



BOROUGH COUNCIL RECAP



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>)

Water Treatment Plant

An ordinance to bond for water filter replacement, and temporary emergency filters, was passed. Details were previously discussed at the April 21st Council Meeting (recap available here: <https://www.hightstowndemocrats.com/council-recaps>)

In response to questions about the cost, Councilman Montferrat clarified that while the job did not go out to bid (due to its classification as an emergency via the Borough Engineer), that the engineer had approached multiple vendors and gave an opinion that the best possible price was obtained.

The filter media replacement and cleanout of existing filtration tanks is expected to take 3 to 6 months, depending on the extent of repairs needed for the tanks. The Borough's Business Administrator informed the public that the newest of the Borough's three filtration tanks has been emptied and inspected, and is in good shape. The remaining two filters are older, and if any issues are encountered, they will be repaired/replaced as needed.

The Borough also formalized a policy for use of an existing emergency water supply connection between Hightstown and East Windsor. This thirty-year agreement sets clear terms regarding the interconnection's use, maintenance, repair, cost-sharing provisions, and compliance with NJDEP regulations. This action is unrelated to the ongoing filtration project, and the emergency connection is not currently in use.

Affordable Housing

The Borough's implementation of its "3rd round" affordable housing plan, a state requirement, was advanced. [Detailed discussion at prior meeting].

Budget: 2023 Audit

The audit of the Borough's 2023 budget was certified. The result was a clean audit, with no major deficiencies found. However, the Borough's CFO presented a few recommendations contained within the audit, along with discussion of minor deficiencies that will be addressed. A copy of the audit will be posted to the borough website.

There were no deficiencies in the areas of contracts and agreements, interest and delinquent tax collection, revenues, expenditures, or the water/sewer utility fund. It was noted that there are currently 18 liens on properties for delinquent taxes.

Bank reconciliations for 2023 were a minor deficiency as records were not processed until the Borough hired its new CFO, but this has already been addressed. The total adjustments needed to the Borough's fund balance was \$37k, comprising many small adjustments to various budget lines. The construction office has seen expenses exceed revenue, so the CFO will recommend corrective action in the future. The CFO also suggests increasing the Borough's flood mitigation fund by \$63k. Minor improvements were suggested to ensure timely processing of pension, health benefit, and salary increase transactions.

New Business

An ordinance was introduced to raise the fee for Type 1 Fire Safety permits from \$54 to \$75, while also establishing an application schedule and fee for rush orders (decision within 7 days). These are for temporary food permits at events, and the new fee is in line with what other towns in the area charge. The Borough Clerk stated that the fee has not increased in over 15 years.

The Council voted to hire Robert S. Pitt as a new full-time police officer, backfilling for the recent retirement of another officer.

Two summer events were authorized: Theatre in the Park (Association Park, June 30 - August 3) and Summer Recreation Program (Dawes Park, June 30 - August 8)

Clerk's Report

The polling location for future elections, starting with the June 10th Primary Election, will now be at the First Presbyterian Church on North Main St.

Council & Committee Reports

Councilman Joe Cicalese reported from the Complete Streets Committee, that they will be seeking grant funding from Safe Streets for All, a federal grant opportunity focused on pedestrian safety. Applications are due at the end of June. The committee is seeking to expand the scope of planned roadwork on Franklin St, to include pedestrian safety improvements. It was also noted that Route 33 has been designated as a "high danger area" which may make additional grants available.

Councilwoman Fowler reported on April activity from the police department:

- 176 motor vehicle summonses were issued including the arrest of 2 persons for driving while intoxicated.

- 4 motor vehicle accidents were investigated, and 4 motor vehicles were towed for various reasons.
- 43 foot patrols were initiated throughout the borough.
- 3 persons were arrested, and 36 investigations were initiated.

Fowler also updated the Council on progress with Hightstown's "NJ Film Ready" certification. Next steps have been taken, and an ordinance will appear on a future Council meeting agenda. Final steps include uploading photos of potential film shoot locations to the NJ Film Ready database, as well as uploading local business that film shoots can employ.

Lastly, Fowler reported that over 300 individuals will be marching in the upcoming Memorial Day Parade, representing 26 groups. Applications are now closed. The parade will be held at 9AM on Monday, May 26th.

Dispatch Shared Services & Executive Session

Earlier in the meeting, the Council approved a resolution opting not to renew its current shared services agreement for dispatch services. The five-year agreement with East Windsor expires on May 15th, 2026, and requires any opt-out to be enacted one year prior to expiration (or it would automatically renew for one year).

The meeting later moved into a closed session, where the Council discussed contract negotiations with Robbinsville, on the topic of dispatch services. After the Council returned from executive session, it took action to apply for a grant that could potentially cover a shared services agreement for dispatch with Robbinsville.

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