

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
WORK SESSION AND
AGENDA MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2025
7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

SALUTE TO COLORS

Mayor Wronko invited all those present to stand in a salute to the colors.

MAYOR'S STATEMENT AS TO COMPLIANCE WITH P.L. 1975

Adequate Notice of this Meeting has been provided according to the Open Public Meetings Act, Assembly Bill 1030. Notice of this Meeting was included in the Annual Meeting Notice sent to the New Jersey Herald and the Daily Record on January 8, 2025, and was placed on the Official Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building.

In the event the Mayor and Council have not addressed all items on this Agenda by 10:00 PM and they are of the opinion that they cannot complete the Agenda in a reasonable time period, the Mayor and Council may exercise their option to continue this meeting at an agreed to date, time and place. Please turn off all cell phones for the duration of this Meeting.

ROLL CALL

Council Members:

Councilwoman Kuncken – absent
Councilman Riccardi – present
Councilman Romano – present

Councilman Simpson – present
Councilman Thornton – present
Councilman Wachterhauser – present

Mayor Wronko – present

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Cannabis – Administrator McNeilly stated May 7th marked the beginning of the cannabis Class 5 license applications acceptance. To date no applications have been received. Procedures are in place and the documents are available on the website.

NJ Natural Gas – Administrator McNeilly stated that NJ Natural Gas has finished its gas main install in the Ridge/Sunset/Overhill area. They are currently on Dell Road and are working down from Highpoint Condominiums to Route 183. The projected finish for the Pennington area is the third week of June. By the end of June, NJ Natural Gas will be ready to begin working on Sparta Road and then onto Lenape Woods, taking advantage of schools being out for the summer. Once Lenape Woods is finished, that will conclude the gas main installation project. Household connections will be ongoing for years. The completion of the gas mains is approximately five months ahead of schedule. This was possible due to the fact the gas company was able to work through the winter months.

Road Resurfacing – Administrator McNeilly stated that notices are going out to the residents on Main Street, Ridge Road, Sunset Avenue, Overhill Road, Mountain View Road and West Drive letting them know that their road will be resurfaced this year. They will be made aware of the five (5) year moratorium on road opening permits and if they desire a gas connection to their home, they will need to make arrangements with NJ Natural Gas soon. Paving will be done later this summer.

Bond Sale – Administrator McNeilly stated the winning bid interest rate for the \$2.048 million bond was 3.87%. On the one-year note, this amounts to \$79,410 in interest. Hopefully, next year the rate will be better.

Sparta Road – Administrator McNeilly stated the DPW is getting price quotes on the replacement light for Sparta Road. It will be ordered this month.

June 10th Mayor & Council Meeting – Administrator McNeilly stated due to the fact the Primary Election date has been changed to Tuesday, June 10th, he suggested that the Mayor and Council meeting scheduled for that date be cancelled. Councilman Riccardi asked if the June 10th meeting is cancelled, does that put anything behind schedule. Administrator McNeilly replied there would be no issues.

Environmental Commission – Administrator McNeilly stated the Environmental Commission submitted a grant request to the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant Program for \$1,500 for native species plantings. The matching portion of the grant would be accomplished with volunteer hours.

Borough Engineer & Planner – Administrator McNeilly stated Eric Keller, Borough Engineer, and William Hamilton, Borough Planner, will be attending the May 27th Mayor and Council meeting.

Highpoint & Stonegate Condominiums – Councilman Romano asked if there is any indication as to when or if NJ Natural Gas will run gas mains to the Highpoint Condominiums or Stonegate. Administrator McNeilly stated those arrangements will be made directly by the condominium associations and NJ Natural Gas. The Borough will not have any involvement with those arrangements.

WORK SESSION

Sussex-Warren Area Energy Cooperative – Administrator McNeilly stated, in the past, we have discussed the Sussex-Warren Area Energy Cooperative, which currently provides the competitive rate against the basic service rate for the BPU which is seen on the JCP&L bill. The competitiveness of the rates has shrunk substantially, since the Borough first became involved in the project eight years ago. The last calculation determined the savings per household is only \$4.00 per year. The current round will end in October or November of 2025, though there is some possibility this will extend briefly into 2026. A new auction will take place in July, which will take effect in November. Between now and the end of this month is when a decision must be made as to whether or not the Borough wants to remain in the plan. There is a plan in place for a municipality to opt-out. Mayor Wronko asked if the co-op has provided any indication as to what the rates may be? Administrator McNeilly stated all the electric costs are increasing. It is just a matter of how much. The first year that the Borough participated in this program, the savings per household were equivalent to the cost of one months electric service. The contract also had a clause in it that in the event that the basic service rate was lower than the co-op rate, the contract would be broken. That clause is no longer part of the contract. All the things that were looked for in the initial round have been striped away. Mayor Wronko stated there has been a lot of confusion for the residents as far as the process of opting in or opting out. Councilman Romano stated due to the fact the savings is no longer there, and things are only going to get worse; he is of the opinion that remaining in the co-op is not worth the administrative hassle. Administrator McNeilly stated this does put an administrative load on the office with the number of telephone calls.

Mayor Wronko called for a straw poll asking the governing body for approval to opt-out of the Sussex-Warren Area Energy Cooperative. The results are as follows: Councilman Wachterhauser – yes; Councilman Thornton – yes; Councilman Riccardi – yes; Councilman Simpson – yes; Councilman Romano – yes Administrator McNeilly stated he will contact the Borough Attorney to begin the process of opting out of the energy program.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Mayor Wronko offered the following resolution which was read by title.

Resolution 101-25

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TERMS OF A NEW
COLLECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE BOROUGH OF STANHOPE AND THE OPEIU LOCAL
NO. 32**

WHEREAS, the Collective Negotiations Agreement between the Borough of Stanhope (“Borough”) and the OPEIU Local No. 32 (“OPEIU”) expired on December 31, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Borough and the OPEIU have been in negotiations for a new collective agreement since that time; and

WHEREAS, representatives of the Borough and the OPEIU involved in collective negotiations have reached an agreement on terms and conditions for a new collective negotiations agreement and have recommended those terms to the full membership of the OPEIU and the governing body of the Borough of Stanhope for approval; and

WHEREAS, it has been determined by the Mayor and Council that the terms agreed to by the parties, which are contained in a written Memorandum of Agreement, for the period from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2028, will provide a fair and reasonable level of benefits and compensation for Borough employees who are members of the OPEIU bargaining unit for the next four (4) years; now therefore

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED this 13th day of May 2025, that the Mayor and Borough Council hereby approve the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement negotiated between the Borough and the OPEIU; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Borough Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to sign any and all contracts, agreements or amendments necessary to effectuate these approved terms and conditions.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Thornton and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

Roll Call:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Councilwoman Kuncken – absent | Councilman Simpson – yes |
| Councilman Riccardi – yes | Councilman Thornton – yes |
| Councilman Romano – yes | Councilman Wachterhauser – yes |

CONSENT AGENDA (All items listed on the Consent Agenda are considered routine by the Borough Council and were enacted by one motion of the Borough Council with no separate discussion.)

Councilman Riccardi asked to have Resolution 102-25 removed from the consent agenda to be voted on separately. Mayor Wronko removed Resolution 102-25 from the consent agenda.

Resolution 102-25

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING LEGISLATION THAT WOULD
PREEMPT LOCAL PLANNING AND PERMIT
CONVERSION OF CERTAIN OFFICE PARKS AND
RETAIL CENTERS TO MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS**

WHEREAS, New Jersey has long history of maintaining the principles of home rule, established in the state constitution, which has provided our residents with the most meaningful direct access to strong local governments; and

WHEREAS, municipalities bring a distinctive responsiveness and ability to shape policy to respond to the needs of communities; and

WHEREAS, local control and decision making reflective of the community empowers the residents and taxpayers of each municipality to carefully tailor local policies that reflect its unique geography, economy, needs, and priorities; and

WHEREAS, proposed legislation, S-1408/A-2757, requires municipal planning boards to permit the conversion of eligible properties, so-called “stranded assets” into mixed-use developments, effectively bypassing the existing variance procedure and preempting local zoning; and

WHEREAS, an eligible property is defined as an office park that is at least 50,000 square feet or a retail center of at least 15,000 square feet; and has a vacancy rate of at least 25% rate for at least 18 months immediately preceding the application; or has suffered an economic downturn over the immediately preceding 3 years, demonstrated by evidence of a quantifiable loss in revenue such that the developer’s expenses for the premises have exceeded revenues by at least 30% or more each year; and

WHEREAS, the committee amendments eliminated the 2-year sunset in the original bill, meaning that this would be a permanent preemption of local planning; and

WHEREAS, a mixed-use development, which may include the demolition of existing structures, that is subject to a preemptive conversion shall be considered a permitted use and not require a variance, provided that the development otherwise complies with zoning requirements in the municipality’s mixed-use zone; the application proposes at least two types of uses, one of which shall be residential, and no use shall be industrial; at least 20% of the residential units to be constructed shall be reserved as very-low-income housing, low-income housing, or moderate-income housing, at least 50% within each bedroom distribution are low-income units, at least 13% of the low income units are very-low income units; and must comply with the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls in N.J.S.A. 52:27D-301 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the bill establishes the criteria to follow if there are multiple mixed-use zones and legislates mixed-use zones if the municipality does not have a mixed-use zone, likely to result in costly litigation; and

WHEREAS, S-1408/A-2757 is based on the unnecessary and unwarranted preemption of local master planning as currently any such application can be made through the variance process or a redevelopment process; and

WHEREAS, the criteria in the bill is ripe for litigation and unintended consequences that could likely turn into a backdoor means to challenge approved affordable housing plans and expose municipalities to litigation; and

WHEREAS, this legislation and the erosion of local autonomy threatens to undermine home rule that is critical for local officials to adopt policies that are the most beneficial to the community and that our residents have long come to expect from their municipal government.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council hereby urges the legislature to reject S-1408/A-2757 and preserve local autonomy in municipal planning; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution shall be furnished to Congressperson Josh Gottheimer, Senator Cory Booker, Senator Andy Kim, President Donald Trump, State Senator Parker Space, Assemblymembers Dawn Fantasia and Michael Inganamort, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Governor Philip Murphy, and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

Councilman Thornton asked Councilman Riccardi why he asked to have the resolution pulled from the consent agenda. Councilman Riccardi stated this is a resolution that opposes legislation and he would like to vote on it separately due to the fact he does not agree with opposing the legislation.

On motion by Councilman Riccardi, seconded by Councilman Simpson and carried by a majority of the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

Roll Call:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Councilwoman Kuncken – absent | Councilman Simpson – yes |
| Councilman Riccardi – no | Councilman Thornton – yes |
| Councilman Romano – no | Councilman Wachterhauser – yes |

CONSENT AGENDA

Resolution 103-25

RESOLUTION DECLARING SUPPORT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE FEDERAL TAX EXEMPTION OF MUNICIPAL BONDS

WHEREAS, the tax-exempt municipal bond market is a widely used source of capital for states, local governments, tribes, territories, and non-profit borrowers that finances a tremendous share of the nation’s public infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, state and local governments finance about three-quarters of the public infrastructure in the United States and use tax-exempt bonds to do so, with the federal government providing only about one-quarter of the investment; and

WHEREAS, federal tax exemption for municipal bonds, dating back to the 1800s and incorporated into the modern tax code in 1919, has been crucial for state and local governments to affordably finance critical infrastructure projects; and

WHEREAS, tax-exempt bonds offer borrowers to achieve a multiplier effect of 2.11, meaning that for every dollar, borrowers achieve \$2.11 in borrowing cost savings, thereby demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness of this exemption in facilitating infrastructure investment; and

WHEREAS, tax-exempt bonds provide for essential infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, utilities, broadband, water and sewer systems, and hospitals, which are vital to the health and well-being of our community such that without such bonds, the cost of borrowing would be more expensive thereby causing an increase in taxes and fees that would place an undue burden on taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Borough finds and determines that tax-exempt municipal bonds provide an opportunity for economic development, better facilitate the movement of agriculture products, equipment, and other goods, and increase safety.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope as follows: The Mayor and Council hereby encourages the New Jersey Congressional Delegation to assist the Borough of Stanhope, State of New Jersey by preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds by supporting and ensuring the protection of the federal tax exemption of municipal bonds.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution shall be furnished to Congressperson Josh Gottheimer, Senator Cory Booker, Senator Andy Kim, President Donald Trump, State Senator Parker Space, Assemblymembers Dawn Fantasia and Michael Inganamort, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Governor Philip Murphy, and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

Resolution 104-25

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARTIAL REFUND OF
CONSTRUCTION PERMIT FEE**

WHEREAS, Trinity Solar paid \$593.00 to the Borough in 2023 for Permit No. 20230202, related to a proposed solar panel installation at 14 Mountain Terrace; and

WHEREAS, Trinity Solar has requested that this permit be voided because the project at the property has been cancelled; and

WHEREAS, Trinity Solar has requested a refund of the fee, and the Construction Official has authorized a refund of the \$593.00, less the 25% plan review fee of \$104.25 and the DCA fee of \$176.00, bringing the total amount to be refunded as \$312.75 .

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, that \$312.75 be hereby refunded to Trinity Solar, 2211 Allenwood Road, Wall, New Jersey 07719, as recommended by the Construction Official.

Resolution 105-25

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ADOPTION OF THE
2025 SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS, all jurisdictions within Sussex County have exposure to hazards that increase the risk to life, property, environment, and the County and local economy; and

WHEREAS; pro-active mitigation of known hazards before a disaster event can reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property; and

WHEREAS, The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-390) established new requirements for pre and post disaster hazard mitigation programs; and

WHEREAS; a coalition of Sussex County municipalities with like planning objectives has been formed to pool resources and create consistent mitigation strategies within Sussex County; and

WHEREAS, the coalition has completed a planning process that engages the public, assesses the risk and vulnerability to the impacts of natural hazards, develops a mitigation strategy consistent with a set of uniform goals and objectives, and creates a plan for implementing, evaluating and revising this strategy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Borough of Stanhope of the County of Sussex:

1. Adopts in its entirety, the 2025 Sussex County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (the “Plan”) as the jurisdiction’s Hazard Mitigation Plan and resolves to execute the actions identified in the Plan that pertain to this jurisdiction.
2. Will use the adopted and approved portions of the Plan to guide pre- and post-disaster mitigation of the hazards identified.
3. Will coordinate the strategies identified in the Plan with other planning programs and mechanisms under its jurisdictional authority.
4. Will continue its support of the Mitigation Planning Committee as described within the Plan.
5. Will help to promote and support the mitigation successes of all participants in this Plan.
6. Will incorporate mitigation planning as an integral component of government and partner operations.
7. Will provide an update of the Plan in conjunction with the County no less than every five years.
8. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

Resolution 106-25

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF
REDEMPTION MONIES TO OUTSIDE LIEN HOLDER**

WHEREAS, at the Municipal Tax Sale held on October 30, 2024, a lien was sold on Block 11008 Lot 12, also known as 9 Hill Rd, for 2023 delinquent sewer and water charges; and

WHEREAS, this lien which is known as Tax Sale Certificate #24-00010 was sold to Bala Partners, LLC at 0% interest and a Premium of \$600.00; and

WHEREAS, Corelogic, mortgagee, has effected a redemption of certificate #24-00010 in the amount of \$1,365.62; and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector certifies that the reimbursement is now required to be made for the required redemption amounts as shown below:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Redemption Amount: Outside Lien #24-00010 and Interest | \$1,365.62 |
| Premium Paid by Lienholder | 600.00 |
| Total From Current Fund: | \$1,365.62 |
| Total From Tax Premium Account | 600.00 |

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Borough Council of the Borough of Stanhope, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey that the Governing Body acknowledges that Bala Partners, LLC is entitled to the redemption in the amount of \$1,965.62; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Financial Officer be authorized to issue a check in the total amount of \$1,965.62 for the total redemption of certificate #24-00010 payable to Bala Partners, LLC, PO Box 303, Pottersville, NJ 07979; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Borough Chief Financial Officer and the Borough Tax Collector.

Resolution 107-25

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF
REDEMPTION MONIES TO OUTSIDE LIEN HOLDER**

WHEREAS, at the Municipal Tax Sale held on October 30, 2024, a lien was sold on Block 11009 Lot 1, also known as 53 Brooklyn Rd, for 2023 delinquent sewer and water charges; and

WHEREAS, this lien which is known as Tax Sale Certificate #24-00011 was sold to Bala Partners, LLC at 0% interest and a Premium of \$600.00; and

WHEREAS, Corelogic, mortgagee, has effected a redemption of certificate #24-00011 in the amount of \$2,146.13; and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector certifies that the reimbursement is now required to be made for the required redemption amounts as shown below:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Redemption Amount: Outside Lien #24-00011 and Interest | \$2,146.13 |
| Premium Paid by Lienholder | 600.00 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Total From Current Fund: | \$2,146.13 |
| Total From Tax Premium Account | 600.00 |

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Borough Council of the Borough of Stanhope, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey that the Governing Body acknowledges that Bala Partners, LLC is entitled to the redemption in the amount of \$2,746.13; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Financial Officer be authorized to issue a check in the total amount of \$2,746.13 for the total redemption of certificate #24-00011 payable to Bala Partners, LLC, PO Box 303, Pottersville, NJ 07979; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Borough Chief Financial Officer and the Borough Tax Collector.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Riccardi and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolutions were duly adopted.

Roll Call:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Councilwoman Kuncken – absent | Councilman Simpson – yes |
| Councilman Riccardi – yes | Councilman Thornton – yes |
| Councilman Romano – yes | Councilman Wachterhauser – yes |

Mayor's Acceptance of Resignation

Resolution 108-25

**MAYOR'S ACCEPTANCE OF RESIGNATION OF JASON
GACCIONE FROM HIS EMPLOYMENT WITH THE
BOROUGH OF STANHOPE WITH COUNCIL
CONCURRENCE**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Borough of Stanhope that they do hereby concur with the Mayor's acceptance of Jason Gaccione's resignation from the position of DPW Laborer, effective May 5, 2025.

On motion by Councilman Riccardi, seconded by Councilman Wachterhauser and unanimously carried by voice vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

Resolution 109-25

**RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MAYOR'S
APPOINTMENT OF TYLER T. SIMPSON, AS A MEMBER
OF THE STANHOPE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mayor's appointment of Tyler T. Simpson, as a member of the Stanhope Fire Department.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Borough of Stanhope that they do hereby concur with the Mayor's appointment of Tyler T. Simpson, as a Member of the Stanhope Fire Department effective immediately.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Wachterhauser and carried by a majority voice vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted. Councilman Simpson abstained.

Resolution 110-25

**RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MAYOR'S
APPOINTMENT OF HANNAH M. ELLICOTT, AS A
MEMBER OF THE STANHOPE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mayor's appointment of Hannah M. Ellicott, as a member of the Stanhope Fire Department.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Borough of Stanhope that they do hereby concur with the Mayor's appointment of Hannah M. Ellicott, as a Member of the Stanhope Fire Department effective immediately.

On motion by Councilman Riccardi, seconded by Councilman Thornton and unanimously carried by voice vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Resolution 111-25

**RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF
THE BOROUGH OF STANHOPE AUTHORIZING
PAYMENT OF BILLS**

WHEREAS, the Chief Finance Officer has certified that funds are available in the proper account; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Finance Officer has approved payment upon certification from the Borough Department Heads that the goods and/or services have been rendered to the Borough;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope that the current bills list, dated May 13, 2025, and on file and available for public inspection in the Office of the Chief Finance Officer and approved by the Chief Finance Officer for payment, be paid.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Thornton and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

Roll Call:

Councilwoman Kuncken – absent
Councilman Riccardi – yes
Councilman Romano – yes

Councilman Simpson – yes
Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Wachterhauser – yes

AGENDA ITEMS

All items listed on the Agenda for May 27, 2025, were approved.

CITIZEN'S TO BE HEARD

Mayor Wronko opened the meeting to the public after advising attendees that there is a five (5) minute time limit for each speaker.

Seeing no one from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Wronko closed the public portion of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Riccardi and unanimously carried by voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 P.M.

Approved:

Linda Chirip
Deputy Clerk for
Ellen Horak, RMC
Borough Clerk