

**WORK SESSION
MINUTES**

The Work Session Meeting of the Mayor and Council was in the Council Chambers and called to order at 7:31pm. Adequate notification was published in the official newspaper of the Borough of Montvale. Roll call was taken.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to The Bergen Record informing the public of the time and place according to the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975).

ROLL CALL:

Councilmember Arendacs
Councilmember Cudequest
Councilmember Koelling

Councilmember Lane
Councilmember Roche
Councilmember Russo-Vogelsang - absent

Also Present: Mayor Mike Ghassali; Borough Attorney, Dave Lafferty; Administrator, Joe Voytus; Borough Engineer, Carl O'Brien and Municipal Clerk, Fran Scordo

ORDINANCES:

None

MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

Agenda Items Only

*A motion to open the meeting to the public for agenda items only by Councilmember Lane;
seconded by Councilmember Roche – all ayes*

No public comment

MEETING CLOSED TO PUBLIC

Agenda Items Only

*A motion to close the meeting to the public for agenda items only by Councilmember Lane;
seconded by Councilmember Roche – all ayes*

MINUTES:

None

CLOSED/EXECUTIVE MINUTES:

None

RESOLUTIONS: (CONSENT AGENDA*)

All items listed on a consent agenda are considered to be routine and non-controversial by the Borough Council and will be approved by a motion, seconded and a roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless a Council member(s) so request it, in which case the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

77-2025 Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder Fiscal Grant Cycle October 2020-June 2026

WHEREAS, the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder (GCSUD) established the Municipal Alliances for the Prevention of Substance Use Disorder in 1989 to educate and engage residents, local government and law enforcement officials, schools, nonprofit organizations, the faith community, parents, youth and other allies in efforts to prevent substance use disorder in communities throughout New Jersey.

WHEREAS, The Borough Council of the Borough of Montvale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey recognizes that substance use disorder is a serious problem in our society amongst persons of all ages; and therefore, has an established Municipal Alliance Committee; and,

WHEREAS, the Borough Council further recognizes that it is incumbent upon not only public officials but upon the entire community to take action to prevent substance use disorder in our community; and,

WHEREAS, the Borough Council has applied for funding to the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder through the County of Bergen;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough of Montvale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey hereby recognizes the following:

1. The Borough Council does hereby authorize submission of a strategic plan for the Municipal Alliance grant for fiscal year 2026 in the amount of:

GCSUD GRANT FUND	\$3,836.33
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Cash Match	\$ 959.08
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In-Kind	\$2,877.25
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2. The Borough Council acknowledges the terms and conditions for administering the Municipal Alliance grant, including the administrative compliance and audit requirements.

78-2025 A Resolution Amending a Professional Services Contract to King, Moench & Collins LLP to Serve as Special Counsel for Affordable Housing Litigation

WHEREAS, the Governing Body previously awarded a professional services contract to Michael Collins, Esq. and King, Moench & Collins LLP ("KMC") to serve as Special Counsel for Affordable Housing Litigation to represent the Borough (and other municipalities) in connection with a challenge to the recent legislation concerning Round 4 of the state-wide affordable housing obligations; and

WHEREAS, the Borough's initial award had a "not to exceed" figure of \$30,000, and the Borough is desirous of increasing this figure to a "not to exceed" value of \$250,000; and

WHEREAS, the payments for KMC's services shall come from the Trust Fund established with funds from all participating municipalities; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(a)(i), a professional services contract is exempt from public bidding requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Borough's Chief Financial Officer has certified that funds have been appropriated and are available for this purpose.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the professional services contract with Michael Collins, Esq. and King, Moench & Collins LLP to serve as Special Counsel for Affordable Housing Litigation is hereby amended to increase the "not to exceed" figure to \$250,000; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Borough Clerk are hereby authorized and empowered to execute a contract consistent with the provisions and intent of this Resolution,

subject to approval of same by the Borough Attorney; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Borough Clerk shall publish notice of this contract award in the official newspaper of the Borough, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5.

79-2025 Authorizing Refund of Redemption of Tax Sale Certificate #24-00002 for Block 2002: Lot 13, 24 Spring Valley Road

WHEREAS, at the Municipal Tax Sale held on October 24, 2025, a lien was sold on Block 2002, Lot 13, also known as 24 Spring Valley Road for 2024 property taxes; and,

WHEREAS, this lien, known as Tax Sale Certificate #24-00002, was sold to Pro Cap 8 LLC FBO Firsttrust Bank, P. O. Box 774, Fort Washington, PA 19034-0774 at 0% interest rate and a premium in the amount of \$132,000.00; and

WHEREAS, Montvale Grove, LLC has affected redemption of Tax Sale Certificate #24-00002 in the amount of \$17,116.10; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Montvale, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, that the Tax Collector be and is hereby authorized to Redeem Certificate #24-00002 in the amount of \$17,116.10 plus \$132,000.00 premium for a total amount of \$149,116.10 to Pro Cap 8 LLC FBO Firsttrust Bank, P. O. Box 774, Fort Washington, PA 19034-0774

80-2025 A Resolution Awarding a Two-Year Extension to the Contract with New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency for Designation as the Borough Elevator Subcode Official, Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-15

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 84-2022 the Borough of Montvale did award a three-year contract to New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency, 30 Amherst Place, Livingston, NJ 07039, for the services of an elevator subcode official within the Borough, with the potential for up to two years of mutual extensions pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-15; and

WHEREAS, the Borough has determined that the services being provided by New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency are being provided in an effective and efficient manner, and the Borough wishes to extend the contract for an additional two years; and

WHEREAS, the annual increases for the two extension years of the contract shall be 54% of DCA Fees charges for inspections, plus the Boroughs 20% Administration Fee; which increases are compliant with the requirements of N.J.S.A. 40A:11-15; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency has consented to the terms of this proposed extension; and

WHEREAS, the Borough CFO has certified that funds have been appropriated and are available for this purpose.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Montvale as follows:

1. The Borough does authorize a two-year extension of the contract between the Borough of Montvale and New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:11-15.
2. The Mayor and Borough Clerk are hereby directed, authorized and empowered to execute an amendment to the contract with New Jersey Elevator Inspection Agency to effectuate the purposes of this resolution, subject to approval as to form by the Borough Attorney.
3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

83-2025 RE: Award Professional Service Contract to Colliers Engineering & Design - for Design and Bidding Services and Grant Administration Services for NJDOT FY2025 – Paragon Drive Resurfacing Project

WHEREAS, the Borough of Montvale has deemed it necessary to engage the professional services of an Engineer for Project Construction Observation Services and Administration Services for the 2024 Road Improvements Program; and

WHEREAS, section N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 of the Local Public Contracts Law, (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.) exempts such professional services from competitive bidding; and

WHEREAS, Colliers Engineering & Design, 400 Valley Road, Suite 304, Mt. Arlington, NJ 07856 has submitted a proposal dated February 6, 2025 to provide engineering services which are detailed and attached to the original of this resolution, and

WHEREAS, the Certified Municipal Finance Officer has certified funds are available certification hereto attached to the original of this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough of Montvale as follows:

1. That the following be provided: Design and Bidding Services and Grant Administration Services for NJDOT FY2025 Paragon Drive Resurfacing Project
2. The cost not to exceed shall be \$58,500.00. The Engineer shall be required to submit itemized bills and payment shall be made based upon services rendered. The rates for this work are in accordance with the hourly contractual agreement with the Borough of Montvale.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be published an official newspaper of the Borough of Montvale, be on file, available for public inspection, in the office of the Municipal Clerk, Municipal Complex, 12 DePiero Drive, Montvale, NJ 07645.

84-2025 Resolution Approving a Grant Agreement with the County of Bergen for a Matching Grant for Historic Preservation of the J.J. Blauvelt (Octagon) House

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Montvale wish to enter into a Bergen County Trust Fund Project Contract ("Contract") with the County of Bergen for the purpose of using a \$45,000 matching grant award from the 2024 Funding Round of the Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") for the municipal historic preservation project entitled, "JJ Blauvelt House: NR listing, Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study," for property located at Block 1601, Lot 22 on the tax maps of the Borough of Montvale; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council hereby authorize the Mayor and/or Borough Administrator to be a signatory to the aforesaid Contract; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council hereby acknowledge that, in general, the use of this Trust Fund grant towards this approved project must be completed by or about November 13, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council acknowledge that the grant will be disbursed to the municipality as a reimbursement upon submittal of certified Trust Fund payment and project completion documents and municipal vouchers, invoices, proofs of payment, and other such documents as may be required by the County in accordance with the Trust Fund's requirements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council acknowledge that the grant disbursement to the municipality will be equivalent to fifty (50) percent of the eligible costs incurred (not to exceed total grant award) applied towards only the approved purposes identified in the aforesaid Contract in accordance with the Trust Fund's requirements.

*Introduced by: Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Roche - a roll call was taken
- all ayes*

76-2025 Refund Overpayment of Taxes - Due to Veteran Exempt Status – Joshua Kohen

WHEREAS, a resolution authorizing the Borough of Montvale to refund the following overpayment of taxes; and

WHEREAS, the owner of 16 Hope Street, Joshua Kohen, is totally exempt from taxes due to his Veteran status, his mortgage company made a payment for February 1st installment in the amount of \$4,854.00 which resulted in an overpayment; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Montvale, County of Bergen, New Jersey, that the Tax Collector be and is hereby authorized to refund in the amount of \$4,854.00 to Joshua Kohen, of 16 Hope Street, Montvale, NJ 07645

Introduced by: Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Cudequest - a roll call was taken - all ayes with the exception of Councilmember Koelling abstaining

81-2025 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 Montvale 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 Auth and Azzariti and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

Introduced by: Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Cudequest - a roll call was taken - all ayes – Councilmember Cudequest asked if this was the resolution that was discussed at last meeting.

86-2025 Appointment of Junior Member for the Montvale Fire Department – Rian J. Murphy

WHEREAS, the Montvale Fire Department is desirous of adding a junior member; and

WHEREAS, Rian Murphy of Montvale, NJ has been approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners and has undergone a satisfactory physical, pursuant to the attached application which has been made part of this resolution; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Montvale that the appointment of Rian Murphy, as a Junior Member of the Montvale Fire Department, is hereby approved.

Introduced by: Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Roche - all ayes

82-2025 Award Professional Service Contract to Colliers Engineering & Design for Survey Services, Geotechnical Services and Design & Specifications for the 2024 Bergen County Municipal Park Improvement – Flagg Field Improvements

WHEREAS, the Borough of Montvale has deemed it necessary to engage the professional services of an Engineer to provide professional services for the 2024 Bergen County Municipal Park Improvement – Flagg Field Improvements

WHEREAS, section N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 of the Local Public Contracts Law, (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.) exempts such professional services from competitive bidding; and

WHEREAS, Colliers Engineering & Design, with offices located at 400 Valley Road, Suite 304, Mt. Arlington, NJ 07856 has submitted a proposal dated February 6, 2025 to provide the engineering services which are detailed and attached to the original of this resolution, and

WHEREAS, the Certified Municipal Finance Officer has certified funds are available certification hereto attached to the original of this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough of Montvale as follows:

That the proposal for the scope of engineering services is attached to this resolution which is made part of this resolution shall be awarded to Colliers Engineering & Design.

That the following be provided: Survey Services, Geotechnical Services and Design & Bidding Services

1. The cost not to exceed shall be \$53,900.00
2. The Engineer shall be required to submit itemized bills and payment shall be made based upon services rendered. The rates for this work are in accordance with the hourly contractual agreement with the Borough of Montvale.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be published an official newspaper of the Borough of Montvale, be on file, available for public inspection, in the office of the Municipal Clerk, Municipal Complex, 12 DePiero Drive, Montvale, NJ 07645.

THIS WAS WITHDRAWN

85-2025 Award Professional Service Contract to Colliers Engineering & Design - for Construction Observation Services for Memorial Drive M.A.L. Synthetic Turf Field

WHEREAS, the Borough of Montvale has deemed it necessary to engage the professional services of an Engineer for Project Construction Observation Services and Administration Services for the 2023 Bergen County Open Space Grant Program; and

WHEREAS, section N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 of the Local Public Contracts Law, (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.) exempts such professional services from competitive bidding; and

WHEREAS, Colliers Engineering & Design, 400 Valley Road, Suite 304, Mt. Arlington, NJ 07856 has submitted a proposal dated February 18, 2025 to provide engineering services which are detailed and attached to the original of this resolution, and

WHEREAS, the Certified Municipal Finance Officer has certified funds are available certification hereto attached to the original of this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough of Montvale as follows:

- 1) That the following be provided: Construction Observation Services for Memorial Drive M.A.L. Synthetic Turf Field

The cost not to exceed shall be \$34,500.00. The Engineer shall be required to submit itemized bills and payment shall be made based upon services rendered. The rates for this work are in accordance with the hourly contractual agreement with the Borough of Montvale.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be published an official newspaper of the Borough of Montvale, be on file, available for public inspection, in the office of the Municipal Clerk, Municipal Complex, 12 DePiero Drive, Montvale, NJ 07645.

THIS WAS WITHDRAWN

BILLS: *Administrator read the Bill Report*

Motion to pay bills by Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Roche - all ayes

ENGINEER'S REPORT: Carl O'Brien

Concrete barriers have been installed at the intersection of Kinderkamack and Magnolia as a temporary measure; the intersection of Chestnut Ridge and Summit will be surveyed to submit to the County; Stormwater GIS mapping will begin in March; MAL field price came back extremely high and Flagg field will be about the same, totaling approximately 1million for both fields. Councilmembers decided to have DPW to work on the fields to get them playable for this year. For next meeting will have a proposal to do all new tax maps for the upcoming Re-Val.

ATTORNEY REPORT: Dave Lafferty

No Report

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT: Joe Voytus

No Report

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

- Appointing Ernie DiFiore to the Mayor's Advisory Committee

Councilmembers agreed on the mayor's appointment

- Appointing Corinne Duffy as the Official Town Photographer

Mayor Ghassali would like to offer a \$2,500 annual stipend – council agreed and a formal resolution will be on the next agenda

COMMUNICATION CORRESPONDENCE:

None

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

HEARING OF CITIZENS WHO WISH TO ADDRESS THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL:

Upon recognition by the Mayor, the person shall proceed to the floor and give his/her name and address in an audible tone of voice for the records. Unless further time is granted by the Council, he/she shall limit his/her statement to five (5) minutes. Statements shall be addressed to the Council as a body and not to any member thereof. No person, other than the person having the floor, shall be permitted to enter into any discussion, without recognition by the Mayor.

A motion to open meeting to the public by Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Koelling – all ayes

No Public Comment

A motion to close meeting to the public by Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Koelling – all ayes

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn by Councilmember Lane; seconded by Councilmember Koelling – all ayes

Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm

Elected Officials Training is scheduled for 6:00pm on Thursday, March 13, 2025

Regular Meeting of the Mayor & Council will be held at 7:30pm on Thursday, March 13, 2025

Respectfully submitted, Frances Scordo, Municipal Clerk