



BOROUGH COUNCIL RECAP - Sept 15th, 2025



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>)

Proclamation

Mayor Susan Bluth began the meeting with recognition of Mr. Joseph Beely of Hightstown, who will reach 100 years of age on Thursday. A lifelong resident, Beely served in the Korean War and later worked for the Borough as a meter reader. He went on to build his home on Maxwell Ave, living there for 66 years. Upon retirement, Hightstown's water treatment plant was renamed in his honor. Mayor Bluth will be visiting the nursing home on Thursday to present him with a full proclamation, which she read to the audience.

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Dutch Neck Road Improvements

The council unanimously approved an ordinance to fund Dutch Neck Rd improvements through \$580,000 of municipal bonds, \$550,000 of which will be paid by an NJDOT grant. This project will include both roadway and sidewalk improvements, and was described in greater detail at the [April 7th council meeting](#).

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Equipment Upgrades & Financing

An ordinance was introduced to finance the purchase of \$627,200 in equipment, spanning multiple departments, as the Borough's 2025 capital budget. This financing would distribute the cost of equipment over the course of its useful life, up to 15 years.

Police Department [\$388,200]: Computers, radios, evidence equipment, storage equipment, shredder, printer, fingerprint scanner, and outfitting of one police vehicle.

Police Department [\$130,000]: In-car modems, BDx, and digitization of all records.

Fire Department [\$38,000]: Turnout gear and respiratory protection equipment.

Fire Department [\$46,000]: Swiftwater boat, trailer, and motor.

Office of Emergency Management [\$10,000]: Portable VHF/UHF radios.

Administration [\$15,000]: Computer equipment upgrades.

During the Borough's budget workshop earlier this year, these expenses were previously outlined with further context, among a longer list of potential items to fund.

As the Borough prepares for a full replacement of the water treatment plant's filtration system, a separate ordinance was introduced to cover \$1,515,000 in financing for this project. Two of the Borough's three filters are over 50 years old, and will be replaced by one new filter. The Borough has obtained a \$1.3M loan from the NJ water bank under favorable terms: 50% loan forgiveness, 25% no-interest, and 25% low-interest. As a result, only a small portion of the project will need to be financed via bonds, and almost half of the total cost will be covered by the state.

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State & County Grants

The Borough succeeded in requesting a \$150,000 grant from the NJ Department of Community Affairs, contributing to the cost of constructing a new police substation. This was credited to State Senator Linda Greenstein, who in working with Mayor Bluth recognized it as a top need of the Borough. Greenstein went on to prioritize these funds within the state budget.

A Mercer County Community Development Block Grant will cover the cost of an emergency generator for the Hightstown Firehouse and related upgrades, totaling \$180,407.51. This funding originates from the federal government as a COVID-era grant for improvements to community and emergency facilities. Borough Administrator John Roman commented that should the project come in under budget, excess funds will be allocated to firehouse HVAC upgrades.

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Other Business

Ownership of three First Aid Squad vehicles (2010 Chevy Tahoe, 2009 Ford E45 Ambulance, and 2024 Chevy Tahoe) was transferred back to the squad, at their request. The Borough took possession of these vehicles over the past three years in order to cover them under the Borough's insurance policy. However, the squad reserved the right to reclaim ownership, and requested to do so.

The Council approved a Cultural Arts Commission art class, to be held on a future Saturday morning (between Oct 2025 - June 2026) at Old Hights Brewing Co.

Hightstown complied with a new state law, raising the bid threshold for public contracts from \$44,000 to \$53,000. This rising ceiling keeps pace with inflation, while also requiring all purchases between \$17,500 and the new ceiling to be made by a Qualified Purchasing Agent.

Hightstown Family Fair was approved to be held at Bank Street and Rocky Brook Park on October 4th. The event will be run by the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society.

The Borough's new CFO continued in cleanup of financial records, identifying 28 instances of completed capital improvements, dating back to 2004 with remaining unused small-dollar debt authorizations. These have all been cancelled, presenting a clearer picture of Hightstown's actual authorized debt.

The Council voted to continue Hightstown's participation in the NJ Statewide Insurance Fund from January 1st, 2026 through January 1st, 2029. This insurance covers a wide range of items including worker's comp, general liability, automobile, property, pollution, and cybersecurity insurance.

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Discussion Item - Filming

The Borough has been in contact with Netflix regarding parking at a public facility, in support of an upcoming film shoot along Route 133 (Hightstown Bypass). This filming would take place in October. The recent temporary closure was related, in preparation for the shoot.

Netflix's crew seeks to park at Hightstown's recycling facility on Route 130, and would compensate the Borough as well as insure the activity. The Mayor and Council discussed this matter, sharing positive views, and then directed the Business Administrator to continue the conversation with Netflix.

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Clerk's Report

Vaccine clinics will be held at the East Windsor Senior Center on Oct 14 and 28th. Specific details will be shared soon via both the Borough's website and email newsletter.

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Council & Committee Reports

During public comment, Fire Company President Ryan Bennett announced that with encouragement from the Borough Government, the fire company will be bringing back the annual Santa parade. This will be held the day after Thanksgiving, and will conclude with photos and a tree lighting downtown.

Councilman Joe Cicalese reported on the latest Board of Health meeting, where 2nd Ave residents spoke regarding reports of rats in their neighborhood. An expert was on the call to

present mitigation measures. Afterwards, homes were inspected, with five receiving treatment. Preventative measures were also taken, such as removing outdoor feeders. The Board of Health also asks that residents remove wood piles, rotting outdoor structures, and other such objects that can harbor rodent nests.

RSV and COVID immunizations are now available, and the Board of Health is working to schedule additional vaccine clinics. They have been challenged in doing so, due to loss of federal funding, but are forming a partnership with Wegmans.

Joe encouraged residents to attend the fire company's Oct 18th fundraiser, a night of food and laughter. Tickets are available for \$50/each. The event includes three comedians, dinner, and drinks. A link to purchase is posted at <https://hightstownfire.org/comedy/>

Councilwoman Fowler thanked Downtown Hightstown, the Rocky Brook Garden Club, and the Public Works Department for another successful year installing and caring for flowers along Main St, pointing out that the flowers are still looking great even in mid-September.

Councilman Fred Montferrat updated residents on the latest planning board meeting. Two residential properties have filed applications (subdivision, use variance) and will soon have public hearings. The board also discussed Hightstown's implementation of NJ's "4th Round" affordable housing plan, and worked on drafting improvements to the Borough Code.

Council President Josh Jackson responded favorably to a public comment, suggesting that Borough Council meetings should be better publicized as to encourage greater attendance and public input. Josh requested that the Borough government take action to do so.

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Mayor's Report

Mayor Bluth shared that she was in communication with County Executive Dan Benson in the lead-up to the county's recent Ward St. Bridge meeting. Bluth reminded the county that Hightstown residents had not received an update on the status of this project since 2022, and she requested a public forum be scheduled. The county has now done so, reserving the firehouse (2nd floor) for a meeting on Monday, September 29th, at 7PM. All residents are encouraged to attend.

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Executive Session

The meeting moved into a closed session where the Council discussed contract negotiations for personnel and the police substation. They also discussed pending litigation.

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