

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – April 20, 2026

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on April 20, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in the meeting room of Township Hall, 2600 Bayshore Road, Villas, New Jersey.

The 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.
- Deputy Mayor Kevin Coombs
- Mayor Frank Sippel

Also present: Michael Laffey, Township Manager, Robert Belasco, Township Solicitor and Amy Belasco, Deputy Township Clerk

Work Session

2026 Budget Hearing

Res. #2026-160 Adoption of 2026 Budget

Municipal Auditor, Leon Costello, voiced favor with this budget stating it is a sound budget with no tax increase and State approved.

Mayor Sippel gave a breakdown of a tax bill and how the taxes are divided. Mayor mentioned out of the 564 municipalities in New Jersey, Lower Township is the 19th lowest in the State. He also thanked everyone for their hard work on the budget.

| | MOTION | SECOND | AYE | NAY | RECUSE | ABSTAIN | ABSENT |
|---------|--------|--------|-----|-----|--------|---------|--------|
| CONRAD | x | | x | | | | |
| WAREHAM | | | x | | | | |
| ROY | | x | x | | | | |
| COOMBS | | | x | | | | |
| SIPPEL | | | x | | | | |

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – April 6, 2026

Res. #2026-161 Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$1,923,951.02

Res. #2026-162 Authorization for the Payout of Accumulated Compensatory Time (E. Danze, \$9,122.34)

Res. #2026-163 A Resolution Authorizing Advertisement of a Notice to Bidders for Re-Bid of Concession Contract to Supply, Install and Service Vending Machines

Res. #2026-164 A Resolution Amending Confirmation of Officials for Joint Insurance Fund and Municipal Excess Liability Fund

Res. #2026-165 Issuance of 2026 Limousine and Operator Licenses

Res. #2026-166 Issuance of Ice Cream Peddling and Ice Cream Salesman License for the Year 2026

Res. #2026-167 A Resolution Authorizing Advertisement of a Notice to Bidders for the Arctic Avenue Storm Sewer Replacement Project

Res. #2026-168 A Resolution Approving a Professional Service Contract with DeBlasio & Associates for Construction Phase Services for the Resurfacing of Various Streets Diamond Beach Project (LT-C-072)

Res. #2026-169 Authorizing Pay Out of Terminal Leave (J. Picard, \$25,138.37)

Res. #2026-170 Resolution of the Township of Lower, in the County of Cape May, State of New Jersey, Determining the Form and Other Details of its "Note Relating to the Construction Financing Program of the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank (F/K/A New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust)", to be Issued in the Principal Amount of up to \$2,500,000 (in one or more Series), and Providing for the Issuance and Sale of such Note (in one or more Series) to the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank, and Authorizing the Execution and Delivery of Such Note (in one or more Series) by the Township of Lower in Favor of the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank, all Pursuant to the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank Construction Financing Program

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

Regular Agenda

Ord. #2026-07 An Ordinance of the Township of Lower Vacating, Surrendering and Extinguishing the Public Rights in a Portion of Cedar Avenue. This is the second reading and public hearing of this Ordinance. This Ordinance has been posted, published and made available to the public.

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

Ord. #2026-08 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 7, Traffic, Article IV, Paid Parking Zones/Parking Meters, of the Code of the Township of Lower, To Authorize the Issuance of Seasonal Parking Permits. This is the second reading and public hearing of this Ordinance. This Ordinance has been posted, published and made available to the public.

Deputy Mayor Coombs made a motion to amend the Ordinance to affix stickers on golf carts. Seconded by Councilmember Wareham.

Solicitor Belasco suggested amending Chapter 7-37A, Seasonal Parking Permits.

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

Mayor Sippel mentioned that the parking permits were put into place at the request of the residents. Mayor mentioned it is one of the lowest rates for parking permits.

Susan Woska-Peterson, 205 Madison Ave, expressed concerns about parking meters in front of their houses.

Mayor clarified that this comment period is only for parking permits not parking meters.

Carmine Axmann- 211 E Raleigh Ave, Discusses the \$250 permits amidst having a \$10 million dollars in surplus, feels this is discriminatory towards Diamond Beach residents, Suggests no fees for the parking permits for the homeowners in Diamond beach

Kelly Scardone, 227 E Raleigh Ave, asks for free parking permit, and asks to change the parking hours to 9am-5pm, addresses concerns with congestion, safety, availability, referred to an article in the Herald, asked for free parking pass and reduced parking hours

Robert P., 400 E Raleigh Ave, agrees with fellow residents, suggests permits for property owners only adjacent to the meters, asks that only full-time residents should be given permits

Bob Resinski, The Grand, Diamond Beach, expressed that the beaches are privately owns, discusses the cost of beach maintenance, does not support the parking meters or permits.

Mayor informs the public that this is not a question-and-answer period and Council may comment at the end of the meeting.

Ted Rose, 212 Raleigh Ave, mentioned he hasn't seen residents this upset in a long time, feels that it will create more problems, feels they cannot compare to another town since they do not have boardwalks, restaurants etc., disappointed in the notification process, feels that Diamond Beach is targeted since they are not putting these meters at the bay or lighthouse, suggests changing parking hours to 9-5 and asks for free passes to residents.

Lisa Heckman, 407A E Raleigh Ave, concerned how the golf cart stickers are going to be transferrable, upset they are being charged to park in front of their own homes, they should take into consideration all the kids who park there to work at the hotel.

Patty Reger, Seapointe, thanked all the residents for coming out, hopes mayor and council hear what they are saying, hears their concerns and will take it into consideration

Lou Konrad, 400 E Raleigh Ave, Unit 404, asked mayor and council to take care of their own and not to compare them to other towns, inquired if they are planning on taking over the beaches, concerned about the schools.

Cindy Rouchard, 400 E Raleigh Ave, discusses how she felt it was not handled well, feels mayor and council should do their due diligence to protect their residents, expresses concerns with traffic and the studies that have or have not been done, concerned on how this will affect the townships relationship with the Crest

Mayor reiterated that this is comment only for Ordinance #2026-08

Joe Flaky, 316 South Station, concerned about the fees already paid in taxes and asks mayor and council to give free parking permits to local residents.

Elizabeth Ludwig, 431 E Raleigh Ave, they already pay for the beaches feels they should not have to pay for parking. Mayor Sippel closed public comment and asked solicitor to provide guidance.

Solicitor Belasco explains it is an equal access issue, streets are public and everyone has right to park there, expresses that Lower Township does not own the beach, explains that everyone has the right to park there and everyone has equal opportunity to park there and access the beach and opens it for everyone to obtain a parking permit also explains it is only limited to residents in Lower Township only equal to all. He also explains the local notification laws and explains how an ordinance is introduced and has hearings prior to being approved. Explains the publication of notices and how the law states using a newspaper that is printed and published within the municipality. He also explains the state law changed and how the Township is required to publish on the township's websites. States that the Township fully complied with the publications of notices.

Mayor explains how transparent the Township is, offers how the Township videos all meetings and posts them online for residents.

On Ord. #2026-08

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

Engineer Report

Andrew McTague, DeBlasio & Assoc., gave Council a briefing on the Capital Project's within the Township. He commented on the Rotary Community Park renovations, Bay outfall extensions Phase 1&2, David Douglass Memorial Park Renovations, Lower Township Public Works Building Design, The Lower Township Municipal Pool building, resurfacing of various streets. He mentioned the Bayshore Rd pickleball courts completion, and Diamond beach various streets are being resurfaced.

Administrative Reports

Clerk, Dog, Tax, Vital

Call to the Public

Dave Fascione, 301 South Station, asked for clarification that they passed the ordinance, feels that they were not heard.

Mayo Sippel explained that they did listen and took notes on all comments made, he also explained that they can always go back and change or amend the ordinances.

Susan Peterson, 205 Madison Ave, asks Mayor and Council to each stand and state when their term expires.

Solicitor Belasco explains that information is available on The Townships website.

Jerry Petraglia, 320 South Station, asking for consideration, explains he is a disabled vet, expresses concerns over problems this will cause, encourages everyone to work together and make some considerations.

Kathy Shenton, 215 Dune Dr, discusses process, fairness and trust between Mayor, Council and residents of Diamond Beach, questions why they are not putting meters elsewhere in the Township, explains the residents are now paying attention.

Ted Rose, 212 Raleigh Ave, questioned why you don't have to pay to park anywhere else in the Township, suggests the Township purchase a building in Diamond Beach for EMT services.

Phyllis Sockwell, Memphis Ave, has a problem with these meters, asks for more handicap parking and expressed concern with disappearing businesses and too many condos.

Lisa DeLizio, 218 South Station, stated that the Township can limit the parking compared to North Jersey, doesn't think they should open it to all Township residents, and believes the passes should be by street.

Solicitor Belasco again explained that the parking is equal opportunity for all Township residents.

Carmine Axmann, 211 E Raleigh Ave, expressed concern of how these parking meters and signs will destroy the natural look of Diamond Beach, concerned of the eye sore, inquired of the letter the Mayor of Wildwood Crest wrote.

Roberto Parota, 400 E Raleigh Ave, asked mayor and council to get rid of the ordinance all together, asks for other forms of notification by either email or phone calls, asks mayor and council to please take their concerns into consideration.

Bob Rabinski, 9600 Atlantic Ave, the Grand, asked for a clearer process, mentioned the Grand has 125 owners which may all want permits, expresses concerns over availability.

Lisa Hickman, Raleigh Ave, suggested making it equal and putting meters throughout the Township, mentioned the possibility of Diamond Beach leaving Lower Township.

Cindy Rushardi, 409 E Raleigh Ave, feels that it was a waste of time coming, inquired about information being truthful.

Lisa Ferante, 210 Jefferson Ave, concerned the meters will cause more parking issues, concerned over more condos going up and less parking.

Jerry Petraglia, 320 South Station, concerned over parking spots, concerned over the effect of property values.

Mayor closed public portion and asked Solicitor to explain how Planning and Zoning works.

Solicitor Belasco explained the differences between the Planning and Zoning Boards, he also described the different variances in which people can apply for, he went into length about how changes are approved.

Council Comments

Councilmember Conrad – no comments

Councilmember Wareham - We are listening and taking notes, expressed that the engineer reports show the amount of work being done in the Township.

Councilmember Roy acknowledged the concerns, believes some people have been misinformed, explained how the Township is in contract with Wildwood Crest to help provide EMS services to Diamond Beach, Council will work things out and thanked residents for expressing their concerns.

Deputy Mayor Coombs, agreed with Councilmember Roy, mentioned that they have a lot to think about.

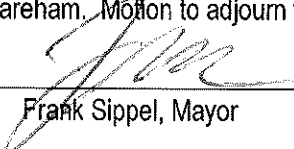
Mayor Sippel explained that the township has been evaluating the parking issues in Diamond Beach since October 2025, residents were posting illegal no parking signs, the Township has brought properties into compliance, mentioned Seapointe Village had illegal meters in a public right of way, they were notified and meters have been removed. Mayor also mentioned the state aide agreement that Lower Township entered, nothing has been done with that project yet, he asked the solicitor to explain.


Solicitor Belasco explained the state aide beach protection project, the provisions within the agreement to obtain easements, explained what that would mean for the township and the process to obtain said easements. To date the process is currently on hold.

Mayor Sippel thanked everyone for coming out and will take everything into consideration.

Adjournment

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Mayor, seconded by Councilmember Wareham. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.


Frank Sippel, Mayor


Township Clerk

Approved: May 4, 2026