



**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE
BOROUGH OF ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS**

Mayor Mark Park called the Regular Council Meeting to order at 6:32 PM on August 13, 2025 followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Statement of Compliance with Open Public Meeting Act

Borough Clerk read the statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, noting that notice of the meeting was included in a notice sent to the Star Ledger and the Record on January 17, 2025, and published on January 21, 2025. The notice was also posted on the bulletin board in the municipal building and copies were available to the public and on file in the municipal clerk's office.

Present: Mayor Park, Councilwoman Drimones, Councilman Luciano, Councilwoman Biegacz, Councilman Liang, Councilman Patel (via phone), Councilman Koutroubas (via phone)

*Councilman Patel joined in person at 8:36pm

Councilman Luciano raised a point of order regarding public participation in the meeting. It was confirmed that the public was engaged via Zoom and YouTube, with four participants currently on Zoom and none in the waiting room.

Department Head Reports

Administration:

Borough Administrator Mr. Chowdhury reported on several matters:

1. Dual stream operations for the meeting were successfully set up despite challenges with the current technology system. Long-term improvements are planned with funding sources identified by the CFO. He noted these issues were due to deferred upgrades, not actions by the current governing body or staff.
2. Emergency management updates: The borough experienced a flash flood and two earthquakes in the past month. OEM and DPW were commended for their response. No sustained damage or issues were found, though homeowners were encouraged to check their properties.
3. Road resurfacing updates:
 - PSE&G Phase 2 restoration resurfaced Charlotte Place between Sylvan Avenue/9W, and Castle Drive.
 - After field inspection, contractors need to remediate damage to curbs and driveways.
 - The borough's resurfacing projects will begin in late August after council approval of the bond ordinance.

- NJDOT road improvement grants for Floyd Street were repurposed due to PSE&G gain-main replacement and restoration work.
 - Summit Avenue improvements will be funded by Municipal Aid 2025 grant
4. Technology updates:
- The LG CNS MOU is exploratory for modernization and innovation initiatives
 - Met with Bergen County Fiber as potential primary internet provider for PD, Borough Hall, and fire department.
 - AT&T FirstNet will replace Verizon Wireless, with anticipated savings of \$70,000+
 - IT service provider and grants writer RFPs will be opened August 21.
5. Health Benefits updates:
- Working on alternatives to address the anticipated 37% hike from the state health benefits program.
 - The Difference Card program would put money back in employees' pockets while generating savings for the municipality.

Councilman Lang inquired about recent internet connectivity issues affecting residents. Mr. Chowdhury explained these were due to Spectrum making upgrades throughout town, which exceeded their stated work scope and timeline.

Councilman Luciano questioned payments to Mr. Barberio acting as a borough administrator. Mayor Park explained this was a consulting arrangement during the transition period, approved before Mr. Chowdhury joined.

Councilman Koutroubas commented that Mr. Barberio left due to what he characterized as Councilman Luciano's "belligerent behavior." He praised the work of the current administration team, including the Mayor, Mr. Chowdhury, and Council members Liang, Drimones, Biegacz, and Patel. Councilman Luciano objected to these characterizations.

Borough Attorney:

Borough Attorney Mr. Ferraro discussed the Cioffi proposed mixed use development application that appeared before a Judge:

1. He advised that residents who sent letters or emails to the judge expressing their position may not have their views considered since they cannot be cross-examined. He encouraged direct participation in person or via Zoom.
2. The judge was impressed by public comments at the August 5th hearing. The borough objected to parts of the proposal, especially the ingress/egress off Bayview and lack of buffers.
3. The applicant presented two witnesses (architect and engineer) at the hearing with three more to follow. The borough has its planner, traffic consultant, and engineer prepared to testify.
4. The next hearing is scheduled for September 9 at 9:00 AM at the Bergen County courthouse.
5. The applicant is considering reconfiguring the project based on the borough's concerns, and Mr. Ferraro hopes the revised proposal will include ingress/egress on Sylvan.

Councilman Luciano asked about a plan created by Mr. Mistretta that showed ingress/egress off Fifth Street without requiring variances. He emphasized that the Borough had paid for this plan and it should be presented to the judge. Mr. Ferraro agreed to speak with Mr. Mistretta about this concern.

Borough Engineer:

Engineer Michael Minton of Gilmore & Associates, Inc. reported:

1. The Hudson Terrace project is proceeding with phased occupancy. They are working to get the parking area reopened.
2. They are finalizing sewer rate recommendations with the tax collector.
3. Stormwater studies continue with recommendations expected within 60 days.
4. Eric Clase provided an update on sewer line replacements, using a map to show previously studied areas (in green) and new areas to be studied (in brownish color). He explained they are addressing gaps in the previous engineer's study of the transmission line.

Finance:

CFO Mr. Firozvi reported that the public hearing on the budget amendment approved at last month's meeting would be held later in the meeting. Upon completion, the borough has clearance from the NJ Division of Local Government Services to adopt the budget as amended.

Police Department:

Chief Henkelman reported:

1. Preparations for the first day of school on September 4, including security protocols and crossing guard refresher training.
2. No public safety concerns arose from the recent earthquakes.
3. The Breaking AIDS ride bicycle event will pass through town on September 14.
4. The annual "Cone with the Cop" event will be held August 26 from 2-4 PM.
5. Probationary officers Rossi and Borchers are progressing well through their field training.
6. PPO Lyon and PPO Sullivan are doing well at the police academy.
7. Progress on the license plate reader program pending approval of the Verizon pole agreement.

Councilman Luciano raised concerns about bicyclists on Route 9W creating traffic hazards. Chief Henkelman explained enforcement challenges, noting that sometimes it's actually safer for cyclists to take the whole lane. He explained that DOT has authority over any restrictions on Route 9W.

OEM:

The OEM Director Drimones reported they would like to have EMS return to the community center. He noted that Deputy Director Lt. Tracy is working with the Borough Administrator to get a new system and alleviate them from the next cell [emergency]. He also mentioned they will use the recent rain event as a drill planning exercise for their Wednesday operation plan.

Fire Department:

Fire Chief Nikow reported:

1. They will conduct an electric vehicle fire extinguisher demonstration with some manufacturers to showcase new types of fire nozzles, inviting surrounding towns to join.
2. They have acquired tools for electric vehicle emergencies.
3. He has shared requests for ordinances and personnel matters with the Public Safety Committee and Borough Administrator.

When asked about the status of the ladder truck, he indicated it's in the queue with an assigned job number.

Building Department:

The Building Official reported:

1. Several new residential homes are under construction.
2. Commercial office spaces on Route 9W are starting to fill up, with leases signed and construction beginning.
3. The 800 Sullivan project is moving along, with a focus on areas near the high school before school starts.
4. Radio transmission issues in new buildings need to be addressed.
5. Buildings next to Borough Hall are nearing completion - the smaller building is complete except for radio transmission issues, and the larger building should be done by December.

The Fire Chief explained that new building codes require in-building radio systems (interior repeaters) for first responders. The independent company's analysis shows both locations need this technology. He submitted ordinances to the Public Safety Committee that would mirror what surrounding towns have adopted to address radio ineffectiveness inside buildings with certain construction.

Councilwoman Biegacz asked about the property at 192 Route 9W to 927, questioning if it was being considered for fair share housing. Mr. Chowdhury clarified it was being evaluated as part of research for potential technology-related uses, not for housing.

Councilman Luciano commented on the overlay zone requirements for fair share housing, noting that the current administration faces the same state mandates that previous administrations dealt with. Councilman Koutroubas disagreed, stating there was a "stark difference" between the current situation and the 2019 settlements.

Department of Public Works

The DPW Superintendent was absent due to a personal issue and will submit a report for the next meeting.

Recreation:

Mr. Chowdhury presented the Recreation Director's report:

1. Summer camp was successful with 120 campers.
2. The 5K is scheduled for September 7 with timing company, DPW, and Police coordination in place. Trader Joe's and Whole Foods have expressed interest in supporting the event.
3. Soccer begins September 2 and volleyball begins in September.
4. Englewood Cliffs Day is scheduled for October 17 from 5-8 PM at Witte Field.
5. The recreation department is working with a new parks and rec portal called Edmonds instead of Community Pass for facility requests and sports registrations.
6. Planning is underway for Halloween events including Trunk or Treat, and Adult Men's basketball will begin in the fall.

Councilman Luciano requested detailed financial information on recreation programs, including expenses versus revenue for the summer program. He emphasized the need to analyze all programs to ensure tax money is spent wisely.

Councilman Koutroubas agreed the information should be provided but defended recreation spending as "money well spent." He praised the recreation department's progress under the current and former directors, noting that the department had been "completely abandoned" before his involvement with the council.

Public Hearing (Privilege of the Floor)

Motioned to Open the Public Hearing

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimonos			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Mayor Park opened the public portion of the meeting.

Kenny Bowen (508 Floyd Street) questioned the protocol for council members engaging the public on social media, stating that a member of the Council had "attacked" him when he asked basic questions about park maintenance plans. He asked about who is responsible for hiring the recreation director and preparing them for their job and inquired about tennis court renewal plans.

Perry Kalajian expressed frustration about PSE&G's work on Forest Drive, which left a 3-inch lip at his driveway that has not been fixed despite promises from borough officials over the past 2-3 years. Mr. Chowdhury agreed to follow up with DPW Superintendent Mark Neville on the issue.

Martin Geiger pointed out errors in the resolutions, including:

- Resolution 25-171 mentioning a "rating committee" without clarity on who serves on it
- The Borough Administrator using the title "Business Administrator"
- Resolution 25-173 containing contradictory language about lease expiration dates
- Questioned why the telecommunications consultant was being given a 5-year contract

Carin Geiger raised concerns about the CHOPRA planning board application and suggested contacting individuals who submitted letters to the court to encourage their appearance at the next hearing. She disagreed with characterizations that Councilman Luciano was responsible for Mr. Barberio's departure. She also criticized the affordable housing plan, claiming it exceeds the state's target numbers.

Mary O'Shea expressed opposition to any kind of changes with respect to Health Insurance plans particularly opposing the Health Insurance Broker resolution in part due to concerns of the impact on retirees and the quality of insurance. She spoke about CFI project (Cioffi) opposing mixed-used development. She raised concerns with digging up roads to resurface. She questioned if the wireless telecommunications consultant was connected to the activities surrounding the LG MOU partnership.

David Di Gregorio offered to yield his speaking time to Ms. O'Shea stating that the allotted five minutes with attendance of public participants was not enough.

Mary O'Shea after receiving the yielded time from Mr. Di Gregorio continued to elaborate in detail about her earlier points raised.

Andrew Nikow speaking as a resident rather than Fire Chief, raised concerns about the deer problem in Englewood Cliffs, noting that deer are destroying vegetation throughout town. He suggested the borough consider proposals for deer control services.

Motioned to Close the Public Hearing

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz	X		X			
Councilman Liang		X	X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Communications/Correspondence/Requests

Mr. Chowdhury reported:

1. Breaking AIDS Ride will pass through town on Sunday, September 14. Riders will be at their own pace and no road closures are requested.
2. Englewood Cliffs Recreation's 8th Annual 5K Run/Walk will be held September 7 at Witte Field. Registration runs through September 6, with information posted on the website.

Approval of Minutes

Motioned to approve the July 22, 2025 Regular Meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano				X		
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Motioned to Approve Resolution No. 25-166 - Authorization for payment of vouchers, August 2025 bills.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones				X		
Councilman Luciano				X		
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Councilwoman Biegacz objected to the bill list, noting it was received that morning with no explanation for the \$40,000 in attorney fees. Borough Attorney Ferraro explained his agreement with the borough is a \$10,000 per month retainer payment without itemized billing.

2025 Municipal Budget and All Matters Hereto

Public Hearing on the 2025 Municipal Budget Amendment

Motioned to Open the Public Hearing on the 2025 Municipal Budget Amendment

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Mayor Park opened the public hearing on the budget amendment.

David Di Gregorio expressed concerns about administrative services increasing by 10% despite claims of efficiencies. He questioned taking \$3.9 million from surplus and asked about future debt service increases. David Di Gregorio recommended finding ways to save money, starting with miscellaneous expenses. He criticized spending on technology and website improvements.

Martin Geiger noted that council members often say they rely on professionals, yet they are not following their professionals' recommendations regarding surplus use. He suggested the tax levy was created for political reasons rather than fiscal prudence.

Melanie Simon asked who the auditor was and what their opinion was on the budget. The CFO indicated that both he and the auditor had the same recommendation to use less surplus.

Kenny Bowen questioned how the recreation department operates without checks and balances on a budget.

Andrew Nikow asked if there was a process to make amendments to the budget based on residents' concerns.

The CFO addressed the questions raised:

- The budget amendment primarily involved a revenue line item that had been left off (\$72,000)
- Some minor adjustments to deferred charges (approximately \$19,000)
- The difference was used to increase the recreation salaries and wages line items
- The budget is increasing approximately 9-10% on the appropriation side
- Using about \$1.5 million more in surplus than last year
- Last year used \$2.45 million and generated approximately \$3.5 million
- The cumulative surplus balance at the end of 2024 was approximately \$6.8 million
- Using \$3.9 million from that surplus

- While both the CFO and auditor would recommend less reliance on surplus, historically the borough has generated about \$2-2.5 million each year
- The Sylvan Avenue mitigation and tax appeal settlement is included in this year's budget (approximately \$1 million)
- The Capital Improvement Fund has a balance of \$321,000 plus \$100,000 in this year's budget, allowing for approximately \$8 million in capital improvements

Motioned to close the public hearing on the 2025 Municipal Budget Amendment.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

2025 Municipal Budget Amendment

Motioned to approve Resolution No. 25-167 - Resolution adopting the 2025 calendar year municipal budget.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones				X		
Councilman Luciano				X		
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Councilwoman Drimones stated she found it "fiscally irresponsible to be taking \$3,900,000 dollars from surplus, only to have the residents pay next year."

Ordinances

Adoption of Ordinance(s)

A motioned to table Ordinance No. 2025-03 (Underground Parking Garage Ordinance) was made by Councilwoman Biegacz and seconded by Councilman Luciano. The motion passed unanimously.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			
Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Motioned for the Second Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-04

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X			
Councilman Luciano			X			
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X			

Councilman Liang	X		X			
Councilman Patel			X			
Councilman Koutroubas			X			
Mayor Park						

Borough Attorney Ferraro read Ordinance No. 2025-04 by title: "Bond ordinance to authorize the 2025 road resurfacing and drainage improvement program in by and for the Borough of Englewood Cliffs in the County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, to appropriate the sum of \$770,000 dollars to pay the cost thereof, to make a down payment, to authorize the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation and to provide for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance of such bonds."

PUBLIC HEARING (Privilege of the floor)

Motioned to Open the Public Hearing on Ordinance No. 2025-04

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

Mayor Park opened the public hearing on the ordinance.

Councilman Luciano asked what portion of the \$770,000 was for drainage versus road resurfacing. The Borough Administrator indicated that approximately \$35,000 was for drainage and the rest for road resurfacing.

Carin Geiger expressed concerns about the lack of coordination between road improvements and sewer repairs. She noted that streets might be repaved and then torn up again for sewer repairs, questioning whether there was a comprehensive plan for street improvements.

Martin Geiger observed that the roads in town are generally in good condition. He recommended that DPW not use snowplows to pick up leaves as they scar the road surface, and suggested that utility companies remove painted markings after completing their work.

David Di Gregorio suggested that curbs should be redone along with street paving, recommending Belgian block curbs which allow for section repairs. He also urged better equipment for leaf collection and encouraging residents to mulch leaves.

Andrew Nikow spoke in support of paving the streets if the money is available, rather than second-guessing the DPW and engineers.

Motioned to close the public hearing on Ordinance No. 2025-04.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				

Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

Motioned to Adopt and Advertise Ordinance No. 2025-04 in accordance with the law.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

Introduction of Ordinance(s)

Motioned to Read the Introduction of Ordinance No. 2025-05

(Summit Street Improvements Bond Ordinance – NJ DOT Municipal Aid FY 2025)

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

The Borough Clerk read the introduction of Ordinance No. 2025-05 by title: "Bond ordinance to authorize the improvement of Summit Street from East Palisade Avenue to Freshen Road in by and for the Borough of Englewood Cliffs in the County of Bergen, State of New Jersey, to appropriate the sum of \$250,000 dollars to pay the cost thereof, to appropriate a state grant, to authorize the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation and to provide for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance of such bonds."

Councilman Luciano asked how much of the \$250,000 was covered by a grant. Mr. Chowdhury confirmed \$190,050 was from a grant.

Motioned to introduce and advertise Ordinance No. 2025-05 for public hearing in accordance with the law.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz	X		X				
Councilman Liang		X	X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

Borough Administrator Chowdhury read the titles of all consent agenda items (Resolutions 25-168 through 25-177).

Councilman Luciano moved to table Resolutions 25-171 and 25-173, but the motion failed 2-4.

Motioned to Table Resolutions 25-171 and 25-173
 25-171(Resolution Awarding Cc# 25-01 For Wireless Telecommunications Consultant
 Competitive Contract to Ace Telecommunications as a
 Fair and Open Manner) and
 25-173 (Resolution Authorizing the Execution of a Lease Agreement with NBCUniversal
 Media LLC for Tennis and Volleyball Courts)

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones		X	X				
Councilman Luciano	X		X				
Councilwoman Biegacz				X			
Councilman Liang				X			
Councilman Patel				X			
Councilman Koutroubas				X			
Mayor Park							

*Motion died

After discussion, it was decided to:

1. Amend Resolution 25-171 regarding the wireless telecommunications consultant contract to specify it is for 1 year, subject to 5 one-year renewals

Councilman Liang motioned to approve the consent agenda with Resolution 25-173 tabled and Resolution 25-171 amended to specify a one-year contract subject to five one-year renewals.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones					X		
Councilman Luciano					X		
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

*Motion passed

Councilman Luciano objected that the council was "voting on things that they have no idea what they're voting on."

Old / New Business

No items were discussed under Old/New Business.

Adjourn Meeting

Motioned to adjourn the meeting

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL MEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN	RECUSE	ABSENT
Councilwoman Drimones			X				
Councilman Luciano			X				
Councilwoman Biegacz		X	X				
Councilman Liang	X		X				
Councilman Patel			X				
Councilman Koutroubas			X				
Mayor Park							

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17PM

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of Minutes approved by the Mayor and Council at a meeting held on August 13, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Beauty Nadim

Beauty Nadim, RMC/CMR
Borough Clerk