

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – December 1, 2025

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on December 1, 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 Joseph Wareham  
Councilmember Roland Roy, Jr.  
Deputy Mayor Kevin Coombs  
Mayor Frank Sippel – via phone

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

### Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – November 17, 2025

- Res. #2025-386 Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$1,431,772.43
- Res. #2025-387 A Resolution Requesting Release of Maintenance Guarantee (Christopher Madden)
- Res. #2025-388 A Resolution Requesting Release of Demolition Bond for Block 46, Lot(s) 22 & 23, 119 W Tampa Ave, Escrow #P Salasin
- Res. #2025-389 Authorization for Refund of Taxes
- Res. #2025-390 Approval for Car Procession – Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Res. #2025-391 Approval for 2025 Christmas Parade
- Res. #2025-392 A Resolution Approving the Annual Level of Compensation for the Commissioners of Fire District #2 Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A: 14-88 and Local Finance Notice 2021-16
- Res. #2025-393 Authorization for 2025 Incentive Award for Insurance Waiver
- Res. #2025-394 Authorization to Transfer Funds from the Tax Premium Account
- Res. #2025-395 Approval of Change Order No. 3 for Remington & Vernick Engineers for Additional Engineering Design Services Related to the Demolition of the Existing Sally Port and Updates to the Construction Design and Plans for the HVAC and Roof Replacement Project at the Township Construction and Zoning Building
- Res. #2025-396 Approval of Change Order #1 to DeBlasio & Associates to Apply for the FY2026 Clean Water Application for Arctic Avenue Storm Sewer Replacement Project (LT-C-071)
- Ord. #2025-24 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 475, Parks and Recreation Areas, of the Code of the Township of Lower, to Enact Article V, Youth Sports Volunteer Background Checks, to Codify Existing Criminal History Background Check Requirements for Recreation Employees and Volunteers Assisting with Youth Sport Programs. This is the first reading of this Ordinance. The second reading and Public Hearing has been scheduled for January 5, 2026.
- Ord. #2025-25 Salary and Benefit Ordinance for the Township of Lower. This is the first reading of this Ordinance. The second reading and public hearing has been scheduled for January 5, 2026.
- Ord. #2025-26 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 January 5, 2026.

Councilmember Roy commented on the representation from the Fire Companies and asked Manager Laffey to explain Ordinance #2025-26.

Manager Laffey briefly explained the amendment in Ordinance #2025-26 to remove the heater inspection for requirement on rental properties.

Solicitor Belasco gave a detailed explanation of the proposed changes contained in Ordinance #2025-26. Rental inspections for rental properties every 3 years that's done by a private company, he explained it's not a requirement for the NJ Uniform Code.

Jeremy Embs, Fire Official for Lower Township, read a letter to Mayor and Council in opposition of the proposed Ordinance. He shared his credentials and informed of the requirements for fossil fuel and stated that the Township has no complaints on file in regards to this rule. He said that everyone should be unified to protect public safety. The ordinance was put in to place in the 1980's after a fire that was caused by a heater. Fire and Heater inspections are helpful to owners.

Solicitor Belasco- Advised Council this is just a first reading and this is not a public hearing.

Deputy Mayor Coombs commented on a relative incident with a fire and questioned why they don't inspect every house as opposed to only rental houses.

Jeremy Embs informed that the Fire Code only has jurisdiction on rental and commercial units.

Donna Blackley- Ordinance in place was adopted to help ensure public safety. This proposed change only benefits the landlords.

Dave Perry, Fire Official when original ordinance was put in place, voiced concern about lowering safety standards.

Jeff Laird, conducts preventive heater inspections, stated that every 3 years is not too much to require for heater inspections. He urged Council to rethink this in the interest of safety.

**Motion to move Ordinance #2025-26 to the Regular Agenda** moved by Deputy Mayor Coombs, seconded by Councilmember Roy.

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

**On the Consent Agenda:**

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

**Regular Agenda**

Ord. #2025-22 An Ordinance Amending Chapter 400, Land Development, of the Code of the Township of Lower. 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	X				
COOMBS			X				
SIPPEL			X				

Ord. #2025-26 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 January 5, 2026.

**Motion to Table Ord. #2025-26** made by Deputy Mayor Coombs, seconded by

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

### Call to the Public

Jim Pomponi, Richmond Ave., Beginning of August he was here, wanted someone to look at the congestion of the street, has a petition signed of 15 of the 24 residents. Would like his street to be changed to one way. It is currently too narrow to be two-way street. It is a major safety concern. Submitting a letter to request change to one way before May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Joseph unknown, Richmond Ave., said road rage on Richmond Ave is unbelievable. The road needs to be changed to one-way out of concern for the families.

Lou Connelly, Jr., Fire Commissioner in Fire District 2, Chair of Fire Bureau Safety, upset over the proposed ordinance change and asked the Solicitor to explain what tabling this ordinance means.

Solicitor Belasco explained that tabling an ordinance means it is removed and no action will be taken on the proposed ordinance.

### Council Comments

Councilmember Wareham reminded everyone of the tree lighting Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7 pm, the Rotary Christmas Parade Dec 13<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm, and stated concerns over phase 1 on Rosehill Parkway.

Councilmember Roy shared that Schellengers Landing safety enhancements are coming to a close and thanked Manager Laffey for resolving issue with the state.

Deputy Mayor Coombs announced Travel basketball try-outs, Ferry Merry Christmas Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, Greater Cape May Elks basketball tournament, Blood Drive Mon Dec 29<sup>th</sup>, and New Years Eve Family Party.

Mayor Sippel – no comments

### Adjournment

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Deputy Mayor Coombs, seconded by Councilmember Roy. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

  
Frank Sippel, Mayor

  
Township Clerk

Approved: December 15, 2025