

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – November 17, 2025

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on November 17, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the meeting room of Township Hall, 2600 Bayshore Road, Villas, New Jersey.

The Deputy Clerk announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act and that adequate notice of the meeting had been provided according to law.

The following members of Council were present for roll call taken by the Clerk:

Councilmember Thomas Conrad
Councilmember Joseph Wareham
Councilmember Roland Roy, Jr.
Mayor Frank Sippel

Also present: Michael Laffey, Township Manager, Robert Belasco, Township Solicitor, Karen Fournier, Deputy Township Clerk, and Amy Belasco, Registrar.

Work Session

Oath of Office - Sgt Anthony Greto to Lieutenant

Police Chief Kevin Lewis read the biography of Lieutenant Anthony Greto.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Lieutenant Anthony Greto as his children, Arianna, Anthony, Dominik and Vincent held the Bible and his wife Samantha pinned his badge.

Oath of Office - Cpl. Jennifer Elwell to Sergeant

Police Chief Kevin Lewis read the biography of Sergeant Jennifer Elwell.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Sergeant Jennifer Elwell as her daughter Hailey held the Bible and her father Rick Anzelone pinned her badge.

Oath of Office - Officer Miguel Valencia

Police Chief Kevin Lewis read the biography of Officer Miguel Valencia.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Officer Miguel Valencia as his mother Maria Valencia held the Bible and pinned his badge.

Mayor and Council presented a Plaque and Proclamation to Chief Kevin Lewis, thanking him for his years of dedicated service to the Township of Lower and congratulating him on his upcoming retirement.

Updates:

Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Gary Douglas, gave a report updating OEM events. He introduced Deputy OEM Coordinator Katie Crecca. Gary Douglas explained EMIT training and classes they've attended. He stated that they completed the annex hazard mitigation plan. Attended planning meetings at DRBA for active shooter event. We have an MOU for a reunification center for the recreation center. Attended a full-scale tomado strike simulation. Katie Crecca attended a 3-day class on how to plan in case of a disaster. Attended OEM conference in Atlantic City. Involved with the Code Blue along with the county for warming centers. Gary mentioned Seashore Community Church hosts as a warming center. We will work the long-term facilities and schools. Councilmember Conrad thanked Gary & Katie for their time and hard work.

Tax Assessor, Liz Ross, thanked Mayor and Council for their support and shared the following updates:

Lower Townships hosts 1/3 of all exempt veterans. In 2025 there were \$37,825,050 added assessments.

2025 added assessments represents a 1% increase in total assessment. The municipality generated \$398,848.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – November 3, 2025

Res. #2025-370 Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$772,887.45

Res. #2025-371 Authorization for Refund of Taxes

Res. #2025-372 Assignment of Eight (8) Tax Sale Certificates

Res. #2025-373 Authorization for the Payment of College Credits

Res. #2025-374 A Resolution Amending Manager Michael Laffey's Agreement with the Township of Lower

Res. #2025-375 2025 Holiday Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Enforcement Mobilization

- Res. #2025-376 Insertion of Special Item of Revenue Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-87, Chapter 159 (Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over)
- Res. #2025-377 Rescinding Resolution #2025-312 of a Professional Service Contract with DeBlasio & Associates for Lincoln Boulevard and Arctic Avenue Storm Sewer Replacement Project Survey and Engineering Phase (LT-C-069)
- Res. #2025-378 Authorizing the Sale of Township of Lower Surplus No Longer Needed for Public Use on GovDeals Online Auction Website
- Res. #2025-379 Bid Acceptance and Contract Award for Clem Mulligan Sports Complex Storm Sewer Pump Station Re-Bid (LT-C-067)
- Res. #2025-380 Approving a Professional Service Contract with DeBlasio & Associates for the Engineering and Survey Phase for Arctic Avenue Storm Sewer Replacement Project FY2026 Clean Water Application (LT-C-071)
- Res. #2025-381 Approving a Professional Service Contract with DeBlasio & Associates for the Engineering and Survey Phase for Lincoln Boulevard Storm Sewer Replacement Project (LT-C-074)
- Res. #2025-382 Bid Acceptance and Contract Award for FY2023 NJDCA Small Cities Program – Delaware Bay Beach Stormwater Outfall Extension Phase 1, Contract 2 (LT-C-070)
- Res. #2025-383 Approval of Change Order #1 to DeBlasio and Associates Inc. for the Construction Phase for the Delaware Bay Beach Stormwater Outfall Extension Phase II for the 2023 NJDCA Small Cities Grant (LT-C-070)
- Res. #2025-384 Approval of Change Order #1 to DeBlasio and Associates Inc. for the Construction Phase for the Clem Mulligan Sports Complex Storm Sewer Pump Station (LT-C-067)

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD	X		X				
WAREHAM			X				
ROY		X	X				
COOMBS							X
SIPPEL			X				

Regular Agenda

Ord. #2025-23 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 340, Fire Prevention, Article II, Uniform Fire Safety Code, of the Code of the Township of Lower to Modify Annual Fire Inspection Requirements. This is the first reading of this Ordinance. The second reading and public hearing has been scheduled for December 15, 2025.

TABLED

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD		X	X				
WAREHAM			X				
ROY			X				
COOMBS							X
SIPPEL	X		X				

Administrative Reports

Clerk, Dog, Tax, Vital

Call to the Public – no comments

Council Comments

Councilmember Conrad – no comments

Councilmember Wareham wished everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

Councilmember Roy wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving, complimented the Police Department on their promotions and congratulated Chief Lewis on his retirement.

Mayor Sippel announced upcoming events including: Tree Lighting and Veterans Ceremony, Rotary Christmas Parade, and Ferry Merry Christmas.

Closed Session

Res. #2025-385 A Resolution Providing for a Meeting Not Open to the Public in accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-12 PERSONNEL

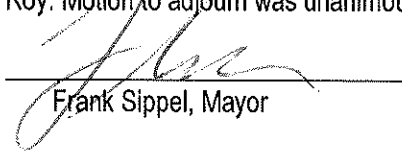
	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD			X				
WAREHAM		X	X				
ROY			X				
COOMBS							X
SIPPEL	X		X				

Council adjourned to Closed Session at 5:43 p.m.

Council returned to Open Session at 6:14 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Mayor Sippel, seconded by Councilmember Roy. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.


Frank Sippel, Mayor


Deputy Township Clerk

Approved: *December 1, 2025*

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fsippel@townshipoflower.org

Kevin Coombs, Deputy Mayor
kcoombs@townshipoflower.org

Thomas Conrad, Ward 1
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TOWNSHIP OF LOWER
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Michael Laffey, Manager
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OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Gary Douglass, OEM Coordinator
Katie Crecca, Deputy Coordinator

oem@townshipoflower.org

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Warming Center:

The Lower Township Warming Center is located at the Sea Shore Community Church On Sea Shore Road in Erma. Our Warming Center provides and over-night location for At Risk Individuals over the winter months when the temperature drops below 32 degrees.

Lower Township shares the Cape May County Warming Center schedule with Middle Township on a monthly rotating basis. This season our Warming Center will be activated during the months of November, January, and March.

Shelter Locations:

In the event of a short term Power Outage or Evacuation Order Lower Township has two Community Shelters located at our Recreation Department Building and the Millman Center.

When possible our residents would be advised to Shelter in place during brief power outages or seek shelter with family or friends outside of the area in the event of an evacuation order as our Shelters are considered Shelters of Last Resort.

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Kevin Coombs, Deputy Mayor
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Thomas Conrad, Ward 1
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Michael Laffey, Manager
mlaffey@townshipoflower.org

Cape May County also has several Community Shelters. There is also a large State Facility Shelter in Woodbine for prolonged emergency incidents.

Special Events:

The Lower Township Office of Emergency Management is responsible for planning all Large Scale Special Events within the Township that require cooperation between our Police, Fire, Rescue, DPW, Recreation Department, Fire Bureau and other Outside Agencies.

To Include The Following Events:

July 4th Fire Works and Vendor Event along our Bay Front

Town Bank Property Owners Association Whale Of Day Event

Military Appreciation LCMR High School Football Game

Veterans Day Parade

Lower Township Rotary Club Christmas Parade

Cape May County School Security Planning Group :

The Lower Township Office of Emergency Management is a member of the Cape May County School Security Planning Group formed in 2022 to address Security Concerns for Active Incidents at our School Buildings.

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fsippel@townshipoflower.org

Kevin Coombs, Deputy Mayor
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Thomas Conrad, Ward 1
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The Planning Group is also addressing the issue of Reunification Centers for Parents And Students if needed following a major incident at a School Building in Cape May County.

NJ Bill S-721 Requiring Certain facilities in New Jersey including Sport Venues, Movie Theaters and Places of Worship with a building capacity of 500 People or more, to submit an Emergency Operations Plan to the Local Chief of Police and Emergency Management Coordinator for The purpose of preparing for Mass Casualty Incidents.

There is an Emergency Operations Plan in place for the following churches in Lower Township:

St. John of God Church

680 Town Bank Road
North Cape May.

St. Raymond Church

800 Bay Shore Road
Villas.

The Parrish is one of the first in Cape May County to Develop Emergency Operation Plans (EOP'S) for their Churches.

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Liaison Contact with ConFires Fire Protection Service:

At the direction of Lower Township Manager Mike Laffey our OEM Office coordinates all On Site Annual Fire Inspections of Township Facilities To include Annual inspections of Fire Extinguishers, Building Alarm Systems and Fire Suppression Systems with ConFires Fire Protection Service.

All Fire Inspections were conducted over the course of the last several months In coordination with our Fire Safety Bureau, DPW and Recreation Department.

Lower Township
Office of Emergency Management
Annual Report Prepared by:

Gary Douglass
Coordinator
11/13/25

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Kevin Coombs, Deputy Mayor
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Katie Crecca, Deputy Coordinator

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2025 OEM Events

1/6/25 State of Emergency- Winter Storm Closure
1/14/25 Hazard Mitigation Plan Meeting (HMP)
1/16/25 Winter Storm After Action Review Mtg
1/28/25 Cape May County Coordinators Mtg
1/29/25 HMP Risk Assessment Review Mtg
2/20/25 Cape May County Warming Center Fiscal Reimbursement Mtg
2/27/25 Cape May Ferry FSE IPR#2 Mtg
3/18/25 EMMIT Drill
3/20/25 Toured Rec Center with CMC OEM & DRBA for Reunification/Mass Casualty Events
3/25/25 HMP Update Mtg
4/8-4/10/25 NJ Emergency Preparedness Conference
4/29-5/1/25 Debris Management Training
4/29/25 Cape May County Coordinators Mtg
5/15/25 Escape the Cape Comms Mtg
5/22/25 Pelican Pointe Assisted Living/ Nursing Home Full Scale Tornado Drill
5/28/25 Escape the Cape Final Mtg
6/3/25 Independence Day Mtg
6/12/25 Independence Day Discussion- Managers Office

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6/18/25	EMMIT Drill
7/3/25	Independence Day Festival- Full Scale Event
7/14/25	EMMIT Drill
7/23/25	9/11 Ceremony Initial Mtg
7/31/25	Cape May County Coordinators Mtg
8/25/25	9/11 Ceremony Follow Up Mtg
9/8/25	9/11 Ceremony Follow Up Mtg
9/18/25	9/11 Ceremony After Action Review
9/29/25	Veterans Day Parade Initial Mtg
10/9/25	Code Blue Readiness Mtg
10/15/25	Warming Center Mtg w/ Rec regarding Wednesday Night Coverages
10/16/25	Veterans Day Parade Mtg #2
10/23/25	Cape May County Coordinators Mtg
10/31/25	Veterans Day Parade Mtg #3
11/17/25	EMMIT Drill

ASSESSMENT UPDATES

2025 Added Assessment Total \$37,825,050

2025 Municipal Assessment was \$3,766,339,500

2025 Added Assessments represent a 1% increase in the total Municipal Assessment

Unbudgeted revenue is generated through added assessments.

Total revenue generated for the municipality was \$398,848, county \$101,955, and in total for our fire districts \$25,860.