

RESOLUTION 2023-386

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BARNEGAT, COUNTY OF OCEAN,
STATE OF NEW JERSEY, URGING THE APPOINTING AUTHORITY IN THE
STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO CHOOSE A RESIDENT OF OCEAN COUNTY
TO SIT ON THE NEW JERSEY BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities is the state agency with authority to oversee the regulated utilities, which provide critical services such as natural gas, electricity water, telecommunications, and cable television; and

WHEREAS, the law requires the BPU to ensure safe, adequate, and proper utility services at reasonable rates for all customers throughout New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Ocean County has, for years, called upon the appointing authority in the State of New Jersey to choose a resident of Ocean County to sit on the BPU in order to provide a needed voice to represent the unique characteristics and challenges faced by communities located along the coast of the State; and

WHEREAS, the population of Ocean County continues to grow with both full-time and seasonal residents increasing the need for assurances by utility companies to provide uninterrupted service and to make certain equipment is maintained and adequately updated; and

WHEREAS, Ocean County currently has a year-round population of 650,000 residents with the number steadily increasing in the summer/warm weather months to more than 1.3 million people; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that with the increase in population, energy and utility demands are met without interruption of service, and our residents, visitors and businesses are confident in all utilities working properly and available for their needs; and

WHEREAS, coastal counties are more prone to serious weather conditions including hurricanes, nor'easters and most recently tornadoes, which can result in power outages, utility poles down and a host of safety issues; and

WHEREAS, Ocean County residents have experienced the likes of Hurricane Irene in 2011, Superstorm Sandy in 2012, Tropical Storm Isaias, an April 1, 2023 tornado, and widespread summer power outages in the summer months dating back to July 2003 that devastated the height of the summer tourism season; and

WHEREAS, any type of lengthy power outages especially during the tourism season, which produces \$7 billion in revenue for Ocean County alone, can result in many residents and businesses, both full time and seasonal, experiencing a financial loss due to having to discard food and medication, and loss of wages; and

WHEREAS, adding to the concern, Ocean County also is home to more than 200,000 senior citizens. An aging population is often more reliant on medical devices that use power for their health needs, and these are people that are fixed income that does not allow extra money to replace food and prescriptions spoiled by power outages or any challenges posed by other utility issues; and

WHEREAS, utility interruptions can also create safety hazards for residents and visitors along with emergency responders tasked to assist during these times; and

WHEREAS, without a voice on the BPU, Ocean County and similar coastal communities, face an uphill battle with the utility companies in getting help for residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS, coastal counties like Ocean have unique characteristics – from its land size, population shifts based on time of year, economically and geographically – that the current members of the BPU are not as familiar with as a resident of Ocean County would be; and

WHEREAS, the current sitting members of the Board of Public Utilities are from Essex, Camden, Morris, and Somerset; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of a member from Ocean County, the BPU in the meantime, should designate one of its current members as liaison to the area in order to address concerns or create alternate positions to be filled by residents of Ocean and/or Monmouth County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Barnegat Township Committee wants the opening on the Board of Public Utilities to go to a qualified individual from Ocean County in order to assure representation of the interests of the residents and businesses of Ocean County and all shore communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Barnegat Township urges Governor Murphy and the Senate recognize that as the population continues to grow, and people continue to move to Ocean County to raise a family or retire, the need for representation on the BPU also increases providing coastal communities with a needed voice on the Board. And in the absence of a member from the Jersey Shore, the BPU at a minimum, should designate a liaison to this area to address ongoing concerns.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution shall be made available to Governor Phil Murphy, State of New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and Ocean County Mayors.

CERTIFICATION

I, Donna M. Manno, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Barnegat, County of Ocean, State of New Jersey do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Township Committee of the Township of Barnegat at their regular meeting held on the 9th day of November 2023, in the Municipal Complex, 900 West Bay Avenue, Barnegat, New Jersey.

Donna M. Manno, RMC
Municipal Clerk