

TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
6:30 pm Executive Session/7:30 pm Regular Session

November 3, 2025

The Regular Meeting of the Lopatcong Township Council was called to order by Mayor Wright. The meeting was held in the Municipal Building located at 232 S. Third St., Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

A Prayer was offered followed by the Oath of Allegiance.

Mayor Wright stated “adequate notice of this meeting has been provided indicating the time and place of the meeting in accordance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975 by advertising a Notice in The Star Ledger and The Express-Times Warren County Zone and by posting a copy on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building.”

Present: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright. Also, present were Attorney Baldwin and Engineer Wisniewski.

Motion to resume Regular Session by Council President Palitto, seconded by Councilman McQuade. All in favor.

Attorney Baldwin reported items listed on the Executive Session were discussed with no action to be taken.

Sworn In: Louis LaFord, Jr. as Lieutenant in the Police Department

Presentation: Lopatcong School District Superintendent Israel Marmolejos presented a slide show on the academics/performance of the students.

Public Comment - Agenda items only – no comments.

Old Business:

Minutes – Motion to approve Executive and Regular Session minutes for October 7, 2025 by Council president Palitto, seconded by Councilman Marinelli. Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

Resolution No. 25-153 – Resolution to approve award of Sally Port Project in the amount of \$421,000.00 to Walkkill Group.

R 25-153

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO AWARD WALLKILL GROUP A CONTRACT FOR THE
SALLY PORT ENCLOSURE PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey put out bid to finish the Sally Port alongside the Municipal Building Police Department; and

WHEREAS, this project went through a solicitation for bids on two occasions both times bids were rejected being in excess of the engineer’s estimate; and

WHEREAS, under the New Jersey Local Public Contracts Law at this point the contract can be negotiated to bring down the cost of the bid; and

WHEREAS, Wallkill Group was the lowest bidder and negotiated a new proposal which reduced the price to \$421,000.00; and

WHEREAS, Wallkill Group located at 3505 Route 94 in Hamburg, NJ submitted Proposal No. WG#25W51 outlining the work to be performed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong do hereby award the contract for completion of the Sally Port under a newly negotiated proposal No. WG#25W51 in the amount of \$421,000.00.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Motion to adopt this Resolution by Councilman Marinelli, seconded by Mayor Wright. Roll call Vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

New Business:

Best Practices Inventory – CFO Kim Browne discussed Lopatcong scored 37.5 points out of 43.5 most being prospective leaving Lopatcong to receive full credit. No action necessary. Resident Donna Schneider asked that the report be placed on the website.

New Jersey Solutions Insurance Fund – Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey Health Benefits cost to employees. CFO Browne explained the State Health Benefits is tanking and in debt over the last several years. Increase this year would be 36%. The Township experience rating was great and we were picked up by New Jersey Solutions Insurance Fund – Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey – Employees will leave the State Health Benefits to accept insurance through NJ Solutions Insurance Fund which is a HIF beginning in January. The cost to remain in the State Health Benefits system would be \$843,000 but moving to NJ Solutions would cost \$633,000. There are two plans; one with The Difference Card. The cost to the employee will be 15% of the premium. Motion by Mayor Wright, seconded by Council President Palitto to approve changes. Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

Consent Agenda:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda by Mayor Wright, seconded by Councilman Marinelli. Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

R 25-154

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING CONSENT AGENDA FOR COUNCIL'S
CONSIDERATION

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby approve and authorize a Consent Agenda to move routine items of business requiring no discussion; and

WHEREAS, there are listed Items one through ten on the Consent Agenda.

1. Resolution to separate Ralph Price from Plumbing Subcode/Inspector position.
2. Resolution to hire Joseph Briganti as Plumbing Subcode/Inspector provisionally pursuant to Civil Service procedures.
3. Resolution to renew lease agreement with Hunterdon Emergency Squad.
4. Resolution - Governing Body appointment of Jeffrey Collura as member of Zoning Board of Adjustment.
5. Resolution - Mayor Wright's appointment of Lou Hardy as member of the Planning Board
6. Resolution – To Issue a Refund for a Tax Overpayment for Block 86.01 Lot 23 due to a disabled veteran exemption in the amount of \$95.08.
7. Resolution to Transfer Appropriations within the Municipal Budget in the amount of \$91,020.00.
8. Approve application for Raffle License for Garnet Boosterettes.
9. Resolution to award a Non-Fair and Open Contract to Inglesino/Taylor.
10. Resolution to award quote to Garden State Tree Mgmt. to purchase trees in the amount not to exceed \$8,000.00 to complete the Powderhorn Tree Project.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Resolution No. 25-155 - Separate Ralph Price from Plumbing Subcode/Inspector position –

R 25-155

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY SEPARATING RALPH PRICE PART-TIME AS A FIRE PLUMBING SUBCODE OFFICIAL

WHEREAS, Ralph Price submitted his resignation as Plumbing Subcode Official/Inspector.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey that Ralph Price be separated from employment as the Plumbing Subcode Official/Inspector.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Resolution No. 25-156 – Hire Joseph Briganti as Plumbing Subcode/Inspector provisionally pursuant to Civil Service procedures.

R 25-156

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO HIRE OF JOSEPH BRIGANTI AS PLUMBING
SUBCODE/INSPECTOR PENDING CIVIL SERVICE PROCEDURES

WHEREAS, there is a need to hire a part-time employee as a Plumbing Subcode/Inspector; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Briganti is a qualified licensed Plumbing Subcode Official/Inspector; and

WHEREAS, Plumbing Subcode/Inspector is a Classified position within the Civil Service Commission and the appointment is provisional pending Civil Service procedure; and

WHEREAS, the rate of pay for these positions is included in the Salary Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey hire Joseph Briganti as Plumbing Subcode/Inspector pending any Civil Service procedures at a rate of pay established in the Salary Ordinance.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk, of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Resolution No. 25-157 – Renew Lease Agreement with Hunterdon Emergency Squad.

Resolution No. 25-158 – Governing Body appointment of Jeffrey Collura as member of Zoning Board of Adjustment.

R 25-158

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY ESTABLISHING
2025 Governing Body Appointment

Zoning Board of Adjustment –

Jeffrey Collura - Alternate Zoning Board Member – 11/5/2025-12/31/2026

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby approve the appointments as listed.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Planning Board Appointment - Mayor Wright to appointment Lou Hardy as member of the Planning Board for January 2026.

Resolution No. 25-160 – Issue Refund for a Tax Overpayment for Block 86.01, Lot 23 due to a disabled veteran exemption in the amount of \$95.08.

R 25-160

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO ISSUE A REFUND FOR A TAX OVERPAYMENT FOR
BLOCK 86.01, LOT 23 DUE TO A DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION

WHEREAS, the Tax Assessor has approved a Disabled Veteran Exemption for the resident of Block 86.01, Lot 23 on 9/26/2025; and

WHEREAS, due to the Exemption Status property taxes will be cancelled as follows; and

Quarter 3 2025 - \$95.08
Quarter 4 2025 - \$2,849.24
Quarter 1 2026 - \$2,798.64
Quarter 2 2026 - \$2,798.64

WHEREAS, the 3rd Quarter 2025 property taxes were paid on August 20, 2025 in the amount of \$2,849.24, resulting in an overpayment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this 5th day of November 2025, that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong hereby authorize the Tax Collector to cancel the taxes and the Chief Financial Officer to refund the overpayment in the amount of \$95.08 to: Jeffrey & Kelly Smigelsky, 1 Foxwood Lane, Phillipsburg, NJ 08865.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Resolution No. 25-161 – Transfer Appropriations within the Municipal Budget in the amount of \$91,020.00.

R 25-161

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND
STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS OF
THE 2025 LOPATCONG TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUDGET DURING THE LAST TWO
MONTHS OF THE YEAR AS PER N.J.S.A. 40A:4-58

WHEREAS, it has become necessary to expend an amount in excess of the respective items appropriated in the 2025 Lopatcong Township Municipal Operating Budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as per N.J.S.A. 4-58 that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong authorize the Chief Financial Officer to make the following appropriation transfers:

CURRENT FUND:

FROM:

TO:

Code Book Update OE	\$ 9,500.00	Parks & Playgrd OE	\$ 20,000.00
Postage OE	\$5,000.00	Computer OE	\$ 8,000.00
Planning Bd OE	\$ 10,000.00	Mun Clerk S& W	\$ 10,000.00
Bldg Subcode OE	\$ 3,500.00	Mayor & Council S&W	\$ 20.00
Mayor & Council OE	\$ 11,520.00	Employee-Payment in Lieu of OE	\$ 1,500.00
Zoning Officer S&W	\$ 5,000.00	Bldg Sub-Code S&W	\$ 3,500.00
Legal OE	\$ 20,000.00	Gas-Natural OE	\$ 12,000.00
Rev Adm S&W	\$ 8,000.00	Social Security OE	\$ 18,000.00
Engineering OE	\$ 7,500.00	Uniform Fire S&W	\$ 8,000.00
Bldg & Grounds OE	\$ 8,000.00	Electricity OE	\$ 10,000.00
Roads S&W	\$ 3,000.00		
Total	\$91,020.00	Total	\$ 91,020.00

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk for the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, CMC

Raffle License – Approve Raffle License for Garnet Boosterettes.

Resolution No. 25-162 - Contract Inglesino/Taylor – Award a contract for professional services with regard to sewer negotiations.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-162

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY APPOINTING DEREK ORTH OF THE LAW FIRM INGLESINO TAYLOR AS SPECIAL LITIGATION COUNSEL

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey wish to enter into a contract with Derek Orth of the law firm Inglesino, Taylor located at 600 Parsippany Road, Suite 204, Parsippany, New Jersey to serve as Special Litigation Counsel; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5(a)(i) of the Local Public Contract Law provides that such professional service agreements are exempt from the requirements of the Local Public Contract Law; and

WHEREAS, Derek Orth, of the law firm of Inglesino, Taylor has submitted a proposal indicating that he will provide services as special litigation counsel to the Township at the rates set forth in the Professional Services Agreement annexed hereto and made a part hereof; and

WHEREAS, the Township CFO has certified there are funds available to retain Derek Orth, of the law firm of Inglesino, Taylor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Township Clerk be and are hereby authorized to enter into a contract on behalf of the Township that has been reviewed and approved by Township Council.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Resolution No. 25-159 – Award Garden State Tree Mgmt. quote not to exceed \$8,000 for purchase of trees for Powderhorn Tree Project.

R 25-159

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO AWARD QUOTE TO GARDEN STATE TREE MGMT. FOR THE PURCHASE OF TREES FOR THE POWDERHORN TREE PROJECT NOT TO EXCEED \$8,000

WHEREAS, the Shade Tree Commission of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey submitted a quote for the replacement of trees on Powderhorn Drive; and
WHEREAS, the installation of trees shall carry a guarantee of up to one year from the date of installation; and

WHEREAS, the purchase shall not exceed \$8,000.00.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey do hereby approve the quote for trees to be replaced on Powderhorn Drive in an amount not to exceed \$8,000.00.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Council Reports:

Councilman McQuade – No report.

Councilman Marinelli – Thanked the fellow councilmen for their assistance with the election, especially Jim Palitto and his wife.

Council President Palitto – Thanks the residents of Lopatcong and looks forward to serving the community another three years.

Mayor Wright – Congratulated Council President Palitto and Councilman Marinelli for winning the election. After last month's meeting, the Township heard that NFI prevailed in the lawsuit. Their will be an appeal filed.

Engineer's Report – Engineer Wisniewski noted the award of the Sally Port Project which has been in progress since 2018. Park and Pool project is out to bid and will be opened on the 2nd of December. Pickleball courts are completed; the contractor left the courts closed until the lawn area around the courts are grown in to prevent tracking of soil onto the new courts. Walkways for the project will be installed when the park/pool project begins. Stonehenge Drive Improvement Project has been awarded and will begin in a few weeks. The South Fifth Improvements project will be completed by end of the month. The storm damage repair work will be designed along with DEP permits filed with construction in the spring.

Mayor Wright confirmed with Engineer Wisniewski that the work being done in the streets in Morris Park will be paved according to the ordinance.

Police Report – Chief Garcia thanked the Mayor and Council for their persistence with completing the Sally Port. The Traffic Report for October had 347 motor vehicle stops with 52% of drivers stopped were issued citations and 31% went to commercial motor vehicles. The Police Department will be participating in no shave November for benefit to a local family – Marino family. Congratulated Lieutenant LaFord and look forward to the continued work in the Police Department as this is well deserved.

Fire Chief's Report – Mayor Wright reported that year to date there was 206 incidents the Fire Department responded to.

Shade Tree Commission – Chairwoman George thanked the Council for approving the quote to plant trees on Powderhorn Drive. Out of 20 homes impacted, 11 responses came in for the replanting. Residents were able to select from a variety of tree species. Chairwoman George noted that the Commission will be working with the Green Team at the Lopatcong School District on the Rain Garden.

Department Reports – Motion to approve by Councilman McQuade, seconded by Council President Palitto. All in favor.

Payment of Bills – Motion to approve payment of bills by Council President Palitto, seconded by Councilman Marinelli. Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

Public Comment:

Brian Weeks – Noted some monthly work completed. Spoke to Council regarding the renewal contract with Deiter Brothers amounting to \$5,144.00 for a one-year term with the ability to renew. This is for the squad building, the fire houses, the municipal bldg. and the DPW. This

will go under attorney review before signature. Motion to approve subject to attorney review by Mayor Wright, seconded by Councilman Marinelli to authorize. Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

Sam Joseph – 37 Haze Way – looking for relief for the fence installation in an easement alongside his property. Engineer Wisniewski indicated that back in June of this year an application was filed for a fence on his property. The Zoning Officer denied the permit because of a 20-foot-wide drainage easement which does not allow for construction within the easement if there is stormwater infrastructure underground. Engineer Wisniewski did visit the property and found surrounding properties on Haze Way have fencing and sheds and other facilities in drainage easements. The primary concern would be that there is access for maintenance. Council would need to provide relief to the denial upon an agreement setting forth criteria so the township would have access to the easement for maintenance.

R - 25-163

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY GRANTING AN EXCEPTION TO TOWNSHIP ORDINANCE § 243-64.1(C) TO PERMIT THE INSTALLATION OF A FENCE WITHIN A PUBLIC EASEMENT ON BLOCK 139, LOT 11, KNOWN AS 37 HAZE WAY

WHEREAS, Sam Joseph (“Owner”) is the owner of Block 139, Lot 11, commonly known as 37 Haze Way, located within the Township of Lopatcong; and

WHEREAS, the Owner submitted an application for a permit to construct a fence pursuant to Township Code § 243-64.1(A)(2); and

WHEREAS, the Township Zoning Officer denied the application on the basis that the proposed fence would be located within the area of a public easement, which is prohibited under Township Ordinance § 243-64.1(C); and

WHEREAS, the Owner thereafter filed an appeal to the Township Council seeking an exception to the prohibition contained in § 243-64.1(C); and

WHEREAS, the Owner represented to the Township Council that neighboring properties contain similarly located fences within the same easement area; and

WHEREAS, the Township Engineer reviewed the application and advised the Council that the proposed fence would not interfere with the function or purpose of the public easement, provided that the Township retains the ability to access and maintain the easement area as necessary; and

WHEREAS, the Township Department of Public Works Superintendent advised that, for proper maintenance and access, a gate of at least ten (10) feet in width must be installed within the fence line; and

WHEREAS, the Owner agreed to (1) incorporate a ten-foot (10') wide access gate in the fence, and (2) permit the Township to remove any portion of the fence located within the easement if necessary to perform maintenance, repairs, or other municipal functions, with any damage to the fence being at the Owner’s sole cost and with no liability to the Township for any damage to the fence; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council finds that the Township already possesses the right of access to the easement by virtue of the recorded easement, and that the Owner’s agreement merely acknowledges and confirms these existing rights; and

WHEREAS, the Township Council further finds that the granting of this exception will not adversely affect the public interest and is in the public good.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lopatcong, County of Warren and State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The appeal of Sam Joseph is hereby granted, and an exception to Township Ordinance § 243-64.1(C) is approved to permit the erection of a fence on Block 139, Lot 11, to the extent it encroaches within the public easement.
2. The Owner is authorized to obtain a fence permit consistent with Township Code § 243-64.1(A)(2), subject to the following conditions:
 - a. The Owner shall construct and maintain a ten-foot (10') wide access gate within the fence at the location acceptable to the Township Engineer and Department of Public Works.
 - b. The Township retains the right to enter upon, access, and utilize the public easement at any time for maintenance, repair, or other municipal purposes.
 - c. To the extent the fence must be removed, in whole or in part, to permit such access or work, the Township may remove the fence without cost or liability to the Township for damage to the fence, and the Owner shall be responsible for any restoration or replacement.

CERTIFICATION

I, Margaret B. Dilts, Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lopatcong, in the County of Warren, State of New Jersey do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by Council at a meeting held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

Margaret B. Dilts, MMC

Mayor Wright made a motion to approve, seconded by Council President Palitto.

Roll call vote:

AYES: Councilman Marinelli, Councilman McQuade, Council President Palitto, Mayor Wright.

NAYS: None

Judy Liptak – 47 Kyle – Spoke about Solicitation in her neighborhood. Police Chief Garcia will post those permits on the website.

Donna Schneider – 26 Meadowview Drive – Commented on some solicitors in her neighborhood. Asked how much money the town takes in from the Pilots. Clerk Dilts informed her that there are three pilots but did not know how much is collected.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Councilman Marinelli, seconded by Mayor Wright. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret B. Dilts
Clerk/Administrator

William D. Wright
Mayor

