

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – January 5, 2026

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on January 5, 2026 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.

Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence

Mayor Sippel acknowledged and thanked those in attendance, including various Elected Officials, Chiefs of Police, Police Officers and families.

Invocation presented by Pastor Bill Laky of Revolve Church.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Councilmember Joseph Wareham, Ward 2, while his wife, Deanna, and daughter, Savannah, held the Bible.

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

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

Res. #2026-01 Appointment of Municipal Solicitor for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (Robert Belasco Esq. NTE \$180,000)

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

Also present: Michael Laffey, Township Manager, Robert Belasco, Township Solicitor and Amy Belasco, Registrar.

Mayor Sippel thanked Solicitor Belasco for his professional services to the Township.
Solicitor Belasco thanked Mayor and Council for the opportunity to serve the Township.

Work Session

Oath of Office: Chief Donald Vanaman, Jr.

Deputy Mayor Kevin Coombs read the biography of Chief Donald Vanaman, Jr.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Chief Vanaman as his daughter Liberty held the Bible and his stepfather Martin Biersbach pinned his badge.

Oath of Office: Deputy Chief Michael Majane

Chief Vanaman read the biography of Deputy Chief Michael Majane.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Deputy Chief Majane as his daughter Aubrey and his mother Dolores held the Bible and his wife Erin pinned his badge.

Oath of Office: Captain John Armbruster

Chief Vanaman read the biography of Captain John Armbruster.

Mayor Sippel administered the Oath of Office to Captain John Armbruster as his daughters Emma and Chloe, along with his wife Adrienne, held the Bible and his daughter Madison pinned his badge.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – December 15, 2025

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|---------------|--|
| Res. #2026-02 | Appointment of Township Labor Attorney for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (W. Blaney, NTE \$40,000) |
| Res. #2026-03 | Appointment of Municipal Prosecutor for the Year 2026 (Blaney, Weinberg, & Curio, P.C., \$45,000. + \$10,000. WWC) |
| Res. #2026-04 | Appointment of Municipal Public Defender for the Year 2026 (S. Fuscarello, \$17,500. + \$13,500. WWC) |
| Res. #2026-05 | Appointment of Municipal Engineer for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (DeBlasio & Associates, NTE \$475,000) |
| Res. #2026-06 | Appointment of Municipal Judge (T. Keywood, Esq.) |
| Res. #2026-07 | Appointment of Public Information Officer for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (L. Suit, \$16,280) |
| Res. #2026-08 | Establishment of Council Meeting Dates and Times for the Year 2026 (annual) |
| Res. #2026-09 | Designation of Official Newspapers for Legal Public Advertising for the 2026 Calendar Year (annual) |
| Res. #2026-10 | Risk Management Consultant; Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund (J. Byrne Agency, year 3 of 3-year agreement) |
| Res. #2026-11 | Appointment of Municipal Auditor for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding |
| Res. #2026-12 | Appointment of Township Tax Appeal Attorney for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (P. Baldini, NTE \$10,000.) |
| Res. #2026-13 | A Resolution Awarding a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding to Surenian, Edwards & Nolan, LLC to serve as Special Counsel to the Township of Lower for Affordable Housing Matters/Litigation (NTE \$10,000) |
| Res. #2026-14 | Appointment of Bond Counsel for the Year 2026 As a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (Archer & Greiner) |
| Res. #2026-15 | Appointment of Health Insurance Brokerage Consultant for the Year 2026 as a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding (Marsh & McLennan) |
| Res. #2026-16 | Authorizing Payment of 2026 Debt Service (annual) |
| Res. #2026-17 | Resolution to Defer the Regional School Tax (annual) |
| Res. #2026-18 | Authorizing Payment for 2026 Local School Taxes to Lower Township Board of Education (annual) |
| Res. #2026-19 | Authorizing Payment for 2026 Regional School Taxes to Lower Cape May Regional (annual) |
| Res. #2026-20 | Adopting 2026 Temporary Current Budget |
| Res. #2026-21 | Approving 2026 Contract with Cape Assist (annual) |
| Res. #2026-22 | Authorizing the Tax Assessor to File Tax Appeals (annual) |
| Res. #2026-23 | Governing Body Certification of Compliance with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's "Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" |
| Res. #2026-24 | Approval of Emergency Management Council (annual) |
| Res. #2026-25 | Authorizing the Clerk to Issue Bingo & Raffle Licenses Throughout 2026 to Qualified Organizations (annual) |
| Res. #2026-26 | Confirmation of Officials for Joint Insurance Fund and Municipal Excess Liability Fund (annual) |
| Res. #2026-27 | Approval of Petty Cash Funds for 2026 (annual) |
| Res. #2026-28 | Authorization to Refund Tax Overpayment due to Tax Appeal |
| Res. #2026-29 | Setting the Interest Rate for Delinquent Taxes (annual) |
| Res. #2026-30 | Approval of Annual Contribution to Volunteers in Medicine (annual) |
| Res. #2026-31 | Authorizing 2026 Annual Shelter Fee Payment (annual) |
| Res. #2026-32 | Authorizing Payment for Dispatch Services (annual) |
| Res. #2026-33 | Authorizing Debt Service Payment for the Joint Public Safety Building Payment (\$173,491.26) |
| Res. #2026-34 | Authorizing Payment of 2026 Employer Share Pension (annual) |
| Res. #2026-35 | A Resolution Authorizing the Qualified Purchasing Agent of the Township of Lower to Award Contracts Exceeding \$17,500 and Under the Current Bid Threshold of \$53,000 and Establishing Quote Limits |
| Res. #2026-36 | Authorizing the Cash Management Plan (annual) |
| Res. #2026-37 | Designation of Official Depositories (annual) |
| Res. #2026-38 | Authorizing Payment of 1 st and 2 nd Quarter 2026 County Taxes with Pilot Remittance (per R.S. 54:4-74; PL 2025, c. 91) and 2025 Added Taxes |
| Res. #2026-39 | Authorizing the Sale of Township of Lower Surplus No Longer Needed for Public Use on GovDeals Online Auction Website |

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| Res. #2026-40 | Bid Acceptance and Contract Award to Supply Fireworks Display Including Barge, for Independence Day Event, Years 2026 and 2027 with a 2028 Option | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-41 | Approval of a Secondhand Merchant and Dealer of Precious Metals License | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-42 | Contract Award for Management Information System (MIS) Consultant for Township of Lower and Lower Township Police Department for Final Year 2026 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-43 | Authorization for Public Bidding (annual) | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-44 | Designation of Public Agency Compliance Officer for Lower Township (annual) | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-45 | Approving 2026 Contract with Cape Mediation Services | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-46 | Authorization for Refund of Taxes | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-47 | Bid Acceptance and Award of Lower Township Animal Control Services for 2026 with an Option for 2027 & 2028 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-48 | Contract Award for Fertilizing Services for Various Locations to J&D Services LLC d/b/a Spring Green for Final Year of 2026 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-49 | Contract Award to Bayshore Landscaping for Landscaping Services for Various Locations for the Final Year 2026 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-50 | FY2027 Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Disorder | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-51 | Reducing the Contract Award to Gentilini Chevrolet with Two (2) Additional Trade In Police Vehicles | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-52 | Authorization for Waiver of Fees in Accordance with Lower Township Municipal Code 475-16, Memorial Bench Dedication Program, due to Exceptional Circumstances | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-53 | Appointment to the Zoning Board (R. Abrams, Jr.) | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-54 | Appointment to the Planning Board (R. Roach, Jr.) | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-55 | A Resolution Approving an Interlocal Services Agreement between the Township of Lower and Lower Township Fire District #3 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-56 | A Resolution Awarding a Professional Service Contract without Public Bidding to Triad Advisory Services, Inc. to Provide Consulting Services in Connection with the Pursuit of Federal, State, Regional, and Foundation Grants and/or Financial Resources (NTE \$10,000) | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-57 | A Resolution Amending Resolution #2025-405 Authorizing the Transfer of Firearms No Longer Needed to a Licensed Firearms Dealer for Private Sale | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-58 | Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$896,121.88 | | | | | | |
| Res. #2026-59 | Authorization for the Payment of 2026 Vouchers \$56,691.78 | | | | | | |
| Ord. #2026-01 | Bond Ordinance Providing for Supplemental Funding for the Construction of a Public Works Building and Related Improvements, by and in the Township of Lower, in the County of Cape May, State of New Jersey; Appropriating \$1,500,000 Therefor and Authorizing the Issuance of \$1,425,000 Bonds or Notes of the Township to Finance Part of the Cost Thereof. This is the first reading of this Ordinance. The second reading and public hearing has been scheduled for January 21, 2026. | | | | | | |

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

Regular Agenda

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|---------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 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 second reading and public hearing of this Ordinance. This Ordinance has been published, posted 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. #2025-25 Salary and Benefit Ordinance for the Township of Lower. This is the second reading and public hearing of this Ordinance. This Ordinance has been published, posted and made available to the public.

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

Call to the Public – No comments

Council Comments

Mayor Sippel wished everyone a Happy New Year and stated his excitement to get things done in 2026. He congratulated Councilmember Wareham and thanked all the professionals that were appointed, as well as the Clerk's office and the Manager's office. He announced the next meeting will be held on Wednesday January 21st due to the holiday.

Deputy Mayor Coombs congratulated Councilmember Wareham.

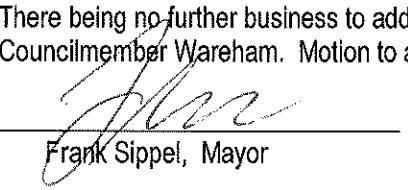
Councilmember Roy congratulated Councilmember Wareham and the Police Department promotions.

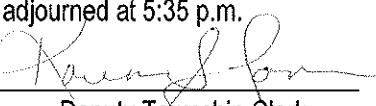
Councilmember Wareham thanked everyone for their support and vote of confidence in him.

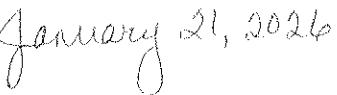
Councilmember Conrad thanked everyone in attendance and congratulated Councilmember Wareham.

Adjournment

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Deputy Mayor Coombs, seconded by Councilmember Wareham. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.


Frank Sippel, Mayor


Karen S. Bon
Deputy Township Clerk

Approved: 
January 21, 2026