



BOROUGH COUNCIL RECAP - April 20th, 2026



This post serves as an unofficial recap of tonight's council meeting, for members of the "Holler About Hightstown" group. All are encouraged to attend meetings or review official meeting minutes when posted to the borough website

(<https://ecode360.com/HI1169/documents/Minutes?category=Borough%20Council>)

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Volunteer Recognition

Mayor Bluth opened the meeting with a moment of silence for Ed Esch Jr, a Hightstown firefighter who passed away after serving for 70 years. Ed was fire chief from 1969-1975 and regularly attended fire company meetings until the time of his passing.

Mayor Bluth went on to read a proclamation for Volunteer Appreciation Week, recognizing and thanking volunteers for various Hightstown emergency services, committees, and boards.

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Infrastructure Financing

Borough Council introduced ordinances that would finance \$382,042 of road reconstruction and \$2,034,500 in water and sewer utility upgrades. The roadwork will take place on Broad St, Van Renssaler Ave, and Manlove Ave. The total cost of roadwork is \$709,330, with nearly half covered by an NJ DOT grant.

The Borough also anticipates financing \$2M in water service line replacement, through NJ's infrastructure bank. NJ municipalities have until July 2031 to replace all galvanized iron or steel pipes, as well as any lead pipes, throughout their water systems. Hightstown has been performing this work alongside road reconstruction, and proposes continuing to do so with the additional funding it is seeking.

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Ward St Bridge Agreement

A memorandum of agreement was signed between Hightstown and Mercer County, solidifying plans to install traffic calming measures on local roads leading to and from the bridge. The Borough's concerns over truck traffic were shared with Mercer County at a February 9th meeting, after which Mercer County agreed to fund the design and construction of such

improvements. The county will also bear all costs for utilities and lighting of the bridge, with outlets to allow for seasonal decorative lighting.

Improvements will be made at the intersections of Rt 33 and Maxwell Ave, Maxwell Ave and Ward St, and S Main and Ward St. This includes, but is not limited to flexible traffic control bollards, striping, and signage. Mercer County made a commitment to maintain and replace bollards as needed for the first five years. Hightstown received a guarantee that these traffic calming measures will be in place prior to the bridge's opening. Additionally, if traffic data shows negative impacts to Hightstown once the bridge opens, Mercer County will revisit the area to install more bollards, and if warranted even construct a roundabout at the intersection of Ward St and Maxwell Ave.

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Borough Hall Redevelopment Study

The Planning Board was asked to begin an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" designation study for the former YMCA and adjacent Borough-owned property.

This move follows a recent town hall meeting (Jan 14th), where the Borough Administrator informed residents of the YMCA building's poor condition. Mayor Bluth reiterated during today's meeting that the building is now unsuitable for use as a new Borough Hall. Therefore, the Borough is exploring all options, including sale of the property.

If pursuing a traditional sale, the Borough would normally be required to use a public auction. However, a redevelopment area designation allows direct negotiation with potential buyers. Bluth's intent is to ensure residents get a return on their original investment in the property. Granting such a designation would provide the Borough significant flexibility in negotiating with private developers, ensuring that any future construction on the site is in line with the Borough's vision, while incentivizing potential buyers with streamlined approvals.

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Other Business

A previously-discussed plan to expand the Cultural Arts Commission was formally introduced, with a final vote to follow.

Borough Council adopted a marketing plan for its affordable housing obligation. This is a state-mandated plan that will help residents stay informed about needs-based grant funding for home renovations and the application process for affordable rentals.

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Engineer's Report

Borough Engineer Cameron Corini reported that water line replacements on Maxwell Ave are set to be completed this week. This puts the project, which includes repaving, on track for the schedule presented at the prior council meeting.

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Administrator's Report

Borough Administrator John Roman visited Hightstown's Judge Seth Kurs at the Borough's new shared courtroom in Robbinsville. Roman stated that the staff there was very impressed with the new facilities, in comparison to the trailers they were formerly utilizing. Hightstown police will move into the building within the next few weeks, and are currently interviewing new hires.

On July 6th, the Borough will hold a hearing regarding NJDOT's purchase of small slivers of land, at the corner of Franklin & N Main, in order to make intersection improvements. This topic was previously discussed at an earlier council meeting, where Roman reported negotiating a higher purchase price. However, since the land falls under the state's Green Acres program, it cannot be sold until a hearing is held.

Roman also stated that he is still making an effort to secure guarantees from NJDOT that water pipes will be removed and replaced prior to the repaving of Route 33.

Lastly, Roman announced that new plantings went in today at Association Park, in time for prom season photos. The corners of the park and its entrance were also trimmed and cleaned up. Work will continue next at Memorial Park.

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Council & Committee Reports

Councilwoman Cristina Fowler reported that during the month of March, the Police Department conducted 269 motor vehicle summonses, 2 arrests for DWI, 16 motor vehicle investigations, 12 vehicle tows, 36 foot patrols, 8 arrests, and initiated 25 investigations.

Councilwoman Stephanie Spann shared news from the Cultural Arts Commission's April 15th meeting. They are reviewing candidates for their potential membership expansion. The Commission is also asking Borough Council to assist them in obtaining an official rain date for Porch Fest, which hasn't been granted by the police department.

The Commission is excited for its June 4th sip and paint event at Tavern on the Lake, their participation in the Memorial Day Parade, and many other Cultural Arts events, such as Fun Friday, coming up soon.

Councilman Jeet Gulati reported that the Housing Authority held its annual dinner, and following a few items of reinspection, has passed its latest HUD inspection. The housing is currently 100% occupied.

Councilman Joe Cicalese informed Council that the Board of Health recently participated in the St Anthony's Health Fair. The Board is also looking to review local ordinances and suggest health-focused improvements. Some areas of focus for them include preventing youth vaping and the sale of hemp/cannabis alternative products to minors.

Councilman Todd Frantz reminded residents that the Environmental Commission will be hosting a stream cleanup on April 25th in partnership with The Watershed Institute. The day will also include a shredding truck at 9AM in Memorial Park, along with a tree planting. The Environmental Commission is hosting a beer release party at Old Hights Brewing Co after the cleanup. Old Hights will be releasing "Lake Effect" a Hazy IPA for which a portion of its proceeds will benefit the Environmental Commission..

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Executive Session

The meeting moved into a closed session where the Council discussed the acquisition of property, as well as contract negotiations.

Want to share this recap or read past meeting notes? Head to <https://www.hightstowndemocrats.com/council-recaps> for a full archive.