

The Library Director and another staff member are leaving the Leonia Library. An interim leader has been put in place and the search for new candidates is active.

There was a sewer backup in August, which was handled through an emergency appropriation.

#### Historical Preservation Commission

The Historical Preservation Committee did not meet in August.

#### **Councilman Ziegler**

#### Facilities Committee

On September 15, 2023 sitework will begin on the ground. This will cause a disruption behind the Library as the Leonia Police will need to use the public lot for their vehicles.

The furniture that is currently being stored within a warehouse for free will be required to be moved out, with it soon to be stored in the court chamber of the new municipal center. All the proper inspectors have approved of this course of action.

Items such as switches, firewalls, licenses, hardware expenses, etc. to replace old technology are on the agenda for consent. The vendor Millenium is a state contract vendor that provides the Borough of Leonia with a large discount.

The facilities committee reviewed the certificate of occupancy rules and all the pre-inspections of the building are done.

The New Municipal Center project is currently a few million under budget.

#### Environmental Commission

Discussion was held over potential increased involvement with Sustainable New Jersey.

The saplings planted at Highwood Hills are doing great.

Environmental Commissioners are thinking of attending one of the upcoming County Commissioner meetings to voice Leonia's concerns over not hearing any further information about the Overpeck Section IV design proposals. It is being asked that Leonia be allowed to provide input.

Ridgefield Park has acquired an infuser, providing an opportunity for Leonia to use it to recycle Styrofoam.

Discussion was held over garbage pails on the south side of Broad Avenue.

The City of Hwaseong, Korea sent delegates of municipal officials to the New York Metropolitan Area. They had asked Leonia to view the Municipal Center as it is being constructed as they had heard it was of high quality and value. They had also visited the Leonia Library as it was of interest to them. Councilman Ziegler thanked Councilman Sihoon Chung for acting as a translator for the delegation.

**Borough Administrator's Report**

Please see the Borough Administrator's Report for August 2023

[Borough Administrator Report – August 2023](#)

Councilman Ziegler requested that the public information session for Broad Avenue Section 11 and reverse-angled parking be live-streamed and recorded for public viewing.

Councilman Hesterbrink inquired as to the status of several grants. Borough Administrator Wardrop explained that the grants that are still pending have not yet received an official response from the state, in particular the Wood Terrace Drainage Project. Councilman Hesterbrink requested that Millenium Strategies update its reports to reflect this.

Council President Grandelis requested that for the public information session on reversed angled parking, the Fire Department be invited.

Council President Grandelis was assured that the digital sign would not affect residents across the street from the Leonia Library.

Councilman Ziegler spoke as to how a million-dollar grant was contingent on the acceptance of reverse-angled parking.

**Borough Attorney's Report**

The Council on Local Mandates recently issued a dismissal of the Borough of Leonia and Fort Lee's legal case against the business registration mandate from the State of New Jersey. The basis is under the pretense that the municipalities can be sufficiently compensated by the fees and enforcement of the ordinance.

Councilman Hesterbrink inquired as to the legal fees relating to the complaint, being split between Fort Lee and Leonia.

The leases for a composting facility and billboard were executed.

The Borough Attorney is working on an update to the Parking Ordinance and a discussion shall occur in closed session concerning Borough Owned Properties.

**Borough Engineer's Report**

The discussion on Broad Avenue Section 11 is underway and conversations have been held with the contractor to hopefully have him begin the following week.

The Recreation Center lower roof project was completed and passed all inspections.

The Sanitary Sewer for the Leonia Library was replaced and improved to further prevent backups.

## **Adoption of Ordinances**

### **Ordinance 2023-15 Amend Chapter 46 - "Personnel Policies"**

The Borough Clerk read the title of the ordinance into the record:

"AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 46 OF THE GENERAL CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF LEONIA ENTITLED "PERSONNEL POLICIES"

Borough Attorney Chewcaskie explained the purpose of the ordinance and the need to constantly update the personnel policies. The personnel policies shall be updated through resolution subject to the ordinance. It is the suggestion by the Borough Attorney that a resolution be adopted yearly.

Let the record show that no members of the public came forward for the public comment portion of the adoption of ordinance 2023-15.

Councilwoman Davis motioned that Ordinance 2023-15 be adopted on second reading. Seconded by Councilman Fusco.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	absent
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

### **Ordinance 2023-16 136-12 Fire Prevention**

The Borough Clerk read the title of the ordinance into the record:

"AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING CHAPTER 136 "FIRE PREVENTION" OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF LEONIA"

As suggested by the Fire Official of the Borough of Leonia, this ordinance updates and clears any ambiguity of language relating to fees.

Let the record show that no members of the public came forward for the public comment portion of the adoption of ordinance 2023-16.

Councilman Hesterbrink motioned that ordinance 2023-16 be adopted on second reading. Seconded by Councilwoman Davis.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	absent
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

### ***Consent Resolutions***

**RES. 2023-193 Authorize Bill List**

[2023-193\\_Authorize Bill List\\_9.06.23.pdf](#)

[2023-193\\_Bill List Backup.pdf](#)

**RES. 2023-194 Authorize Tax Refund for Overpayment**

[2023-194\\_Authorize Tax Refund for Overpayment\\_09.06.23.pdf](#)

**RES. 2023-195 Authorize Tax Refund for Erroneous Payments**

[2023-195\\_Authorize Tax Refund for Erroneous Payments\\_09.06.23.pdf](#)

**RES. 2023-196 Authorize Tax Refund for 100% Veteran Exempt**

[2023-196\\_Authorize Tax Refund for 100% Veteran Exempt\\_09.06.23.pdf](#)

**RES. 2023-197 Authorize Network Equipment and Licensing Upgrades for the New Municipal Center**

[2023-197\\_Millenium Communications Group Network Upgrades\\_09.06.2023.pdf](#)

Motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilwoman Davis, that the Consent Agenda be approved.

On a roll call, the vote on the Consent Agenda was recorded as follows:

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	absent
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

### ***Unfinished Business***

**Capital Budget – Louis Grandelis/Issa Abbasi/Andrea Wardrop**

Councilman Ziegler commented that the amount to be appropriated compared to previous years is very reasonable. Councilman Ziegler also called attention to the fact that there is a \$250,000 grant from Senator Menendez for the Senior Bus, which will help offset the appropriations for that purpose.

Councilman Hesterbrink stated his desire to see a 5 to 6-year plan and what liabilities could be foreseen in the future.

Borough Administrator Wardrop discussed the capital budget process and explained that there is indeed a 5-year plan that is put together by the Department Heads.

Councilman Hesterbrink requested that the information relating to the 5-year plan be collectivized and put together into a one-page report.

Borough Administrator Wardrop discussed the road assessment program as an important item that is desired to be appropriated and moved forward with during the current year. Once it is completed there can be an assessment of the quality and condition of all the roads in the Borough of Leonia. Council President Grandelis seconded the notion of this project's importance.

Councilman Ziegler mentioned a discussion held by the Environmental Commission over the lack of garbage pails at bus stops on the south side of Broad Avenue. There was a capital request made two years ago that was not granted. Councilman Ziegler questioned whether the Mayor and Council would like to return to the iron mesh pails or have big bellies installed. Councilman Ziegler asked the Mayor and Council if they would be willing to appropriate funds for this purpose. Council President Grandelis and Councilwoman Davis stated their approval.

It was suggested by Councilman Ziegler to amend the capital budget and include \$10,000 in appropriations for the garbage pails.

Councilman Fusco commended the Finance and HR Committee for performing a great job of preparing the Capital Budget.

Motion by Councilman Ziegler and Second by Councilwoman Davis that the Capital Budget be approved pending the addition of the \$10,000 in appropriations for garbage pails as suggested by Councilman Ziegler.

On a roll call, the vote on the Capital Budget was recorded as follows:

Council President Grandelis:	aye	Councilman Hesterbrink:	aye
Councilwoman Davis:	aye	Councilwoman Terrell:	absent
Councilman Fusco:	aye	Councilman Ziegler:	aye

### **Public Comment**

Robin Barbossa, 443 Fort Lee Road, asked that a garbage can be installed on the north side of Fort Lee Road. Ms. Barbossa expressed concern over distractions that the digital sign might cause for motorists driving on Fort Lee Road and asked what the guidelines will be for messaging on it for special interest groups. Ms. Barbossa commented on her concerns about reverse-angled parking and questioned the cost-benefit of storing furniture in the new municipal center. Ms. Barbossa asked if touring the construction site was open to the public and if there was adequate insurance for personal injury relating to the site.

Maria Duran, 121 Van Orden Avenue, questioned what the training entails for volunteer officers and how they will be used. Ms. Duran questioned how often Styrofoam will be collected in Leonia. Ms. Duran asked how reverse-angled parking would affect traffic in Leonia. Ms. Duran spoke about a lack of garbage cans on the north side of town and how she has witnessed individuals from other towns come with garbage and dump it in public garbage cans.

Allison Miller, 116 Palisade Avenue, asked when the new master plan would be made available to the public.

Mike DeGidio, 408 Grand Avenue, shared a story as to how the Planning Board fought hard for improvements to be made to the property hosting the Power Station on Willow Tree Road. Recently improvements have been made to the property with landscaping by PSE&G. Mr. DeGidio gave thanks to all those who have been involved in this with special thanks to Councilman Ziegler, who had initiated the discussion, and the Shade Tree Commission Co-Chairs.



Vito Mazza, 430 Grandview Terrace, commented on how the SLEO I Officer is not allowed to pull over vehicles due to safety concerns and questioned if any evaluations were performed on the placement of SLEO I officers within the Borough of Leonia. Mr. Mazza spoke about the various traffic issues and incidents where pedestrians were struck at the intersection of Broad and Fort Lee Road. Mr. Mazza asked as to what studies have been performed to show that reversed-angled parking would be safer. Mr. Mazza questioned what Borough properties are to be discussed in the closed session.

Council President Grandelis responded to the concerns over the digital sign and stated that the Borough's intent is not to create any issues and that these signs are common. Borough Attorney Chewcaskie said that as to liability the Borough of Leonia has JIF Insurance and excess insurance, and for the duration of the contract it has contract insurance. Borough Administrator Wardrop clarified that the Police Department has been involved in the digital sign project since the beginning for the sake of public safety and to consider these concerns.

Councilwoman Davis responded that the intersection of Broad Avenue and Fort Lee Road has a special light cycle where pedestrians should not cross unless all lights are red. Pedestrians thus should not be running across Fort Lee Road while there is an ongoing green light.

Council President Grandelis clarified that money was not paid to store the furniture for the new municipal center but that the contract allowed for the storage of furniture for no additional cost to the Borough of Leonia. The Borough of Leonia was requested to move the furniture and it is safe to move the furniture into the new municipal center. Councilman Ziegler added that the current furniture being used by the Police Department is in abysmal shape.

Council President Grandelis stated that the construction area for the new municipal center is not open to the public and that no one is allowed to enter a construction project without approval and accompaniment by a construction official. Tours are not given to the public, the individuals who toured the facility were construction officials from South Korea who had requested to do so. Borough Administrator Wardrop explained that the Borough of Leonia is properly insured and that risk management has been held in serious regard since the beginning.

Councilwoman Davis explained that SLEO I Officers are not crossing guards and that they are trained at the Bergen County Police Academy. The purpose of the SLEO I Officers is not for crossing but for assisting in the deployment of traffic control equipment so sworn officers are free for other duties. Council President Grandelis explained that domestic violence rates at traffic stops are high for officers and thus for the safety of SLEO I Officers, who are not allowed to carry firearms, they are not permitted to perform stops.

Council President Grandelis stated that all information relating to the redevelopment zone is posted on the Borough's website.

Councilman Ziegler replied that the Borough of Leonia used to have a bin down at the DPW compound for residents to drop off Styrofoam but as it was no longer profitable the opportunity was lost. The possibility of Styrofoam collection can potentially be resurrected due to Ridgefield Park buying a diffuser. Currently, the Borough of Leonia is not collecting Styrofoam.

### ***Closed Session***

**RES. 2023-198 Authorize Closed Session**[2023-198\\_Closed Session\\_09.06.23.pdf](#)

BE IT RESOLVED in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-12, the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Leonia entered into Closed Executive Session to discuss the following matters:

A. Borough Owned Properties

Minutes will be taken of the meeting and released to the public at the time that the matter is resolved. After Closed Executive Session, the Mayor and Council will reconvene to adjourn this meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Council, on a motion from Councilman Hesterbrink, seconded by Councilman Fusco, and all present voting in favor, the meeting was adjourned to the Closed Executive Session at 8:58 p.m.

***Adjournment:***

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council, on a motion by Councilman Ziegler, second by Councilman Hesterbrink, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Mandel,  
\_\_\_\_\_