

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
COUNCIL MEETING ROOM – UPPER LEVEL

March 18, 2025

The following are the Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Lawrence Township Council that was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was opened with the Inspiration and Pledge of Allegiance, led by the Municipal Clerk.

Mayor Farmer stated that, in light of *Women's History Month*, she would like to share one of her and Councilwoman Perry's favorite quotes from author and civil rights activist, Maya Angelou, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

At the commencement of the meeting Mayor Farmer read the following statement of proper notice:

STATEMENT OF PROPER NOTICE: "Adequate notice of this meeting of the Lawrence Township Council being held on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, has been provided through the posting of the annual meeting schedule of said Council in accordance with Section 13 of the Open Public Meetings Act." Said Notice was forwarded to The Trentonian, The Times and The Princeton Packet on December 19, 2024.

The roll was then called as follows:

Present: Councilmembers Bobbitt, Kownacki, Perry, Ryan and Mayor Farmer.
Absent: None.

Also in attendance were Kevin Nerwinski, Esq., Municipal Manager, and Arthur Sypek, Esq., Municipal Attorney.

Special Proclamations, Recognitions and Presentations

**Mayor's Task Force Update Regarding
the Lawrence Township Community Center**

Mr. Chris Woolley thanked Council for allowing him to speak on behalf of the Mayor's Task Force regarding Resolution #346-24. He stated that his purpose this evening is to bring Council up to date on the progress made by the Task Force, and ever since the adoption of the Resolution, the Task Force has met on multiple occasions to brainstorm community engagement strategies, to accomplish the goals set by Council, to

review the history and governance of the Center, and to develop a plan for inclusive community outreach. He relayed that a critical part of their effort is ensuring that all voices are heard, and they are committed to engaging residents and stakeholders across Lawrence Township. To that end, he reported, they are organizing a community meeting, tentatively set for May 13th, 2025, which will provide residents with an opportunity to share thoughts, concerns and ideas regarding how the Center can best serve the community moving forward. In addition to this meeting, Mr. Woolley shared that they will be distributing a community survey to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on possible uses for the Center, and their outreach strategy will be to engage key community organizations, including local schools, civic groups, faith-based institutions, and social service providers, to ensure broad representation.

Mr. Woolley discussed that they are also gathering data on current Center usage, as well as Recreation Department data, in order to better understand existing programs in the community and examine the community needs. After obtaining the data, he explained, the Task Force will analyze the survey responses and community meeting feedback, draft a report outlining residents' concerns and priorities, propose a mission statement and future vision for the Center, develop recommendations that reflect the community input while preserving the Center's legacy, and establish a timeline for follow-up with Council.

Finally, Mr. Woolley expressed thanks for Council's continued support, stating that he looks forward to sharing the community's insights and recommendations in the coming months, and encouraged Council to attend the May 13th Mayor's Task Force meeting.

Public Participation

Mr. Thomas Ritter stated that he is here on behalf of the New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation, *Friends of Colonial Lake Park*, to discuss an ecological threat to Colonial Lake Park. He informed Council that the park contains a variety of young trees, as well as beech and oak trees that are over one hundred years old, and his concern is that the Ewing Lawrence Sewage Authority (ELSA) plan to run new sewer lines through Colonial Lake Park, which will pass through this section of trees, may disrupt the ecological stability of the park. To avoid this sensitive area, while also offering ELSA an equitable alternative, Mr. Ritter suggested having the sewer lines exit the park before entering the environmentally-sensitive area. He indicated that this solution would not only remove the potential threat, but also offer, from an engineering perspective, an equally good path. In closing, Mr. Ritter respectfully asked Council to support this modification to ELSA's proposed sewer line plan.

Mr. Jim Hooker stated that he is here on behalf of Colonial Lake Park, and is concerned about an encroachment on the park by a public entity, potentially affecting several one-hundred-year-old trees in the process. He also expressed concern about the affect this will have on the bald eagle and osprey that make their home in the park, as

they were once on the endangered-species list. Mr. Hooker asked Council to support a Resolution for a Green Acres waiver, and formally oppose what he believes is a disruptive and destructive plan by ELSA that would adversely affect the trees.

Mayor Farmer asked Councilman James Kownacki about ELSA's timeline with regard to the pipeline project, but Attorney Arthur Sypek reported that this information was discussed in a privileged context at an ELSA meeting, and is not yet available to the public; therefore, Mr. Kownacki is unable to answer this question. Mayor Farmer, Mr. Sypek and Manager Kevin Nerwinski discussed Council's ability to provide a Resolution in support of a Green Acres easement, if this is the consensus of Council, and the need to act sooner rather than later, as the window to do so is closing.

Councilman Christopher Bobbitt referenced a previous Council meeting where ELSA's plan was discussed, and public sentiment in opposition of the plan was considered, with an agreed upon proposal to hand-excavate the one tree that would be affected by the pipeline construction, in addition to having an arborist on hand to supervise the effort. After Mr. Bobbitt had finished providing background information, he stated that this was the basis for which he had given his approval, and he would like to know what had changed from this proposal to have caused the present consternation from within the community, so that Council can make an informed decision regarding this situation.

Lawrence Township Manager, Kevin Nerwinski, reported that received a communication from Mr. Robert Filler, Executive Director of ELSA, where he was pointedly asked if something had changed within the plan since it was first presented to Council, and Mr. Filler responded with an emphatic "no." He shared that this communication was from several weeks ago.

Councilman John Ryan asked if Council would consider asking ELSA to flag the pathway in question to provide a better understanding of the location being considered, to which Mr. Hooker responded that he and Mr. Ritter had already walked the proposed pathway with Mr. Filler and the engineer, along with a copy ELSA's blueprints in-hand.

Mayor Farmer asked if there was consensus from Council in support of the Green Acres Resolution, to which Council responded in the affirmative. Mr. Nerwinski recommended that tonight, since consensus is clear, a member of Council propose a Resolution to oppose ELSA's present plan to install a line through certain sections of Colonial Lake Park, and to request a waiver from Green Acres to divert that line, consistent with a proposal presented under the Friends of Colonial Lake plan.

Ms. Deborah Dorner stated that she is a member of New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation, *Friends of Colonial Lake Park*, and shared with Council that she has been conducting a monthly children's story time within the aforementioned grove of trees every spring and summer for the past three years, teaching the children about the bald eagle and other environmental issues, and it is her hope that this issue will be resolved in the right way.

Mr. Edward Laub wished to report a dangerous road crossing, which he stated is located on Route 206, just past the Lawrence Township Police parking lot, crossing the exit from 295 South. He relayed that, due to low-lying brush, pedestrians are unable to see cars coming up this roadway, but he believes this can be easily fixed by clearing the brush, allowing for a better view of the traffic.

Mr. Nerwinski informed the Mayor that he can make the request of Lawrence Township's NJDOT representative, to investigate and address the situation.

Mr. Jim Bird, former Mayor of Hopewell Township, explained that the reason he is here tonight is to discuss the affordable housing law. He stated that 15 percent of property taxes are going to the school board, which has a major impact on Township residents, and he believes the number of housing units which would need to be constructed in order to meet "prospective need" is shocking. Mr. Bird urged Council to take a closer look at the proposed legislation, and take steps that they feel are necessary to achieve relief from what may be overwhelming obligations.

Ms. Sywlia Kobus stated that she would like to thank the Council for tonight's resolution pertaining to saving the trees on behalf of Friends of Colonial Lake. She feels that it is important to save and protect all of Lawrence's green spaces, and hopes that in the future, Council will support green spaces in her Colonial Heights neighborhood, also.

Mr. Fred Vereen Jr. began by thanking Councilman Kownacki for his past sponsorship of a Resolution naming his street, Fred Vereen Jr. Road, after him in honor of his 80th birthday. He also thanked Council for recently passing a Resolution creating the Mayor's Task Force to study the needs of the Community Center. He stated that his family moved to Eggert's Crossing in 1941, and at that time, it was mainly a Black community with dirt roads, outhouses and substandard housing, whereas today, it is a diversified community with houses worth up to \$600,000. He suggested that this change is, in large part, due to the legacy of the Community Center, and he believes the Community Center will continue to effect positive change for Lawrence Township.

Mr. David Bossio asked Council for an update regarding the abandoned lot on Route 206 next to the vape shop, and asked if the contamination testing process will include the surrounding houses or just the abandoned lot. In addition, he asked for an update with regard to a gym that is scheduled to open in the Lawrence Shopping Center. Finally, Mr. Bossio commented that the one-hundred-year-old-trees in Colonial Lake Park are not truly "old," given the fact that they can grow up to 300 and 400 years old, and urged Council to do everything they can to save the trees.

Mr. Nerwinski responded that this is the "Pitt Stop" location, which is currently owned by a defunct LLC, in which the principal member is deceased. He stated that because of its complicated history, it is known as a "zombie lot," as no one is willing to purchase the property due to the many tax and DEP liens, as well as the current land contamination. Mr. Nerwinski recounted that approximately 6 years ago, one of the children of the deceased LLC owner allowed the Township to apply for a grant from the

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to study the contamination and begin the remediation process. Once completed, he explained, the heir would deed the property to Lawrence Township for one dollar, upon the condition from the NJDEP that nothing would be built on this site as it will be preserved as a passive park. He shared that they are in the process of having a second round of remediation, as the building has been removed, and they are awaiting approval from the NJDEP to test the soil for contamination and have it cleared. Finally, he relayed that the testing would involve the "Pit Stop" location only; however, if the NJDEP discovers evidence that the contamination has gone off-site, then they would take steps to notify surrounding property owners.

With regard to the potential gym that is scheduled to open in the Lawrence Shopping Center, Mr. Nerwinski stated that LA Fitness owns the rights to build a gym and has continued the permit process; however, since the pandemic, they have been in a "retreat mode." He relayed that they have not abandoned the site, and suggested that perhaps when they're once again in "expansion-mode," they will select this Lawrence site as the site on which they will continue to build.

Review and Revisions of Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Bobbitt, seconded by Mr. Ryan, the Agenda was amended to add Resolution No. 146-25 (18-H.6), Authorizing Resolution Opposing the Current ELSA Plan to Install a Force Main Sewer Line Through Colonial Lake Park and Supporting the Application to the NJ Green Acres to Divert the Line Outside of the Park, and to include discussions regarding the Tax Assessor to Resolution No. 145-25 - Closed Session.

Ayes: Councilmembers Bobbitt, Kownacki, Perry, Ryan and Mayor Farmer.
 Absent: None.
 Abstain: None.

Adoption of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Bobbitt, seconded by Mr. Kownacki, the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 7, 2024 were approved without corrections on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Bobbitt	X					X	
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Perry	X						X
Mr. Ryan					X		
Mayor Farmer	X						

Awarding or Rejecting of Bids

On a motion by Mr. Bobbitt, seconded by Ms. Perry, Resolution (9-A), Authorizing Awarding of Bid No. 25-04: Lawn Service to RJM Landscape and Design.

Resolution No. 136-25

WHEREAS, on March 6, 2025, proposals were received for Bid 25-04 Lawn Services; and

WHEREAS, three (3) proposal were received and reviewed by the Municipal Manager/QPA and the Director of Public Works and RJM Landscape & Design met all requirements and is being awarded the bid; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:30-14, a Certificate of Availability of Funds has been provided and the accounts to be charged are:

Acct.	Ord. No.	Name	Amount
5-01-28-375-255	----	Park Maintenance – Miscellaneous Contractual Services)	\$44,500.00

and;

WHEREAS, the bid amount for Option 1 Route One South (islands and basins) substantially exceeds the estimate and the budgeted amount for the project is hereby being rejected; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, that the Township is hereby authorized to award the bid for Lawn Services Bid 25-04 to RJM Landscape & Design, 821 Parsonage Hill Drive, Branchburg NJ 08876 for the period of April 7, 2025 through November 14, 2025 in the total amount of \$44,500.00.

Adopted: March 18, 2025

Same was carried on the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Councilmembers Bobbitt, Kownacki, Perry, Ryan and Mayor Farmer.
 Absent: None.
 Abstain: None.

Introduction of Ordinances

Mayor Farmer read by title, an ordinance entitled, "ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2427-22 BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, COUNTY OF MERCER, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, IN ORDER TO REVISE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPROVEMENT HEREIN – Acquisition of Fire/Rescue Equipment: "Ambulance and Equipment".

Mr. Nerwinski reported, for the record, that this is a capital improvement fund that requires Council to authorize a change in the description to include the acquisition of an ambulance in order to allow the Township to address a present need.

A clarifying discussion ensued between Councilman John Ryan and Mr. Nerwinski with regard to the fact that the ambulance being budgeted is in the current Lawrence Township Budget that was previously passed by Council, and the affirmation that no new monies are being spent, nor are any monies being added to bonds.

The Ordinance No. 2488-25 was approved on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Bobbitt	X					X	
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Perry	X						X
Mr. Ryan	X						
Mayor Farmer	X						

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Mayor Farmer read by title, an ordinance entitled, "ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 2449-23 BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, COUNTY OF MERCER, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, IN ORDER TO REVISE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPROVEMENT HEREIN – Acquisition of Fire/Rescue Equipment: "Ambulance and Equipment".

Mr. Nerwinski reported, for the record, that this is the exact same situation but they are revising under two different funds, whereby this capital improvement fund also requires Council to authorize a change in the description to include the acquisition of an ambulance to allow the Township to address a present need.

The Ordinance No. 2489-25 was approved on the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL      | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Bobbitt  | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Mr. Kownacki | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Ms. Perry    | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Mr. Ryan     | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mayor Farmer | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

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Mayor Farmer read by title, an ordinance entitled, "ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE REGULATION OF INVASIVE BAMBOO".

Mr. Nerwinski reported, for the record, that this Ordinance came about when a resident informed him that a property adjacent to theirs had bamboo that was not being managed. Bamboo is very aggressive, Mr. Nerwinski relayed, and must be consistently maintained. He explained that, in order for the Township to assist property owners experiencing encroachment by this invasive bamboo, the Lawrence Township Zoning Officer amended the Ordinance to give the Township more enforcement power so that Officials can work with property owners to correct the situation.

The Ordinance No. 2490-25 was approved on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Bobbitt	X					X	
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Perry	X						
Mr. Ryan	X						X
Mayor Farmer	X						

Adoption of Ordinances

Mayor Farmer read by title, an ordinance entitled, "ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, IN THE COUNTY OF MERCER, NEW JERSEY, APPROPRIATING \$57,050.00 THEREFORE, AND DIRECTING THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COST THEREOF".

Mr. Nerwinski indicated that this Ordinance is part of the Township's Sidewalk Replacement Program. Under this program, he reported, the Township negotiates reduced pricing for property owners whose sidewalks require repair. He relayed that the cost of these repairs can be paid by property owners over a five-year period, interest-free, through the Tax Collector's Office. Mr. Nerwinski shared that this initiative is intended to promote pedestrian safety and ease the financial burden of residents.

Ordinance No. 2486-25

ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, IN THE COUNTY OF MERCER, NEW JERSEY, APPROPRIATING \$57,050.00 THEREFORE, AND DIRECTING THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COST THEREOF

WHEREAS, at the request of certain owners of properties identified herein, the Township of Lawrence has previously authorized and undertaken certain sidewalk improvements; and

WHEREAS, the understanding between the property owners and the Township was that these improvements would be specially assessed against the properties; and

WHEREAS, the Township now wishes to authorize the special assessment of the cost of such improvements;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, in the County of Mercer, State of New Jersey (not less than two-thirds of all members thereof affirmatively concurring) as follows:

Section 1. The improvement described in Section 3 of this ordinance is hereby authorized to be undertaken by the Township of Lawrence, New Jersey as a local improvement. For the improvement or purpose described in Section 2, there is hereby appropriated the sum of \$57,050.00.

Section 2. (a) The improvement hereby authorized is the improvement of the sidewalks, curbs, and driveway aprons along the streets listed below. The affected properties, listed by name of record owner, street address, block, lot and assessment amounts are as follows:

BLOCK	LOT	OWNER OF RECORD	PROPERTY ADDRESS	TOTAL COST
1601	1,2	Donald F. & Christine M. Edwards	773 Mayflower Avenue	\$900.00
1601	3,4,5	Lynch & Sharon Hunt	771 Mayflower Avenue	\$1,900.00
1607	33.02	Gilda Quinones	718 President Avenue	\$2,000.00
1701	16	Carol A. Brofman & Thomas Riether	110 Lakedale Drive	\$425.00
1703	21	Lori Venta	142 Lakedale Drive	\$2,600.00
1703	22	Migdalia Acevedo	144 Lakedale Drive	\$600.00
1901	88	Michael F. & Carolynn A. Donnelly	930 Lawrenceville Road	\$1,000.00
1904	19	Turgut & Virginia A. Sari	2375 Princeton Pike	\$450.00

2201	11	Peter R. & Denise K. Hall	5 Huron Way	\$400.00
2402	52	Patricia A. Leoniec	80 Berwyn Place	\$500.00
2501	32.1	Ashok N. & Nayana A. Rana	15 Mink Court	\$550.00
2701	26.11	Hedwig M. Bartell	115 Ketterer Court	\$1,200.00
2701	26.12	John P. & Samantha A. Oakley	113 Ketterer Court	\$675.00
2701	62.2	Lianne Lipskind	27 Karena Lane	\$900.00
3009	2	Daniel & Carrie Spiteri	17 Pin Oak Drive	\$525.00
3011	12	Matthew & Dana Schneider	25 Pine Knoll Drive	\$750.00
3101	3	Lawrence A. & Margaret Marino	2 Bearfort Way	\$8,200.00
3204	1	Lawrence E. Leibowitz	283 Glenn Avenue	\$1,100.00
3205	15	Jason & Elizabeth Edwards	29 Allen Lane	\$4,000.00
3501	14	Diane & Fredrick Miller	2786 Princeton Pike	\$6,475.00
3502	19	John D. & Kerry A. McQuarrie	17 Royal Oak Road	\$975.00
3503	25	Thomas J. Kostrzewa UX	19 Carnation Place	\$1,400.00
3507	39	Jeffrey & Jessica Paolini	58 Stonicker Drive	\$800.00
3507	40	Jacob & Kathleen Luckey	56 Stonicker Drive	\$3,600.00
3507	45	David M. & Brenda A. Lippincott	46 Stonicker Drive	\$250.00
4201	168	Kim Y. Taylor	278 Fountayne Lane	\$600.00
4201.03	24	Pieran Liu & Lixin Fan	57 Fountayne Lane	\$400.00
5201.01	24	S. & Iyadurai S. Ramasubramanian	7 Flanigan Street	\$600.00
5201.01	32	N. Gopalakrishnam & Aruran Sairaam	24 Vaccaro Road	\$1,425.00
5201.02	5	Venkata R. Seshadri & Matilda Ramanan	25 Vaccaro Road	\$600.00

5201.07	13	Biswadeep & Bipasa Gupta	12 Richards Road	\$400.00
5201.07	21	Muya Guo & Yang Liu	26 Marchesi Drive	\$500.00
5201.07	31	Bach & Binh Tran	6 Marchesi Drive	\$225.00
5201.08	1	Anuradha & Sridhar Kura	119 Canal View Drive	\$2,000.00
5201.09	15	Rajesh Soleti & Sandhya Casula	96 Canal View Drive	\$200.00
5201.09	29	Ping Zhong	4 Hyde Court	\$800.00
5201.09	34	Javin M. & Pinalben J. Shah	70 Canal View Drive	\$400.00
5603	1	Madeline Muzin & Joseph Tino	11 Chopin Lane	\$500.00
5704	6	Kim Peterson	5 Titus Avenue	\$4,400.00
6003	10	Kelly Rose Sullivan	14 Abby Drive	\$400.00
6201.03	7.01	Wael H. & Sanna & Jenna Quasmieh	1 Overlook Way	\$850.00
6509	4	Michael G. & Cindy M. Ehret	2 Pheasant Drive	\$575.00

(b) The estimated cost of the improvement or purpose is equal to the amount of the appropriation herein made therefore.

Section 3. The improvement described in Section 2 of this ordinance shall be undertaken as a sidewalk improvement and the cost thereof shall be assessed in the following manner. An accurate account of the cost of construction of the sidewalks shall be kept, and such cost shall be assessed upon the several properties fronting on the improvement in proportion to their respective frontage or square yardage thereon pursuant to and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:65-1 *et seq.*

Section 4. The owner of any land upon which any assessment for the local improvement shall have been made may pay such assessment in the number of equal yearly installments herein determined, with legal interest, currently six-percent (6%) on the unpaid balance of the assessment. The first of the installments shall be due and payable two months after the confirmation of the assessment, and each subsequent annual installment and interest shall be payable in each successive year thereafter at such time as the governing body shall by resolution determine, provided that any owner of land so assessed shall have the privilege of paying the whole of any assessment or of any balance of installments with accrued interest thereon at any time. Whenever any

such installment shall remain unpaid for thirty (30) days from and after the time it shall become due and payable, the whole assessment or balance thereof shall become and be immediately due and payable and shall draw interest at the rate imposed upon the arrearage of taxes in the Township and shall be collected in the same manner as provided by law for other past due assessments. Such assessment shall remain a lien upon the land described herein until the assessment with all installments and accrued interest thereon shall be paid and satisfied. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, the Township shall have the right to waive default as may be permitted by law.

Section 5. The following additional matters are hereby determined, declared, recited and stated:

(a) The improvement or purpose described in Section 3 of this ordinance is not a current expense. It is an improvement or purpose that the Township may lawfully undertake as a local improvement the cost of which shall be specially assessed in the manner provided herein.

(b) The number of annual installments within which the special assessments are to be levied on the lots and parcels of real estate affected by the improvement is five (5).

(c) The Township will not contribute to the payment of any part of the cost of the improvement.

(d) The estimated maximum aggregate amount of the special assessments is \$57,050.00.

Adopted: March 18, 2025

The Ordinance No. 2486-25 was approved on the following roll call vote:

COUNCIL	AYE	NAY	PRESENT	ABSENT	ABSTAIN	MOVE	SECOND
Mr. Bobbitt	X					X	
Mr. Kownacki	X						
Ms. Perry	X						
Mr. Ryan	X						X
Mayor Farmer	X						

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Mayor Farmer read by title, an ordinance entitled, "CALENDAR YEAR 2025 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, COUNTY OF MERCER (NJSA 40A:4-45.14)".

Mr. Nerwinski reported that this is a function of the NJ Budget Law, which allows municipalities to create a bank of money up to 3.5% to use should the need arise.

Ordinance No. 2487-25

CALENDAR YEAR 2025

ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND  
TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE, COUNTY OF  
MERCER

(N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14)

**WHEREAS**, the Local Government Cap Law, N.J.S. 40A: 4-45.1 et seq., provides that in the preparation of its annual budget, a municipality shall limit any increase in said budget up to 2.5% unless authorized by ordinance to increase it to 3.5% over the previous year's final appropriations, subject to certain exceptions; and,

**WHEREAS**, N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.15a provides that a municipality may, when authorized by ordinance, appropriate the difference between the amount of its actual final appropriation and the 3.5% percentage rate as an exception to its final appropriations in either of the next two succeeding years; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey finds it advisable and necessary to increase its CY 2025 budget by up to 3.5% over the previous year's final appropriations, in the interest of promoting the health, safety and welfare of the citizens; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence hereby determines that a 3.5% increase in the budget for said year, amounting to \$920,830.02 in excess of the increase in final appropriations otherwise permitted by the Local Government Cap Law, is advisable and necessary; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence hereby determines that any amount authorized hereinabove that is not appropriated as part of the final budget shall be retained as an exception to final appropriation in either of the next two succeeding years.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED**, by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, a majority of the full authorized membership of this governing body affirmatively concurring, that, in the CY 2024 budget year, the final appropriations of the Township of Lawrence shall, in accordance with this ordinance and N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14, be increased by 3.5%, amounting to \$920,830.02, and that the CY 2025 municipal budget for the Township of Lawrence be approved and adopted in accordance with this ordinance; and,

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, that any that any amount authorized hereinabove that is not appropriated as part of the final budget shall be retained as an exception to final appropriation in either of the next two succeeding years; and,

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, that a certified copy of this ordinance as introduced be filed with the Director of the Division of Local Government Services within 5 days of introduction; and,

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, that a certified copy of this ordinance upon adoption, with the recorded vote included thereon, be filed with said Director within 5 days after such adoption.

Adopted: March 18, 2025

The Ordinance No. 2487-25 was approved on the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL      | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Bobbitt  | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Mr. Kownacki | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Ms. Perry    | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mr. Ryan     | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Mayor Farmer | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

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### **Township Council - 2025 Budget Review**

Mr. Nerwinski stated that, to his understanding, Council has expressed interest in conducting a line-by-line reading of the 2025 Municipal Budget. He noted that the Recommended Budget was provided to Council on February 4<sup>th</sup>, has already been formally introduced, and has been made available to the public via the Township website. Mr. Nerwinski reminded Council that the Budget Hearing is scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup>. If they would like to read the Budget line-by-line it is within their power to do so, and he emphasized that he will be available to address any questions they may have during the process.

After further discussion, Council decided that they will revisit the issue of having the Manager read the Municipal Budget line-by-line at the 2026 Recommended Budget presentation next February.

### **Manager's Report –**

Mr. Nerwinski provided Council with an update regarding the proposed Federal Point traffic light. He reminded Council that the original intention was to enter into a shared agreement with Hopewell and Ewing to address traffic concerns at the intersection of Federal Point and Bull Run Roads. However, he explained, both municipalities ultimately declined to participate in the installation of a traffic signal for the benefit of Federal Point residents, and, as a result, the Township proceeded independently with the design work, which was funded in the Budget and submitted to the New Jersey

Department of Transportation (NJDOT). Upon review, he relayed, it was determined that a portion of the proposed traffic light design was found to be on Hopewell land. Mr. Nerwinski acknowledged that Hopewell had since objected to the plan, expressing interest in adding design elements such as a left-turn lane—features the Township's engineers deemed unnecessary, and would also result in a significant cost increase for the Township.

In the interim, Mr. Nerwinski reported receiving a call from Aaron Watson, Business Administrator for Ewing Township, who indicated that Ewing is considering an alternative plan involving the installation of a roundabout on Bull Run Road to manage traffic flow on Federal City Road. As part of this plan, he explained, Ewing is requesting that Lawrence Township abandon its proposed traffic light project and instead participate in the roundabout installation, as well as attend a joint meeting involving business administrators and engineers from Hopewell, Ewing, and Lawrence to further discuss the potential change in direction.

Mr. Nerwinski expressed his position that a traffic light at Federal Point Road remains the most effective solution for ensuring the safety of Township residents entering and exiting their development. Accordingly, he does not support abandoning the current plan to install the signal.

Further discussion ensued between Councilman Bobbitt and Mr. Nerwinski with regard to how the proposed roundabout at the intersection of Bull Run Road and Federal City Road will serve Ewing and Hopewell Township residents, but not Lawrence Township residents. Mayor Farmer asked that Mr. Nerwinski continue the conversation with Hopewell and Ewing, and keep Council abreast of the ongoing situation.

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#### **Attorney's Report –**

There was no attorney report.

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#### **Clerk's Report –**

Ms. Carter reported that the Special School Board Election went very well, and stated that the County did a fantastic job. She then gave Council a copy of the unofficial election results, which indicated that the referendum passed with 2,641 'yes' votes, and 1,790 'no' votes. She relayed that March 24<sup>th</sup> is the nominating petition deadline, and June 10<sup>th</sup> is the date of the Primary Election. The dates for Early Voting have been extended from three days to six days, from June 3<sup>rd</sup> through June 8<sup>th</sup>. Finally, Ms. Carter shared that she is working on Financial Disclosures and updating the rosters, which she will give to Council as soon as she receives approval from the Local Finance Board.

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**Unfinished Business –**

Councilman Ryan stated that he would like to make a motion to revisit the issue of the Deputy Clerk vacancy and have the position advertised for an additional month with the League of Municipalities and the Municipal Clerk's Association of New Jersey.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if they have received any further applications, to which Ms. Carter stated that the original deadline has passed, but one application was received today, which she will copy and disperse to Council.

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**New Business –**

Councilman Ryan asked if he could discuss an e-mail regarding the Clerk's position that he sent to Mr. Sypek last Wednesday, to which Mr. Sypek relayed that he is in the process of reviewing the information. Councilman Bobbitt asked for clarification with regard to the contents of the email, as this was the first he was hearing of this, to which Mr. Ryan replied that, as the Clerk's position is open, due to the fact of Ms. Carter's well-deserved retirement, he asked if Mr. Sypek could provide guidance as to the process of filling the open position.

After a brief discussion regarding the Municipal Clerk position, Mayor Farmer requested that the issue be tabled. The request was approved on the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL      | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Bobbitt  | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Mr. Kownacki | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Ms. Perry    | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Mr. Ryan     | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mayor Farmer | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

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**Public Participation (3-minute limitation per speaker) –**

Mr. Jim Bird, former Mayor of Hopewell Township, once again spoke on the issue of Affordable Housing, and provided Council with various information, which included a copy of a letter sent to various New Jersey State Senators, Assemblymen, and New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in support of bill NJ S4065. He stated that he will be available to answer any questions that Council may have regarding this issue.



Mr. Nerwinski expressed that Lawrence Township has always been at the forefront of meeting the Affordable Housing obligations. He and Mr. Bird had a brief discussion regarding the impact of this bill on property taxes, as well as the concern that this bill may provide for builders to construct housing that would be sold at market rate.

Both Mr. Thomas Ritter and Mr. Jim Hooker spoke once again on behalf of the New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation, *Friends of Colonial Lake Park*, to thank Council for the Resolution that was passed at tonight's meeting regarding the longevity of the trees, and express how appreciative they are of Council's support.

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### Resolutions

Resolution Nos. 137-25 (18-A.1) though 146-25 (18-H.6) were approved by the following roll call vote:

| COUNCIL      | AYE | NAY | PRESENT | ABSENT | ABSTAIN | MOVE | SECOND |
|--------------|-----|-----|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| Mr. Bobbitt  | X   |     |         |        |         | X    |        |
| Mr. Kownacki | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Ms. Perry    | X   |     |         |        |         |      | X      |
| Mr. Ryan     | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |
| Mayor Farmer | X   |     |         |        |         |      |        |

Cited Resolutions are spread in their entirety in the Resolution Books of the Township of Lawrence.

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### Council Initiatives/Liaison Reports –

Mr. Bobbitt wished to publicly acknowledge the Streambank Restoration work that the Environmental Green Advisory Committee participated in on Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 230 Glenn Avenue, and reported that it was attended by more than 20 people. He expressed how great it was to see families, young and old, driving rebar into the streambed then planting stakes in order to help slow down soil erosion, which lessens the amount of silt going into Colonial Lake. He emphasized that it was a great feeling to begin the day participating in such a wonderful community event.

Ms. Perry reported that the Growth and Redevelopment Committee will be holding a small business networking event on April 30<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Lawrence Library. She explained that the purpose of the event is to share best practices, to help businesses, and to network as a way to create synergy. Ms. Perry relayed that they are actively seeking speakers for the event and look forward to continuing their efforts to strengthen small businesses in Lawrence.

In addition, Ms. Perry provided Council with an update on the Public Safety Subcommittee, reporting that they have received seven proposals in response to their RFP, which they have been reviewing over the past two months using an in-depth rubric that will ensure that each proposal meets the minimum requirements of the RFP. Some of the criteria they are looking for, she explained, include the consulting firm's knowledge and experience, their current local projects, the quality of their proposals and presentations, their understanding of the project scope, professional qualifications, and the composition of the proposed project team. As a reminder to Council, Ms. Perry explained that the purpose of the RFP is to study the feasibility of centralization or consolidating the Township's emergency services, and to determine the best model for Lawrence Township. Their goal is to provide a clear recommendation to propose to Council at the last meeting in April.

Mayor Farmer reported that the Planning Board met last night, and the Master Planner indicated that she is in the process of finalizing the documents in order to provide a formal written report, with the expectation that it will be completed by June. In addition, Mayor Farmer reported that all of the stakeholder meetings have been completed, the subcommittee was able to share their ideas with the Planning Board, and the recommendations and ideas are scheduled for a preliminary draft to be provided to the public.

Mayor Farmer stated that the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee would like to share that there will be an unveiling of the Lewisville Road marker, which will take place on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. on the Lawrenceville School Campus, and all are welcome to attend this event.

Mayor Farmer also reported that the Trails, Open Space and Stewardship Advisory Committee are asking Council to consider a Resolution for the creation of a trail near the Amazon Warehouse and the D & R canal, near Princess Road. She reported that Council will need to ask the Amazon property owners for permission to enter their property in order to walk the area and review the possible trail location.

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#### **Written Communications –**

There was no written communication.

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There being no further business to come before this Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Tonya D. Carter, Municipal Clerk

Attest:

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Patricia Farmer, Mayor