

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
REGULAR MINUTES
August 25, 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

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.

Rosemarie Maio stated that advertising signs are starting to fill up on the corners of the roads. With the election coming up, the signage will get worse. Ms. Maio asked if the signs are supposed to be monitored. Administrator McNeilly stated removing the signs is a manpower issue. The election signs are permitted. The gas company was putting up signs, so the Borough backed off from removing the signs. All the signs would have to come down because we cannot pick and choose. Discussion took place about commercial signs versus event and sports signs. Administrator McNeilly stated if one group of signs is allowed, someone else will come along and drop their sign next to it. There is a resolution or ordinance prohibiting signage. The DPW has collected the signs in the past and then the owners have been able to pick the signs up from the DPW yard. Ideally, any signs posted should be on private property and not on the corners. Attorney Leo stated political signs are handled differently but the commercial signs in the right of way can be removed. Councilman Romano stated a clean sweep should be done for all the signs in the public spaces. Administrator McNeilly stated the work schedule is very full right now, but the signs can be collected in approximately two weeks from now. If the owners of the signs call, they will be told they can pick the signs up at the DPW yard on Wednesday's when the gate is open.

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:

July 28, 2026

Business Meeting

On motion by Councilman Smith, seconded by Councilman Simpson and carried by a majority voice vote, the minutes were approved. Councilmen Wachterhauser, Thornton and Riccardi abstained.

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

Public Safety – Councilman Wachterhauser/Councilman Riccardi

(Police, Fire, Ambulance, Court & Violations Bureau, Emergency Management)

Councilman Wachterhauser stated the Police Department for the month of July reported 383 calls for service of which 86 were motor vehicle stops.

Councilman Wachterhauser stated the Fire Department submitted several reports this month. For the month of July, the Fire Department reported there were 21 calls answered, 4 drills and they had a total of 166.75 hours volunteered. For the month of June there were 6 calls answered, 7 mutual aid calls, 5 drills and they had 130.75 hours of volunteer hours. For the month of May there were 6 calls answered, 4 mutual aid calls, 4 drills and a total of 214.25 hours volunteered.

Councilman Wachterhauser stated the Ambulance Squad for the month of June reported 36 total calls, 23 patients, 19 trips to the hospital, travelled 594 miles and had 202 hours and 57 minutes of volunteer hours. For the month of May, there were 34 calls, 19 patients, 13 trips to the hospital, 342 miles travelled and a total of 142 hours and 43 minutes of volunteer hours.

Councilman Wachterhauser stated, for the month of July, the Zoning and Code Enforcement Official reported that 6 notices of violation were issued.

Finance & Administration – Councilman Romano/Councilman Thornton

Councilman Romano stated the property taxes collected for the month of July totaled \$247,282.06. The year-to-date total is \$7,139,450.17. Close to 99% of the first quarter taxes have been collected and nearly 98% of the second quarter taxes have been collected. The collections are consistent with the usual collection rate.

Councilman Romano stated the water collection for the month of August was \$41,459.28 and the year-to-date amount is \$398,010.35. The sewer collection for the month was \$57,509.08 and the year-to-date amount is \$564,705.75.

Community Development – Councilman Smith/Councilman Simpson

Councilman Smith stated there were six zoning permits applied for and five were approved.

Municipal Infrastructure – Councilman Thornton/Councilman Romano

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

Councilman Thornton stated he had no report. Councilman Thornton stated he would like to follow up on the paving issues during Council Discussion.

Information Technology – Councilman Riccardi/Councilman Wachterhauser

Councilman Riccardi stated he had no report.

Boards/Commissions – Councilman Simpson/Councilman Smith

Councilman Simpson stated he had no report.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Administrator McNeilly stated he had no written report but mentioned the following items.

Hydrant Flushing – Administrator McNeilly stated the hydrant flushing will begin next Monday. The DPW Superintendent and two staff members will be working nights for the month of September.

Brush Pickup – Administrator McNeilly stated the DPW will be picking up brush during the week of September 13th.

Hickory Drive Property Purchase – Administrator McNeilly stated he is still gathering information with regard to the request received awhile back from a resident asking to purchase property on Hickory Drive at the circle. The property is a right of way. When the Borough sells surplus property, we already know what the property looks like. The property in question is not clearly defined by a survey. The property will have to be surveyed. In order for the property to be sold as a surplus sale, we need to know what we are selling. The Borough will have to pay the cost for the survey and then that cost will be added to the cost of the sale. The survey could cost between \$3,000 - \$4,000. Administrator McNeilly stated he will need to make sure the prospective buyer is aware of the cost. More information will be available for the September work session meeting. The plan is to have this item placed on the agenda for the September business meeting.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Ordinance 2026-13 Adopting a New Chapter 131, Tree Removal-Replacement was tabled on 6/23/2026 – Administrator McNeilly stated he spoke with Paula Murphy, Shade Tree Commission Chairperson, this afternoon and with Rosemarie Maio, Shade Tree Commission Member, this evening. The proposed state ordinance was reviewed and essentially it was found to contain much of the same requirements as the Borough’s Shade Tree ordinance. The state prepared a stock ordinance for the municipalities to review and use as a template. The DEP had no intention for this to be adopted as written. The ordinance specifically calls out a reference to street trees which could be removed from the ordinance due to the fact that the Borough does not permit anyone other than the Shade Tree Commission to do anything with the street trees. The definitions are fairly straight forward. A key item is the Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) which is a specification not included in the Shade Tree ordinance. The state ordinance requires any person who removes one or more trees to plant a new tree unless there is an exemption. This exemption may make it a little easier for the residents and would not require a tree replacement and it states that “Residents who remove less than four trees per acre that fall into category 1, 2, or 3 of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table within a five-year period.” The ordinance would set requirements for replacement trees when large numbers of trees are being cleared. Mayor Wronko asked how this would affect the utility companies. Administrator McNeilly reviewed the various exemptions. The utility companies would likely be exempt if they are removing hazard trees which may be removed without a fee and no replacement is required.

Administrator McNeilly stated the state ordinance calls out a \$25.00 fee which the Borough currently does not charge. As for the application process, Administrator McNeilly stated the application should be submitted to the Shade Tree Commission and not the Zoning Officer. Mayor Wronko stated he has no objection as long as the Borough does have the ability to make minor adjustments to the ordinance. Attorney Leo confirmed the change can be made, and the Shade Tree Commission would also be approving the application. Administrator McNeilly stated the enforcement would be handled by the Code Enforcement Official. Councilman Wachterhauser asked if the \$25.00 fee has to be charged and what is the purpose of charging a fee for one tree if they are allowed to take it down. Administrator McNeilly stated the application has to be submitted and reviewed and put on file for the rolling five-year time period. Councilman Wachterhauser asked if this is mandated by the state and asked if this bureaucracy has to be dealt with to take down one tree. Attorney Leo confirmed this. Administrator McNeilly stated this is not just for the one tree, but it rolls on for five years. The current Shade Tree Ordinance allows for the removal of one tree a year without a permit or fee. Discussion took place regarding the number of trees, size of the trees, acreage, timeframes and fines.

Administrator McNeilly stated if a resident takes down a tree and has to replace the tree but does not have the room on their property to do so, they can pay the Borough \$100.00 instead. An exemption is not allowed for a tree 33 inches or greater. In that case, four trees would have to be planted. But, if you do not want to plant the four trees, then \$100.00 per tree removed could be paid to the Borough. The suggestion was made to change this fee to \$200.00. Much discussion took place regarding who in the municipality would make the decisions. This would most likely be done by Zoning/Code Enforcement or the Shade Tree Commission. Paula Zeliff-Murphy, Shade Tree Chairperson, stated the Shade Tree Commission members are core trained by the State and the Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer is not. Attorney Leo stated there could be circumstances where there is a hazard present that the Zoning Officer would address. Councilman Wachterhauser asked what would happen if there is a conflict in what decision is made. This is a lot of bureaucracy for trees. Attorney Leo stated this is a State mandate. Ms. Maio stated the Shade Tree Commission members visit the property when a request for tree removal is made. They speak with the property owner and find the reason for the request. Sometimes people will say they want the tree down, so they do not have to rake leaves, which is not a valid reason. Administrator McNeilly stated this ordinance is going to become a living document. The DEP may also have input. Councilman Wachterhauser stated the Zoning Officer's report for July listed multiple diseased trees.

Administrator McNeilly stated that currently the Shade Tree Commission has absolute decision making power over any living Borough owned tree such as a streetscape tree, park tree etc. The minute something is not living, it drops into one of two budgets. If it is a municipal tree, it then becomes an issue for the DPW Superintendent. If the tree is on private property, it then falls to the Code Enforcement Official. After every storm, there are people in the office stating that any tree that leans in their direction they want gone, even if it is a healthy tree. The Shade Tree Commission then takes a look at the tree and may decide the tree just needs to be trimmed. Councilman Smith asked if there is an appeal built into the Shade Tree ordinance. Administrator McNeilly stated there is no appeal process. Administrator McNeilly stated he is of the opinion this ordinance will continue to be updated even after it is adopted. Councilman Thornton asked if streetscape trees are only the trees which have been planted by the Borough along Sparta Road and Main Street or does it include all trees on resident's property that are in the right of way. Administrator McNeilly stated there are trees which were not necessarily planted but are streetscape trees if they fall between the homeowner's property line and curb or the paved surface. Borough trees can be located behind someone's property if the Borough owns the lot adjacent and we have to deal with those as well. Several years ago, the ten-foot easement that existed behind all the properties on Young Drive was owned by the Borough and we were responsible for all the trees in that easement. The governing body at that time decided to abandon the easement. Administrator McNeilly stated the tree issue is the reason that he encourages the governing body to sell as much of the Borough owned property as possible. The cost of removing the trees is expensive. Attorney Leo stated she will revise the ordinance. Administrator McNeilly stated he is of the opinion that the compliance will remain about the same but this ordinance will provide more guidelines when an issue arises.

Environmental Commission Request – Chapter 100 Ordinance Banning Data Centers – Councilman Wachterhauser asked if the ordinance was a form letter that was changed. Councilman Riccardi stated the ordinance from Warren County was referenced to create this ordinance. Councilman Wachterhauser stated he has no objection to the ordinance, even though the Borough does not have the space for a data center. The ordinance kept changing the reference to town, township, and borough. There is a reference to nuclear power plants which is irrelevant to the Borough. Administrator McNeilly stated this would be a Chapter 100 ordinance and all that has to be said is that a data center is not a permitted use. Councilman Riccardi stated Rockaway Borough recently adopted an ordinance banning computer centers as well, which in his opinion would cause more issues than just banning data centers. Perhaps the scale of the center should be defined. Administrator McNeilly stated the size should be determined and then send the draft to the Borough Attorney to be reviewed and drafted. Councilman Riccardi stated he will send the information to Attorney Leo.

Recent Paving Work – Councilman Thornton stated residents have complained about the paving work on Dell Road and in the downtown area. Mayor Wronko stated he and the Administrator have discussed the issue. Administrator McNeilly stated he, Eric Keller (Borough Engineer) and the DPW Superintendent have driven around and inspected various areas. Councilman Thornton stated when the Borough is responsible for paving, compaction measurements are taken. The gas company is not held to that same standard and he asked what the lifecycle is for the paving which was just completed and if there is any type of warranty. Administrator McNeilly stated he is of the

opinion that the Borough would be able to contact the gas company and let them know if there is some type of pavement failure in the future and they would have to contact the contractor to fix it. Attorney Leo stated she will look into the issue. Administrator McNeilly stated that the company which just completed the paving in the Borough, paved several other streets three years ago. Administrator McNeilly stated the quality of the paving on Dell Road does match the quality on the other roads in the Borough. Mayor Wronko stated the work has been completed at the school. Administrator McNeilly confirmed this and stated the contractor for the school caused issues with the paving of the cul-de-sac on Sagamore Road. The first application of salt this winter will eliminate the marks on the roads. The streets that have been paved by NJ Natural Gas can have a three foot by three-foot square cut into them at any time by NJ Natural Gas if they need to. The only road that will be added to the moratorium list for this year will be New Street.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Resolution 126-26

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 August 25, 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 Thornton 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 she had no report this evening.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Flock Camera – Administrator McNeilly stated he saw on social media today there was mention of a Flock Camera. Administrator McNeilly stated this is being stated in an official capacity at this meeting that Stanhope Borough does not have a flock camera. There is a flock camera presently within the Borough, but it does not belong to the Borough. The camera belongs to Hopatcong Borough, and it is located in the County right of way. If anyone has any concerns about the camera, they should contact Hopatcong Borough or Sussex County.

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 Wachterhauser, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried by voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

Approved:

Linda Chirip
Deputy Clerk for
Ellen Horak, RMC
Borough Clerk