

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
REGULAR MINUTES
September 22, 2026
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 public meeting has been made in accordance with P.L. 2025, c.72, N.J.S.A. 35:3-2, and the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6, et seq., inasmuch as a notice has been published on the Borough's official Internet website, www.stanhopenj.gov, which is accessible and available to the public free of charge. A direct hyperlink to legal notices published on the Borough's official Internet website is conspicuously placed on the website's homepage. Notice was also 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:

Councilman Riccardi – present
Councilman Romano – present
Councilman Simpson – present

Councilman Smith– present
Councilman Thornton – present
Councilman Wachterhauser – present

Mayor Wronko – present

PRESENTATION

Sussex County 250th Quilt Display – Mayor Wronko asked Linda Chirip, who participated in making the quilt, which was displayed here this evening, to speak about the quilt. Ms. Chirip stated in January, Jane Krueger from the Ogdensburg Historical Society, sent an email to the other historical groups within Sussex County, asking if anyone was interested in participating in the creation of quilt to commemorate the 250th Celebration of America. Anyone interested was invited to attend a meeting. A group of women showed up and ultimately eleven women worked together to design and create the quilt which was on display tonight. All 24 municipalities are represented on the quilt. The towns were contacted and asked if they wanted to design their square or it could be done for them. Each square represents a significant location within each of the municipalities. Ms. Chirip stated she created the square for Fredon Township and the one for Stanhope Borough, which depicts the Borough seal of the Morris Canal Lock. The center of the quilt was designed around the 250th Anniversary seal for Sussex County and the items around the seal are items which are relative to our County such as; the baseball stadium, the state fair, and the Appalachian Trail just to name a few. The original plan was to have the quilt made by August to have it displayed at the Sussex County Fair. Then it was announced that there was to be a 250th Celebration Event in June. The quilt was ultimately designed and sewn together in ten weeks' time. This was an amazing collaboration considering that the eleven women did not know each other prior to this. The design which has been sewn with a long arm machine all through the quilt is designed with stars, swirls and "250". On the back of the quilt there is a patch with the names of the 11 women who created the quilt. The plan is to have all the towns display the quilt at their town halls and the quilt is available upon request to be displayed at town events. The quilt won first place at the Sussex County Fair, and it received the Award of Merit from the National Association of Certified Quilt Judges for "Outstanding Achievement in Quilting". Mayor Wronko stated the group did a wonderful job with the quilt and thanked everyone involved for the time and effort put forth

to create it. The quilt will last for a very long time and should be displayed proudly. Ms. Chirip thanked the Mayor and Council.

PRESENTATION

Police Chief Joseph Johnson – Increase of Departmental Personnel – Mayor Wronko asked Police Chief Joseph Johnson to begin his presentation. Chief Johnson stated he distributed a binder of information to the governing body which they can use to follow along with the Power Point presentation. This presentation will demonstrate the need for additional personnel. The department currently has eight (8) officers and is in the process of hiring one (1) with the goal of getting to ten (10). Local Ordinance 37-1 deals with the council and staffing of the Police Department which gives the authority for changes to be made from time to time, which historically has been done. Currently, there is an officer who is over the number of years needed to retire and could retire at any time. If that were to happen, the department would be down to seven (7), including the Chief, and that is not enough to run the department. There is another officer with 23 years of service. In two more years, he will be eligible to retire. With regard to vacation time, the Chief, Sgt. Heater and Patrolman Popelka, receive 24 vacation days per year and 15 sick days. These benefits have been lowered for officers hired after a certain year. There were issues in the past with too many people on vacation or out sick, and not enough officers and that caused everyone to have to work alone. The change helped a little bit but in no way did it fix the issue. The department works 12-hour shifts for a total of 730 shifts in a year. Each officer works an average of 180 shifts. In Stanhope, 80-90 of those shifts are being worked alone. In 2023, there were 328 shifts where one officer worked alone. This caused an overtime amount of approximately \$28,000. Chief Johnson explained that over the past three years there has always been someone working alone. Sometimes their entire two-week pay period was spent working alone. This causes low morale among the officers. Chief Johnson stated he has worked his entire career this way, but policing has changed and we cannot continue to work with only one officer on duty. The only reason this has been working is due to the fantastic employees that we have here. The low morale results when officers cannot take time off and when they are forced to come to work on days when they do not want to be here due to lack of staffing. Chief Johnson has explained this situation to people during interviews, and many have turned down the position because of this. This also makes it difficult to keep employees. Recently an officer left here after a short amount of time to go to a neighboring town with more officers. Overtime costs increase when officers are out sick. Officers get run down when they are having to put in extra hours. Overall, service to the community suffers. The citizens are not getting constant patrols when one officer is tied up on a million other issues.

Chief Johnson stated the neighboring town of Netcong, our sister town, has fifteen (15) officers. Byram has sixteen (16) and Hopatcong has twenty-six (26). Stanhope is constantly leaning on these departments for assistance. We need them to survive, but they do not need us. They are a necessity for us, but we are a luxury for them. The department here has only six steps to get to the top of the pay scale, which has been a positive selling point when hiring. Towns like Netcong have 15 steps. The new generation does not care as much about the money. They care more about being able to work with someone. That is what is important. In 2020 the Attorney General revised the Use of Force Policy. One of those changes was called ABLE, which stands for Active Bystander Law Enforcement. If an officer is out of line with someone, they are interacting with or trying to arrest and they do something that is excessive or illegal, it is up to another officer to step in and stop that from happening. The officers are trained in this at the academy but in Stanhope we cannot adhere to that when officers are working alone. This can cause litigation, discipline or termination if something illegal is done. There are two other Use of Force Policies that were changed and added. Core Principle 2.4 is critical decision making, which specifically deals with the officer being able to use as much time as possible when dealing with emotionally disturbed people. This can take hours. A phone call has to be made to get a screener from mental health to come to the scene to do an evaluation. There are usually family members to deal with. The idea is that the officers should not go hands on to end the situation quickly and risk the person getting aggressive, which can cause injuries and litigation. This ties up a great deal of time and in Stanhope these types of situations are dealt with often. Section 2.5 deals with deescalation and wants the officers to slow down their pace and deal with the instances slowly. In the past, these situations would be handled as quickly as possible due to the fact that no one else was watching the town while the situation was happening. And if the officer has to ride in the ambulance with a person to be transported to the mental health

facility, no one is watching the town. The new procedures are good and they work, but they take a lot of time.

Chief Johnson stated another situation where having two officers is critical is during a call where CPR has to be done. Officer Piedrahita was recently on a call and had to do CPR alone. The patient got to the hospital and had a pulse. Had she not done CPR, he would not have made it to the hospital. This gave the family an opportunity to be able to say goodbye. Unfortunately, he was placed on life support because he did not get enough air to his brain. Having two people present may have helped. CPR is definitely better with two people. When our officer has to leave town to transport a combative person to the hospital or mental health facility, Netcong or Byram are asked to cover for us. They are only covering emergencies that might occur. They are not patrolling the Borough. Any non-emergency calls are put on hold until our officer returns to town. In the case of a DOA or unattended death, the officer is on the scene for a long amount of time. A determination needs to be made as to whether or not there was foul play, the coroner has to be called, the body has to be released to the funeral home, and the officer cannot leave until the funeral home arrives to transport the body. This can take hours. If there is a call from a resident for a lift assist, this usually requires two people. That is another time when we need to call Byram, Netcong or Hopatcong to come and assist us. No other towns call us for these types of issues because they all have enough staff.

Chief Johnson stated the crossing guard coverage has been a huge issue. For quite some time the Borough was short of a crossing guard. This is not an easy position to fill. The locations for the crossing guards have to be covered. When an officer has to fill that position, they cannot leave that post for any reason. The children have to be crossed across the road safely. If the officer were to leave and a child is injured, that would fall on the Borough. We have to rely on neighboring towns to cover any emergency issues that arise during those times when our officer is filling in for the crossing guards. The Borough cannot continually rely on other towns to cover for us. It is not their responsibility. We have a mutual aid agreement, but it only goes so far. Chief Johnson stated two years ago he was on crossing guard coverage, and a call went out for an overdose on the trail. He was unable to respond, and a neighboring town had to handle the case.

Chief Johnson stated in Appendix C there is a copy of a letter, addressed to the governing body, from the prior Police Chief, stating that the department is not properly staffed. This issue is documented as being a problem. Chief Johnson stated this has been going on for his entire career and fixing the issue is long overdue. Motor vehicle accidents are not safe to respond to alone, especially on Brooklyn Road, but our officers do it. There can be injuries, tow trucks, traffic issues, all while trying to gather information. Another town has to be called to control traffic. Chief Johnson stated there are times when officers have to do warrant and arrest pickups. These too have been done alone in the past. Chief Johnson stated he will not allow this to happen. It is incredibly dangerous. If there is a need to transport a prisoner to jail or to the hospital, it is going to be done with another officer. A transport call could come in from anywhere in New Jersey. Chief Johnson stated the officers in the past, even when on duty alone, have been tasked with going door to door to check for dog and cat licenses. In the case of DWI's, these are very time consuming, especially when the box used for testing does not work. When that occurs, after watching the person for twenty minutes, we then have to transport them to another town, watch them again for twenty minutes and then use that town's box. If blood work is required, a warrant has to be obtained from the Prosecutor's Office and then the person has to be transported to the hospital with an officer. This process can take hours and all that time the officer is out of town. Again, Netcong, Byram or Hopatcong is covering the Borough for emergencies only. Chief Johnson stated those towns follow their own training and standards which may or may not align with Stanhope's. The Stanhope Police Department is no longer accredited, but they do follow the accreditation standards.

Chief Johnson stated the department has been burning the candle at both ends for so long that it is amazing nothing bigger has occurred. Building searches are another dangerous issue. At the academy, they call this tombstone courage. The officers are doing it because they do not have the manpower. If there is an open door on the Legion at 3:00am, they are going to check it. No one should be doing this alone. The Attorney General and the Prosecutor's Office are continually changing things which require the officers to learn and take tests. The domestic violence test has 250 questions and approximately 400 slides to

read. This can take hours. And during that time, no one is patrolling the Borough. This is a very frustrating situation which has been going on for too many years. Chief Johnson stated when road closures have to be put in place like what happened here in July when many trees came down during the storm, one officer was on duty. Other towns cannot be called because they are dealing with the same issues in their towns. The officer was running around getting cones trying to shut down roads and while that is happening it is dangerous for the citizens driving on roads with trees down and it is unsafe for the officer to be doing everything alone. Chief Johnson stated he authorized anyone who was available to come in to do so but that increased the overtime costs. Chief Johnson stated an officer never knows what they will encounter at a motor vehicle stop. The stop can escalate to the point of needing a search warrant or a canine unit may be needed. Again, the officer has to stay and wait. There are times when there are multiple people under arrest or someone under arrest and a victim in the next room. If this is a domestic issue, a judge has to be called which leaves the arrestee alone in the room. The DASI response team could be onsite talking with the victim in the next room. Chief Johnson described all the steps required in a domestic situation which can typically take from 4-6 hours, and he provided copies of four reports which document the amount of time spent on these types of calls. When other emergencies occur during this time and Netcong is dispatched, our residents question why a neighboring town is responding when they called for help from Stanhope Police.

Chief Johnson stated there are growing needs within the community. The neighboring towns are growing at a rapid rate. Their staffing has been adjusted according to their populations. Thousands of people are moving into this area which increases the traffic in Stanhope and all the kids and teenagers are walking through here. Stanhope has a development proposed to be built on Sparta Road.

Chief Johnson stated Appendix F covers salary and wages for 2023, 2024 and 2025. The budgeted amount and actual charges are listed and the amounts left over for every category. The balance left over in 2023 was approximately \$43,000. Overtime was budgeted for and what was used is listed with a balance left of \$28,000. The Crossing Guard budget had \$6,000 left over. The overall total was approximately \$78,000. In addition, there was the Safe and Secure Grant for another \$22,000. In 2024, the balance was \$103,000. In addition to the Safe and Secure Grant of \$22,000. In 2025, the balance was \$105,000 plus the Safe and Secure Grant of \$22,000. The incentive for adding an officer would be that this will not increase taxes. It appears that the funds are existing. If an officer is hired at the highest salary at Step 3 that cost would be \$79,000, if this were a transfer. Within the next two years, two of the highest salaries may drop off. One officer has definitely stated he will be retiring. This Police Department is going to be made up of young officers. This can be good and bad. The good is that there will not be any officers at top pay. But the department will lose 50 years of experience. Overtime will be greatly reduced by having four (4) officers on each side. Right now, we only have three (3) officers per side. In December of 2025 there was no overtime, because they had four (4) officers. Overtime costs did increase this year due to the fact that Chief Johnson stated he will not allow the officers to work alone with an arrestee or transporting an arrestee. The department will rely much less on the neighboring towns for mutual aid. The morale of the officers will increase. It is very hard to remain motivated when working alone knowing that no one has your back during a call or a motor vehicle stop. This will increase community policing, which is important. Chief Johnson stated he wants to get more involved with the community but currently there is not enough staffing to do so. Something as simple as "Coffee with a Cop" cannot happen when there is only one officer on duty. There is a Ride Along Program for the Elderly which Chief Johnson would like to implement, but the manpower is needed to do this. Having the extra officer will also help the Borough to adhere to the Attorney General guidelines. There will still be times when an officer is working alone but the occurrences will be greatly reduced. With four (4) on each side and the Detective, officers can be moved around if necessary. The department will be more efficient in deterring crime by having more than one car on patrol. Having more officers will lead to more quality candidates when promotions are available. The department will have the best of the best. Supervisors will be able to do the job as they are supposed to and work with the officers to share their knowledge and experience. Chief Johnson stated he has had to delegate things to the Supervisors because he has so much on his list right now. The Supervisors wear many hats which is unfair and they are often stuck at their desks. They do their best, and they do a great job, but they should be out supervising the officers.

In closing, Chief Johnson stated he was sworn in as Chief in March this year to oversee the department and to protect the citizens of the Borough, which he is doing to the best of his ability. Adding an officer will go a long way to help the department to do this better. We cannot continue on this path, which is not fair to the officers, and it is not safe for them. This is not fair to the citizens of the community either. We have been lucky so far that nothing bad has happened and this is due to the fact that the officers work well and they work hard. They do more than they should have to. It is a credit to the officers who are fantastic workers and Chief Johnson stated he is glad to be leading them. Chief Johnson stated the officers are present here tonight on their own accord. Chief Johnson did not ask them to attend the meeting. This shows how dedicated they are to their job, to this agency and to the Borough. They actually care. Chief Johnson stated the governing body members have stated their verbal support in the past that they are in support of the job he is doing and he is appreciative of the support. This is an opportunity for the governing body to take action on this, by supporting this request, and supporting the officers.

Mayor Wronko thanked Chief Johnson for his presentation this evening and stated that he did a great job articulating the pros and cons. Mayor Wronko also thanked Chief Johnson and all the Police Officers for the great job that they do. Mayor Wronko asked Administrator McNeilly, based on the financial information provided by the Chief, are there funds available to accommodate this request this year. Administrator McNeilly stated he does not have any figures in front of him at this time, but there is a certain amount of funding budgeted based on staffing. In 2025, there was a high-end retirement and in 2026 the department has been down an officer for the past nine months. Therefore, the numbers may look different than how they present. The Chief stated a new hire may come in at a step 3 salary. However, the fringe benefit amount comes in at 35% over. So, the \$78,000 is \$105,000. There are also uniforms and other items to be considered. Mayor Wronko asked Administrator McNeilly if he could calculate the costs for the next meeting. Administrator McNeilly confirmed he will do this and stated this is going to be a budgetary question to be discussed between now and the spring. There is not enough funding to implement this now. Administrator McNeilly stated he will calculate the cost of hiring a step 3 officer for the next meeting.

Councilman Wachterhauser stated the Police Department is currently down one officer. They are allocated for 9 officers and there are only 8 officers currently and we are already into October. Councilman Wachterhauser stated perhaps, based on the numbers, the budgeting can be done to allocate this at the first of the new year. Councilman Wachterhauser stated that Chief Johnson's presentation here tonight and the one he gave at the Public Safety Committee Meeting were both great. The points made are valid and need to be addressed. Adding an officer would address those points. Councilman Wachterhauser stated that he is of the opinion that Chief Johnson's request to add another person to the Police Department is correct and that it would meet the requirements moving forward for the Borough. Mayor Wronko stated he agreed and he wants to see what can be done. Mayor Wronko asked if there were any questions for Chief Johnson.

Councilman Riccardi stated just the fact that the department cannot follow the Attorney General's guidelines for the Police Department means that the Borough has to do this. We need the officer to be able to adhere to the guidelines and to make sure that our officers are safe and cared for. We do not want to lose any of our officers. We need to do everything we can to get those numbers to work for the next budget. Mayor Wronko agreed and thanked Chief Johnson for his presentation. Chief Johnson thanked the Mayor and Council members.

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.

Mark Forder stated he has been a resident for over thirty years. There is an issue currently occurring on Dell Road and some other issues that came up during the paving. Just recently, Verizon installed a hub across the street from his home, on someone else's property, and in his opinion the hub is larger than it should be, and it is lower than it should be. Mr. Forder stated he spoke with one of the Verizon employees who told him that the hub will get a lot of activity due to the fact that it will be used to connect and disconnect every client of theirs for all of Dell Road

and the condominiums. There is an issue with people speeding on the road and there is no control of that. The speed bumps help but with the repaving, the speed bumps seem to be different now. The elevation of the bumps is lower. Mr. Forder stated he did not see anyone from the town present to make sure the speed bumps were installed properly. And, when the gas company paved, they did not infrared seal the two areas together. Over time, water is going to get in and that will break them up causing more problems. Mr. Forder stated he compiled a list of all the code requirements for the town, the county, the state and the federal government. In Mr. Forder's opinion, the town is responsible for code violations with regard to the box and the road issues. There is pavement sitting on top of the Belgian Block that was never cleaned up. There are issues with some of the drains and some of the manholes are covered with pavement. Mr. Forder asked who he should give the codes he compiled to. Mayor Wronko asked Administrator McNeilly if the Code Enforcement Officer would be able to speak with Mr. Forder. Administrator McNeilly stated that the specificity that Mr. Forder is looking for would need direction from the governing body to remove other responsibilities from an employee in order for him to focus entirely on the list of items which Mr. Forder has in his hand. Mayor Wronko stated he understands there are resource shortages. However, if there are zoning concerns, they cannot be ignored because we do not have the people to review them. If it takes a longer period of time to do, it is worth the time to explore it. Administrator McNeilly stated the box in question had already been brought to the Borough's attention and this is being looked into by the Borough Engineer, due to the fact this is a traffic safety issue. Administrator McNeilly stated, with the governing body's approval, the Borough Engineer can be asked to look at the other items if they relate to traffic safety. Mayor Wronko stated he is of the opinion that if a concern is brought to the attention of the governing body, the issue has to be looked into from a liability standpoint. But, to Administrator McNeilly's point, the Borough is small and resources are limited. The concerns will have to be prioritized as best as possible.

Councilman Wachterhauser asked if the Verizon Hub box is located on a pole or on the ground. Mr. Forder replied the box is on a pole, and it is 2-3 feet off the ground, is 35" tall, and it is 2' wide. The ordinance basically states it cannot be bigger than a foot and a half, or so. Councilman Wachterhauser stated that Optimum installed a box at the beginning of Musconetcong Avenue. Councilman Wachterhauser stated he agrees with Mayor Wronko with regard to having the issue looked into and the pavement issue should be addressed as well by the Engineer as long as he will be at that location. Councilman Smith asked if the height of the speed humps should also be looked at. Administrator McNeilly stated the governing body can ask the Engineer to look at everything all at one time. Councilman Wachterhauser asked if the Borough is now responsible for the pavement that was put down by the gas company. Residents have asked to have gas lines run in the Borough for many years, but the gas company would not agree to repave entire streets. The compromise, in order to get gas lines, was that the gas company would only repave what they cut into. The Borough Engineer can examine the paving and provide his comment on the condition of the work that was done. Mr. Forder stated the speed bumps are the main issue. Drivers are crossing over the yellow line to come up the bend. Councilman Wachterhauser stated that regardless of the number of speed bumps or police presence, people will continue to speed. Councilman Riccardi stated he is of the opinion that the Borough Engineer should review Mr. Forder's list and Mr. Forder needs to be aware that not everything on that list is going to be covered. Administrator McNeilly stated, relative to the Verizon box, the resident of the property where the box is located sent a well detailed email. Administrator McNeilly located the Borough's government relations person, and he has asked to be updated with any new information. The Borough Engineer can provide his comments and then assistance can be provided by government relations as well. Mr. Forder stated he submitted two cases to Verizon. The first one was dismissed immediately by saying a representative drove by and stated the box is staying where it is. The second case was dismissed based on the result of the first case. The hub box is an issue. There will be trucks sitting there for long periods of time, this is a noise issue and a safety issue. The hub is located on the property line of #22 and #24 Dell Road.

Councilman Thornton stated he discussed the paving issue at the last meeting. At that time, he was told that the DPW Superintendent, the Borough Engineer and the Administrator had all inspected the paving which was done and that it was all satisfactory. Councilman Thornton stated now that is all going to be done again. Administrator McNeilly stated those were observations but now something will be prepared in writing. Councilman Thornton asked the Borough Attorney what the gas company's liability is with regard to Mr. Forder's concerns about the paving job. Attorney Ursula Leo stated if the Borough Engineer finds the work to be unsatisfactory, he would follow up with the utility company, and the second avenue would be to contact the BPU. The Borough Engineer has to be the first step because it is their professional

opinion which matters as to whether it is sufficient or not. Councilman Thornton asked what happens if the paving fails years from now. When the Borough paves, testing is done to check the compaction. The gas company is not doing this. Administrator McNeilly stated the Borough has received a performance bond and a maintenance bond for the work which was done. The maintenance bond covers a two-year period. The paving which was done on Main Street, Kelly Place and Furnace Street was done three years ago. After two years the Borough has no recourse to go back after any contractor for our own jobs or grant projects. The core borings which the Borough has done on certain jobs only indicates whether the compacting was done correctly or not. In the past there was a road that failed and that only led to penalizing the contractor monetarily. Dell Road most likely was compacted immediately. The roller went over it right away and the road was being used shortly after. The quality of the other roads in the Borough which were paved the same way, such as Kelly Place, Furnace Street and Linden Avenue, are all in good condition. Mayor Wronko stated roads have been half lane paved all across Sussex County. Mr. Forder stated he spoke with one of the men working on the paving crew and he had said that the company did not have enough workers the day of the paving and that they had to call in other people. Administrator McNeilly stated the Borough was aware of that, and it was the owner of the company that was running the paving machine that day. So, it was the “A” team that was called in, not the “B” team. The job was done well. The engineer will take a look at it. Councilman Wachterhauser stated Mr. Forder’s neighborhood still has to have the speed bumps and one ways painted. Administrator McNeilly stated that work will be done with the epoxy mat by a different company. Mr. Forder thanked the governing body for their time.

Nicole Member stated she supports the Police Department’s request for an additional officer as she is of the opinion this would be beneficial. Ms. Member stated there is a lot listed on the agenda this evening that will be auctioned off and she asked if donating the land to Habitat for Humanity was an option. This could increase the affordable housing and help the Borough meet their COAH numbers. Administrator McNeilly stated the lot in question has been offered for auction three other times with no results. The land is on the side of a hill and will not perc. It is not a buildable lot. It meets the spirit of the code but not for development. When donations were made in the past, if this were viable, it would have been considered. There is a lot on Main Street which could be an option. Ms. Member stated with regard to the ordinance regarding the trees, she asked if something could be placed in the ordinance to prevent the clear cutting like what was done in Mt. Olive along Continental Drive. Administrator McNeilly stated the ordinance does take that into account. Councilman Wachterhauser stated the ordinance is state mandated, and the governing body has reviewed and amended it. It is now ready for adoption.

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

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

Mayor Wronko read aloud the list of minutes being presented for approval:

August 11, 2026	Work Session & Agenda Meeting
August 25, 2026	Business Meeting

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Simpson and carried by a majority voice vote, the minutes were approved. Councilmen Wachterhauser, Smith and Riccardi abstained from the August 11th minutes.

CORRESPONDENCE *(List Attached)*

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Riccardi and unanimously carried by voice vote, the list of correspondence was accepted and ordered placed on file.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

On motion by Councilman Riccardi, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried by voice vote, the Council Committee Reports were waived.

Public Safety – Councilman Wachterhauser/Councilman Riccardi
(Police, Fire, Ambulance, Court & Violations Bureau, Emergency Management)

Finance & Administration – Councilman Romano/Councilman Thornton

Community Development – Councilman Smith/Councilman Simpson

Municipal Infrastructure – Councilman Thornton/Councilman Romano

(Water Distribution, Sewer Collection System, Road Construction & Maintenance, Buildings & Grounds)

Information Technology – Councilman Riccardi/Councilman Wachterhauser

Boards/Commissions – Councilman Simpson/Councilman Smith

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Hydrant Flushing – Administrator McNeilly stated that the DPW has completed the hydrant flushing.

Brush Pick-up – Administrator McNeilly stated that the townwide brush pick-up has been completed. The next pick-up will be done the first week of May 2027 and leaf pick-up will begin on October 13th.

2026 Best Practices Survey – Administrator McNeilly stated the Best Practice Survey has not been received to date. When it is received, Administrator McNeilly will work with the CFO to complete the survey. If all goes according to the State’s usual plan, the Best Practice Survey will have to be discussed at the Mayor and Council meeting scheduled for October 27th to be able to comply with the due date of October 31st. Administrator McNeilly stated he will distribute the survey to the governing body as quickly as possible for their review.

3 Hickory Drive – Administrator McNeilly stated the owners of 3 Hickory Drive have requested to purchase property from the Borough’s right of way. As previously discussed, prior to the sale of the property, a survey needs to be conducted. Eric Keller, Borough Engineer, has provided a scope of work with a cost of \$6,100. This cost will be provided to the property owner, and they will need to provide escrow for the work to be done. Once the survey is complete, Attorney Leo will prepare the documents for the sale.

NJ Safe Routes to School – Administrator McNeilly stated he is working on the Stanhope Pedestrian Loop Phase III – Neighborhood Connection Project to submit for the NJ Safe Routes to School Grant. The Borough is teaming up with the Stanhope School Board to prepare the documents for submission. A resolution of support will be on the October 13th meeting agenda. Resolutions will be sent to the school board. They will be looking for additional letters of support from some former elected officials as well as the Home and School President. On one section of the deck, approximately halfway through, it will be expanded from six feet to twelve feet or more and angled to provide benches. This will provide a recreational element and perhaps in the future someone could add a bird blind to the front of it facing toward the 18 acres. This would be right along the edge of the wetland’s delineation. This could also allow for additional projects through the marsh area. The walkway will be lit similar to the lighting used on the trail behind Highpoint. The poles will be short but they have to be up above the ground. The pre-application meeting will be held next Wednesday.

Stormwater Annual Training – Administrator McNeilly stated the annual Stormwater Training will be done online this year through the NJDEP site. The program can be viewed by the governing body members on their own schedule and once viewed, they will need to inform the Administrator. Administrator McNeilly will then let the Stormwater Management Coordinator know when the training is complete.

Budget 2027 Timeline – Administrator McNeilly stated the 2027 Budget Timeline is as follows: 2027 Budget and Capital memos have been distributed; Budget and Capital Requests will be presented to the governing body on October 16th; the proposed 2027 budget discussion will take place at the November 10th Work Session Meeting; and the Tax Assessor and the Borough Auditor will make their presentations on December 8th.

Overgrowth/Site Distance Issues - Councilman Thornton stated years ago he brought up the subject of overgrowth impeding the site lines at Grove Road. There are new owners at the corner

of Bell Street and Bedford Avenue and the overgrowth there is getting further out into the street. Administrator McNeilly stated a letter has been sent to the homeowner on the East side of Grove Road and Brooklyn Road and to the owner of the corner of Bell Street and Bedford Avenue. Some activity should take place at both locations soon.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Ordinance Prohibiting Data Centers – Mayor Wronko stated the definition for a data center was discussed at a previous meeting and it was agreed that a more specific definition was needed to define a data center. Attorney Leo stated that Councilman Riccardi had forwarded some comments to her which has been incorporated into the ordinance. Mayor Wronko asked the governing body if there were any additional questions. There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinances for Public Hearing and Final Adoption

Mayor Wronko offered the following ordinances for public hearing and final adoption which were read by title.

Ordinance 2026-13

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOROUGH OF STANHOPE, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY ADOPTING A NEW CHAPTER 131, TREE REMOVAL-REPLACEMENT

WHEREAS, all municipalities with a Tier 1 MS4 stormwater permit are required to adopt and enforce an ordinance to control tree removal and replacement to reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants, and to promote infiltration of rainwater into the soil; and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance is drafted in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection-issued model ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, Sussex County, New Jersey, that a new Chapter 131, Tree Removal-Replacement, shall be adopted as follows:

SECTION 1. A new Stanhope Code Chapter 131, Tree Removal-Replacement, shall be adopted as follows:

Chapter 131 - Tree Removal-Replacement

131-1 Purpose.

The purpose of this Chapter is to establish requirements for tree removal and replacement in the Borough of Stanhope to reduce soil erosion and pollutant runoff, promote infiltration of rainwater into the soil, and protect the environment, public health, safety, and welfare.

131-2 Definitions.

For the purpose of this Chapter, the following terms, phrases, words, and their derivations shall have the meanings stated herein unless their use in the text of this Chapter clearly demonstrates a different meaning. When consistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future, words used in the plural number include the singular number, and words used in the singular number include the plural number. The use of the word “shall” means the requirement is always mandatory and not merely directory.

A. “Applicant” means any “person”, as defined below, who applies for approval to remove trees regulated under this ordinance.

B. “Critical Root Radius (CRR)” – means the zone around the base of a tree where the majority of the root system is found. This zone is calculated by multiplying the diameter at breast height (DBH) of the tree by 1.5 feet. For example: a tree with a 6” DBH would have a CRR = 6”x1.5’ = 9’.

C. “Diameter at Breast Height (DBH)” means the diameter of the trunk of a mature tree generally measured at a point four and a half feet above ground level from the uphill

side of the tree. For species of trees where the main trunk divides below the 4 ½ foot height, the DBH shall be measured at the highest point before any division.

D. “Hazard Tree” means a tree or limbs thereof that meet one or more of the criteria below. Trees that do not meet any of the criteria below and are proposed to be removed solely for development purposes are not hazard trees.

1. Has an infectious disease or insect infestation;
2. Is dead or dying;
3. Obstructs the view of traffic signs or the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles, where pruning attempts have not been effective;
4. Is causing obvious damage to structures (such as building foundations, sidewalks, etc.); or
5. Is determined to be a threat to public health, safety, and/or welfare by a certified arborist or Licensed Tree Expert (LTE).

E. “Person” means any individual, resident, corporation, utility, company, partnership, firm, or association.

F. “Planting strip” means the part of a street right-of-way between the public right-of-way and the portion of the street reserved for vehicular traffic or between the abutting property line and the curb or traveled portion of the street, exclusive of any sidewalk.

G. “Resident” means an individual who resides on the residential property or contractor hired by the individual who resides on the residential property where a tree(s) regulated by this ordinance is removed or proposed to be removed.

H. “Street Tree” means a tree planted in the sidewalk, planting strip, and/or in the public right-of-way adjacent to the portion of the street reserved for vehicular traffic. This also includes trees planted in planting strips within the roadway right-of-way, i.e., islands, medians, pedestrian refuges.

I. “Tree” means a woody perennial plant, typically having a single stem or trunk growing to a considerable height and bearing lateral branches at some distance from the ground.

J. “Tree Caliper” means the diameter of the trunk of a young tree, measured six (6) inches from the soil line. For young trees whose caliper exceeds four (4) inches, the measurement is taken twelve (12) inches above the soil line.

K. “Tree removal” means to kill or to cause irreparable damage that leads to the decline and/or death of a tree. This includes, but is not limited to, excessive pruning, application of substances that are toxic to the tree, over-mulching or improper mulching, and improper grading and/or soil compaction within the critical root radius around the base of the tree that leads to the decline and/or death of a tree. Removal does not include responsible pruning and maintenance of a tree, or the application of treatments intended to manage invasive species.

131-3 Regulated Activities.

A. Application Process:

1. Any person planning to remove a street tree, as defined as Tree removal, with DBH of 2.5” or more or any non-street tree with DBH of 6” or more on their property shall submit a Tree Removal Application to the Shade Tree Commission. No tree shall be removed until the Shade Tree Commission has reviewed and approved the removal. An application fee of \$25 shall be paid.

B. Tree Replacement Requirements

- 1. Any person who removes one or more street tree(s) with a DBH of 2.5” or more, unless exempt per Section 131-4, shall be subject to the requirements of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table below.
- 2. Any person, who removes one or more tree(s), as defined as Tree removal, with a DBH of 6” or more, unless otherwise exempt, shall be subject to the requirements of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table.

Replacement tree(s) shall:

- 1. Be replaced in kind with a tree that has an equal or greater DBH than tree removed or meet the Tree Replacement Criteria in the table below;
- 2. Be planted within twelve (12) months of the date of removal of the original tree(s) or at an alternative date specified by the municipality;
- 3. Be monitored by the applicant for a period of two (2) years to ensure their survival and shall be replaced as needed within twelve (12) months; and
- 4. Shall not be planted in temporary containers or pots, as these do not count towards tree replacement requirements.

Tree Replacement Requirements Table:

Categor y	Tree Removed (DBH)	Tree Replacement Criteria (See Appendix A)
1	DBH of 2.5” (for street trees) or 6” (for non-street trees) to 12.99”	Replant 1 tree with a minimum tree caliper of 1.5” for each tree removed
2	DBH of 13” to 22.99”	Replant 2 trees with minimum tree caliper of 1.5” for each tree removed
3	DBH of 23” to 32.99”	Replant 3 trees with minimum tree caliper of 1.5” for each tree removed
4	DBH of 33” or greater	Replant 4 trees with minimum tree caliper of 1.5” for each tree removed

C. Replacement Alternatives:

- 1. If the Shade Tree Commission and/or Zoning Officer determines that some or all required replacement trees cannot be planted on the property where the tree removal activity occurred, as proven by photos or a written submission by a NJ license tree expert or arborist, then the applicant shall do one of the following:
 - a. Plant replacement trees in a separate area(s) approved by the municipality.
 - b. Pay a fee of two hundred (\$200) dollars per tree removed. This fee shall be placed into a fund dedicated to tree planting and continued maintenance of the trees.

131-4 Exemptions.

All persons shall comply with the tree replacement standard outlined above, except in the cases detailed below. Proper justification shall be provided, in writing, to the municipality by all persons claiming an exemption as proven by photos or a written submission by a NJ license tree expert or arborist:

- A. Residents who remove less than four (4) trees per acre that fall into category 1, 2, or 3 of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table within a five-year period. [The number of trees removed is a rolling count across a five-year period. For example, if 3 trees from category 1 are removed in July 2023, the 'count' resets to zero in July 2028. However, if 1 tree from category 1 is removed in July 2023 and another in July of 2025 the first tree will come off the count in July 2028 and the second in July 2030.]
- B. Tree farms in active operation, nurseries, fruit orchards, and garden centers;
- C. Properties used for the practice of silviculture under an approved forest stewardship or woodland management plan that is active and on file with the municipality;
- D. Any trees removed as part of a municipal or state decommissioning plan. This exemption only includes trees planted as part of the construction and predetermined to be removed in the decommissioning plan.
- E. Any trees removed pursuant to a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved environmental clean-up, or NJDEP approved habitat enhancement plan;
- F. Approved game management practices, as recommended by the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife; and
- G. Hazard trees may be removed with no fee or replacement requirement.

131-5 Enforcement.

This Chapter shall be enforced by the Code Enforcement Officer during the course of ordinary enforcement duties.

131-6 Violations and Penalties.

Any person(s) who is found to be in violation of the provisions of this Chapter shall have seventy-two (72) hours to complete corrective action. Repeat violations and/or failure to complete corrective action shall result in daily fines not exceeding \$1,000 per day, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 90 days or a period of community service not exceeding 90 days, or any combination thereof.

SECTION 2 - SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this Ordinance or the application of this Ordinance to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this Ordinance shall not be affected and shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 3 - REPEALER

All ordinances or parts of ordinances or resolutions that are inconsistent or in opposition to the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed in their entirety.

SECTION 4- EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption and publication in accordance with law.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Riccardi and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing ordinance was adopted.

Mayor Wronko opened the meeting to the public for questions or comments on this ordinance only. Seeing no one from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Wronko closed the public portion of the meeting.

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes	Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Romano – yes	Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Simpson – yes	Councilman Wachterhauser - abstain

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Simpson, and unanimously carried by voice vote, the Mayor and Council instructed the Clerk to post the ordinance and authorized publication of same.

Ordinance 2026-16

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE PUBLIC SALE OF REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT BLOCK 10314, LOT 2, IN THE BOROUGH OF STANHOPE, PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40A:12-13(a)

WHEREAS, the Borough of Stanhope is the owner of the property located at Block 10314, Lot 2, Leo Avenue, Stanhope, New Jersey, which land is not needed or required for municipal use; and

WHEREAS, the lot meets the minimum size required for development under the municipal ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council deems it in the best interest of the Borough of Stanhope to sell the property at public auction, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:12-13 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the sale shall be conducted as an auction to the highest bidder, after advertisement, with such auction to be held at the Stanhope Borough Municipal Building, 77 Main Street, Stanhope, New Jersey 07874 on October 27, 2026 at 7:00pm, or such adjourned date, as may be determined by the Mayor and Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, as follows:

- A. The Borough of Stanhope shall offer for sale by auction, pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:12-13(a), et seq., the property located at Block 10314, Lot 2, Leo Avenue, with a minimum sale price of \$8,500.00. The Mayor and Council reserves the right, in its discretion, to reject all bids for the property for any reason, including but not limited to, in the event that the minimum sale price for the property is not met.
- B. Upon final passage of this Ordinance, the sale shall take place on October 27, 2026 at 7:00 pm at the Stanhope Borough Municipal Building, 77 Main Street, Stanhope, New Jersey 07874, after offering same to the highest bidder, at said time and place.
- C. A copy of this Ordinance shall be posted on the bulletin board or other conspicuous place in the Stanhope Borough Municipal Building. Notice of adoption of this Ordinance shall be made in the official Borough newspaper within five (5) days following the enactment of the Ordinance. Notice of the public sale shall be published in the official Borough newspaper by two (2) insertions at least once a week during two (2) consecutive weeks, the last publication shall be within seven (7) days prior to the sale date.
- D. The property shall be sold subject to the following terms and conditions:
 - (a) The property is sold "as is". No representations of any kind are made by the Township as to the conditions of the property, and the descriptions of the property are intended as a general guide only and may not be accurate. The properties are being sold in the present "as is", "where is", with all faults.
 - (b) The sale shall be made after legal advertisement of this Ordinance to the highest bidder.
 - (c) Should the highest bidder own property adjacent to this property, Block 10314, Lot 2, Leo Avenue, this property shall be merged with the adjacently-owned property or properties.
 - (d) The Borough does not warrant or certify title to the property and in no event shall the Borough of Stanhope be liable for any damages to the purchaser-successful bidder if title is found unmarketable for any reason and the purchaser-successful bidder waives any and all right in damages or by way of liens against the Borough. The sole remedy being the right to receive a refund prior to closing of the deposit paid in the event title is found unmarketable. It

shall be the obligation of the successful purchaser to examine title to said premises prior to the closing. In the event of closing and a later finding of defect of title, the Borough shall not be responsible for same, shall not be required to refund money or correct any defect in title or be held liable for damages.

(e) Acceptance of the highest bid shall constitute a binding agreement of sale, and the purchaser shall be deemed to agree to comply with the terms and conditions of the sale herein contained.

(f) The highest bidder shall deposit with the Borough either cash, check or money order in the amount of not less than 10% of the bid price at the time of sale. In the event the successful bidder fails to deposit 10% of the bid price at the time of the sale, the Borough of Stanhope will re-auction the property at the same public sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the deposit, the bidder shall be responsible for any difference between their bid and the final sale bid in the event such bid is lower than the bid of the original bidder.

(g) The highest bidder must pay the balance of the purchase price, plus (1) the sum of \$750.00 for the legal services incurred by the Borough; (2) the Borough of Stanhope's advertising and the actual recording fees within thirty (30) days after the date the Mayor and Council adopts a resolution confirming the winning bid(s); (3) all costs and expenses for the sale including, but not limited to, the appraisal costs incurred by the Borough; and (4) realty transfer fees, if any. The balance shall be paid by certified funds. Once the purchase price has been paid, a Quitclaim Deed without covenants will be prepared by the Borough Attorney and, after execution by the Mayor, shall be recorded with the Sussex County Clerk's Office by the Borough Attorney. Additional work performed by the Borough Attorney beyond the standard preparation of the sale resolutions, notice of sale, letters to property owners and adjoining property owners, Deed and closing statement, shall be billed at the rate charged by the Borough Attorney and shall be the responsibility of the purchaser, which fees must be paid prior to the Deed being recorded

(h) The Deed will be subject to all matters of record, which may affect title herein, what an accurate survey may reveal, the Ordinances of the Borough of Stanhope and reserving an easement for all natural or constructed drainage systems, waterways, water and sewer easements, if any, on the premises and the continued right of maintenance and flow thereof.

Potential Bidders are advised:

(1) To conduct all necessary title searches prior to the date of sale.

(2) No representations of any kind are made by the Borough of Stanhope as to the conditions of the Property, including habitability or usability; the Property is being sold in its present conditions "as is".

(3) The property will be conveyed by a Quit Claim Deed and such conveyance shall be subject to all covenants, restrictions, reservations and easements established of record or by prescription and without representation as to character of title of the Property to be conveyed.

(4) The highest bidder for the Property shall have the rights, at its sole cost and expense, to obtain a new survey of the Property. Provided such survey depicts the Property and is certified to be correct to the Borough of Stanhope, the Borough of Stanhope shall utilize the legal description drawn in accordance with such survey in the Deed of conveyance, provided the highest bidder provides such legal description and a copy of the certified survey to the Borough of Stanhope not less than one week prior to the date set for closing of title.

Additional terms the successful bidder must comply with:

(1) To abide by appropriate zoning, subdivision, health and building regulations and codes and stipulate that this sale will not be used as grounds to support any variance from the regulations.

(2) That the failure to close title as agreed shall forfeit to the Borough of Stanhope any and all money deposited with the Borough.

- (i) The property will be sold subject to the current year taxes, prorated from the date of sale.
- (j) The Mayor and Council reserves the right to withdraw this offer to sell, or upon completion of the bidding to accept or reject any or all bids for said properties or to waive any informality in relation thereto.
- (k) All bidders currently owning property within the Borough must have their taxes, as well as all municipal utility charges, if applicable, paid to date in order to be a qualified bidder. In the event the bidder's taxes or municipal utility charges are delinquent, the bidder shall be deemed unqualified and such bid shall be rejected.
- (l) The same is made subject to all applicable laws, statutes, regulations, resolutions and ordinances of the United States, State of New Jersey and Borough of Stanhope.
- (m) No employee, agent or officer of the Borough of Stanhope has any authority to waive, modify or amend any of the conditions of sale.
- (n) The purchaser must abide by appropriate zoning, subdivision, health and building regulations and code, and agrees that this sale will not be used as ground to support any variance from or realization of the regulations.
- (o) The failure of the purchaser to close on title within sixty (60) days of the Borough's award of the bid shall constitute a breach of this Ordinance unless the Borough agrees in writing prior to that date to extend the time of the closing. In the event the purchaser fails to close within 60 days, or such date as may be extended by the Borough, the deposit paid by the purchaser shall be retained by the Borough as liquidated damages. The municipality is entitled to retain the purchaser's deposit to the extent of any expenses and/or losses it incurs including but not limited to advertising costs, attorney's fees, lost tax revenues from the date of the required closing as well as additional cost of resale and the difference in the sales price, to the extent the property is sold for a lower price and any subsequent sale. The only exception to this section is in the event that the purchaser fails to close as a result of the title being unmarketable, in which case the Purchaser shall be entitled to a refund of their deposit.
- (p) The purchase shall not be used for any County, Board of Taxation, Tax Court of New Jersey, or in any Courts of the State as grounds to support a challenge of the existing assessments with regard to other properties.
- (q) The sale shall be subject to final approval by the Mayor and Council.

5. **Severability.** If any provision of this Ordinance or the application of this Ordinance to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this Ordinance shall not be affected and shall remain in full force and effect.

6. **Repealer.** All ordinances or parts of ordinances or resolutions that are inconsistent or in opposition to the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed in their entirety.

7. **Effective Date.** This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption and publication in accordance with law.

On motion by Councilman Wachterhauser, seconded by Councilman Thornton and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing ordinance was adopted.

Mayor Wronko opened the meeting to the public for questions or comments on this ordinance only. Seeing no one from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Wronko closed the public portion of the meeting.

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes	Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Romano – yes	Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Simpson – yes	Councilman Wachterhauser - yes

On motion by Councilman Riccardi, seconded by Councilman Wachterhauser, and unanimously carried by voice vote, the Mayor and Council instructed the Clerk to post the ordinance and authorized publication of same.

Administrator McNeilly asked for the date of the sale. Ellen Horak, Borough Clerk, stated the sale is October 27th.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

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

Resolution 130-26

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING LAKESIDE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC. TO INSTALL SPEED HUMPS ALONG NEW STREET

WHEREAS, the Borough, through the Borough Engineer, solicited quotes for the installation of speed humps on New Street, which process is within the bid threshold that permits the Borough's Qualified Purchasing Agent to process the bids without an open public bid process; and

WHEREAS, Lakeside Construction Company, Inc. submitted the lowest quote of \$19,344.87; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Engineer recommends awarding the contract to Lakeside Construction Company, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Borough of Stanhope to award a contract for the installation of speed humps on New Street to Lakeside Construction Company, Inc., pursuant to the quote received; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed and approved of the award to Lakeside Construction Company, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope that the installation of speed humps on New Street shall be awarded to Lakeside Construction in the amount of \$19,344.87.

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

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes
Councilman Romano – yes
Councilman Simpson – yes

Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Wachterhauser – yes

Resolution 131-26

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE USE OF KEY TECH LABORATORIES FOR NEW STREET CONCRETE CORE SAMPLING AND TESTING FOR THE PAVING OF NEW STREET

WHEREAS, the Borough of Stanhope is in need of bituminous concrete core sampling and testing for the paving of New Street (the "Project");

WHEREAS, the Borough applied for and received a Local Aid Grant from the New Jersey Department of Transportation related to this Project; and

WHEREAS, Key Tech Laboratories has submitted a proposal dated August 31, 2026, for bituminous concrete core sampling and testing for the paving of New Street for \$2,610.00; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Engineer has recommended the use of Key Tech Laboratories for this testing for the "Project"; and

WHEREAS, the Borough awards the bituminous concrete core sampling and testing for the paving of New Street to Key Tech Laboratories for the total amount of \$2,610.00 subject to the approval of the New Jersey Department of Transportation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, that the Borough shall utilize Key Tech Laboratories for bituminous concrete core sampling and testing for the paving of New Street as part of the Local Aid Project in the amount of \$2,610.00, as set forth in the attached proposal.

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

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes	Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Romano – yes	Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Simpson – 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.)

Resolution 132-26

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING RENEWAL
OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE MORRIS COUNTY
MUNICIPAL JOINT INSURANCE FUND**

WHEREAS, the Borough of Stanhope is a member of the Morris County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund; and

WHEREAS, said renewed membership terminates as of December 31, 2026 unless earlier renewed by agreement between the Municipality and the Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Municipality desires to renew said membership;

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved as follows:

1. The Borough of Stanhope agrees to renew its membership in the Morris County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund and to be subject to the Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, coverages, and operating procedures thereof as presently existing or as modified from time to time by lawful act of the Fund.
2. The Mayor and Clerk shall be and hereby are authorized to execute the agreement to renew membership annexed hereto and made a part hereof and to deliver same to the Morris County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund evidencing the Municipality's intention to renew its membership.

Resolution 133-26

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING 100% DISABLED
VETERAN BLOCK 11009, LOT 9 REFUND OF TAXES PAID
FOR 3rd QUARTER 2026**

WHEREAS, Mr. Nicholas J. Sisto, Jr., lawful owner of Block 11009, Lot 9, commonly referred to as 47-49 Brooklyn Rd, has been deemed 100% disabled by the Veteran's Administration; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Nicholas J. Sisto, Jr., has been approved by the Tax Assessor for a 100% Disabled Veteran exemption in accordance with 54:4-3:30, which has been granted on August 11, 2026 via Resolution No. 121-26; and

WHEREAS, the 3rd quarter 2026 real estate taxes were paid in the amount of \$2,577.29 on August 24, 2026 by Cotality on behalf of Mr. Nicholas J. Sisto, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector has determined that the property taxes are paid, and a partial refund is due in the amount of \$2,353.18 which represents the exempt balance of 3rd quarter 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Stanhope, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, that the Chief Financial Officer is authorized to refund said amount paid of \$2,353.18 to Mr. Nicholas J. Sisto, Jr., 47-49 Brooklyn Rd, Stanhope, NJ, 07874; and

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

Resolution 134-26

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING STANHOPE BOROUGH TO ACCEPT A GRANT FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY, OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$22,575.00 UNDER THE 2026 SAFE AND SECURE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM, SUBAWARD GRANT NUMBER 26-1919

BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, in the County of Sussex, State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The Borough of Stanhope is authorized to accept a subaward grant from the State of New Jersey, Department of Law and Safety, Office of the Attorney General, in the amount of \$22,575.00, under the Safe and Secure Communities Program, Grant No. 26-1919, with a Match-Local Salary & Wages of \$79,141.00 and Match-Fringe Benefits of \$44,882.34, for a total project cost of \$124,023.34.

2. Mayor Eugene Wronko and Chief Joseph Johnson are authorized to execute and the Borough Clerk to attest to a Subgrant Award in connection with this grant, and any and all documents in connection with this grant.

3. The Borough of Stanhope is accepting this grant of funds for the purpose described in the application.

4. Subaward Period: January 16, 2026 to January 15, 2027.

5. A certified copy of this resolution shall be provided by the Office of the Borough Clerk to each of the following:

- a) Mayor Eugene Wronko
- b) Borough Council
- c) Brian McNeilly, Borough Administrator
- d) Ursula H. Leo, Esq., Borough Attorney
- e) Angelica Sabatini, CFO
- f) Police Department: Chief Joseph Johnson
- g) State of New Jersey, Office of Attorney General

Resolution 135-26 Was removed from the Consent Agenda List by Councilman Riccardi for discussion.

Resolution 136-26

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF REDEMPTION MONIES TO OUTSIDE LIEN HOLDER

WHEREAS, at the Municipal Tax Sale held on November 4, 2021, a lien was sold on Block 11208 Lot 10, also known as 13 High Street, for 2020 delinquent sewer charges; and

WHEREAS, this lien which is known as Tax Sale Certificate #2021-004 was sold to Ridgeback Ventures, LLC at 0% interest and a Premium of \$1,500.00; and

WHEREAS, Ridgeback Ventures subsequently assigned Tax Sale Certificate #2021-004 to WHP Equities, LLC on August 19, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Robert Rothman, lienholder of Tax Sale Certificate #2008-20, has effected a redemption of certificate #2021-004 in the amount of \$49,626.27; 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 #2021-004 and Interest \$49,626.27
Premium Paid by Lienholder 1,500.00

Total From Current Fund:	\$49,626.27
Total From Tax Premium Account	1,500.00

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 WHP Equities, LLC is entitled to the redemption in the total amount of \$51,126.27; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Financial Officer be authorized to issue a check in the total amount of \$51,126.27 for the total redemption of certificate #2021-004 payable to WHP Equities, LLC, 1120 Lexington Ave, Lakewood, NJ 08701; 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 Smith, seconded by Councilman Riccardi and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolutions were duly adopted.

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes	Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Romano – yes	Councilman Thornton– yes
Councilman Simpson – yes	Councilman Wachterhauser – yes

Discussion of Resolution 135-26

Councilman Riccardi questioned why the resolution is asking for something which is already underway. The state has already launched an investigation and has already taken action in having the vendor take accountability. The voter roles have been purged of the improperly registered people. The county board of elections has also been mandated. The resolution is asking for transparency which is already being done voluntarily. The system is being actively reviewed. The improperly registered people have been notified, and anyone affected has been notified.

Mayor Wronko stated he had asked to have this resolution put on the agenda. Mayor Wronko stated he agrees with Councilman Riccardi, but he is of the opinion that there is additional investigation that still needs to go on. This is a non-partisan issue and investigation is at the state and county level. This is especially important in our municipalities in Sussex County, which are very small. We have elections that are often won by one or two votes. Someone who is not allowed to vote could have an impact on the election results.

Councilman Smith asked if any of the people identified voted in the Stanhope elections. Councilman Riccardi stated that information has not been release to date. The preliminary findings indicate that no elections were affected in the areas where these registrations occurred. But the investigations are still ongoing. Councilman Riccardi stated the time period of when the glitch occurred encompassed five elections. They are the June 6, 2023 Primary Election, November 7, 2023 Election, June 4, 2024 Primary, April 2024 School Board Election and the May non-partisan election in 2024. So far there were 400 people registered that have been documented. For the three main elections there were 3,275,289 people registered with 400 being invalid. This amounts to 0.1%. Mayor Wronko stated this is a serious enough issue that our elections elect people who can make laws, influence who gets elected, and who gets elected as judges. This can have a snowball effect that is much greater than a small percentage error. The resolution is to let the state know that even though they have found a few things, we are still pushing to make sure it continues. The analysis has not been concluded, and they do not know how big a problem this may be.

Councilman Riccardi stated the resolution does not read that it is supporting the investigation. It reads as though they are not doing anything and that they better do so. Mayor Wronko stated they need to do more. Councilman Riccardi stated the resolution does not state what more they should do. The items listed are things they are already doing. Mayor Wronko stated he will not be satisfied until they have exhausted their effort. Councilman Wachterhauser stated this is the governing body’s request for them to continue on and to conduct a transparent investigation. Even though the percentage is small, it should be zero. Even just one person voting illegally needs to be addressed. Councilman Wachterhauser stated he is of the opinion the investigation has to continue on to the end. Councilman Riccardi stated if the resolution was written that way

he would agree but in his opinion this resolution does not do that. Councilman Romano stated this is an issue of semantics and suggested that the language be corrected. Mayor Wronko asked Attorney Leo if she could modify the resolution based on Councilman Riccardi's input. Attorney Leo stated the title will be changed to read, "a resolution supporting a continued full, independent and transparent investigation". All the "whereas's" state the reasons for it. The first "now therefore" where it says "to conduct and make public" will be changed to read, "to continue and make public".

Resolution 135-26

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A CONTINUED FULL,
INDEPENDENT, AND TRANSPARENT INVESTIGATION
INTO THE IMPROPER REGISTRATION OF
NON-CITIZENS TO VOTE IN NEW JERSEY AND
CALLING FOR ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS TO
PROTECT ELECTION INTEGRITY**

WHEREAS, the integrity of our elections is fundamental to the democratic process and to maintaining public confidence in government; and

WHEREAS, on July 21, 2026, the Governor of New Jersey announced that approximately six thousand six hundred (6,600) individuals who had indicated that they were not United States citizens were improperly registered to vote as a result of a software error; and

WHEREAS, the Governor further stated that a review found fewer than four hundred (400) of the individuals newly registered as a result of the error subsequently cast ballots; and

WHEREAS, regardless of whether any individual election was ultimately determined to have been affected, the improper registration of individuals who are not eligible to vote raises concerns regarding the accuracy, security, oversight, and integrity of New Jersey's voter registration system; and

WHEREAS, the public deserves a complete accounting of how the error occurred, how long it remained undetected, what safeguards failed, and what steps will be taken to prevent a similar failure; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council believes that an independent and transparent review, together with appropriate verification and auditing safeguards, would promote accountability and public confidence while protecting confidential personal information as required by law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Stanhope, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, that the Borough calls upon the Governor of the State of New Jersey and the appropriate state election authorities to continue and make public, to the fullest extent permitted by law, the results of a full, independent, and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the improper registration of approximately 6,600 individuals who had indicated that they were not United States citizens; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough requests that the investigation identify how the registration error occurred; the systems, procedures, or oversight failures that contributed to it; the dates and scope of the error; the counties and municipalities affected; whether affected individuals cast ballots; and what corrective actions and safeguards will be implemented to prevent similar errors in the future; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough urges the State of New Jersey to evaluate independent verification and auditing measures for voter registration systems as an additional check on existing registration procedures, with appropriate protections for confidential personal information; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough encourages the State of New Jersey to evaluate additional lawful measures designed to verify voter eligibility and citizenship while ensuring that every eligible voter is able to register and cast a ballot; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution is intended to promote accurate, secure, transparent, and lawful elections and to protect public confidence in New Jersey's election system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that certified copies of this Resolution shall be forwarded to the Governor of the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Secretary of State, the New Jersey Division of Elections, the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, the Borough's representatives in the New Jersey Legislature, and such other officials as the Borough Clerk may deem appropriate.

On motion by Councilman Romano, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried by voice vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted as amended.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Resolution 137-26

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 September 22, 2026, 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 Riccardi and unanimously carried by the following roll call vote, the foregoing resolution was duly adopted.

Roll Call:

Councilman Riccardi – yes
Councilman Romano – yes
Councilman Simpson – yes

Councilman Smith – yes
Councilman Thornton – yes
Councilman Wachterhauser – yes

ATTORNEY REPORT

Attorney Ursula Leo stated the issue of utility paving has come up for discussion in other municipalities. There is a push with regard to utility paving. One ordinance that Attorney Leo drafted recently stated that if it is larger than fifty feet patching, it requires a full width curb to curb edge of pavement to edge of pavement paving. If it is less than fifty feet, then it is just halfway width. Attorney Leo stated she cannot say if this will stand scrutiny, but she is willing to try. There is a concern that this may prohibit utilities from moving forward. This may no longer be a concern, but if the governing body would like, she can draft an ordinance. Councilman Wachterhauser stated if it does not hurt to have the ordinance in place it may be helpful. Administrator McNeilly stated it may be applicable for the new development.

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 8:25 P.M.

Approved:

Linda Chirip
Deputy Clerk for
Ellen Horak, RMC
Borough Clerk