

TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

June 9, 2026— 6:00 P.M.

1. **CALL TO ORDER 6:00 pm** **By CP Kennedy**
2. **OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT STATEMENT** **Read by CVP Clark**
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** **All**
4. **INVOCATION** **CVP Clark**
5. **ROLL CALL** – Council Members Present – Kennedy, Clark, Wanisko
Absent - Saultz
-Also in attendance: Mayor Piazza, Attorney Wenner, Acting Municipal Clerk Turner
6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Regular Meeting Minutes May 23, 2026
Executive Session Minutes May 23, 2026

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

7. BILLS LIST

Council President Kennedy questioned the high dollar amount of check #5170 for computers for Recreation. Mayor Piazza stated that instead of replacing desktop units, laptops with docking stations, offsite VPN's, and proprietary software will be issued. The laptops and docking stations issued last year in many other municipal departments were around the same cost. Councilman Wanisko asked, regarding check #5182, if Peanuts is the name of a dog. Mayor Piazza stated Peanuts is the name of the K9 dog.

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

8. **MAYOR'S REPORT** – Mayor Piazza stated that while the sewer plant runs well, the collections system/sewer lines are old and have problems. On Sunday a police patrolman noticed

a softball sized depression in the road which indicates a sanitary sewer line, and possibly stormwater lines, have failed. If this is not addressed quickly it could lead to significant road damage, possible sidewalk damage, and traffic interruptions. A resolution has been “walked on” for tonight’s agenda to authorize a \$300,000 emergency contract with Montana Construction to address this. Unfortunately, emergency crews who come in on a moment’s notice charge a high fee but it has to be handled quickly. This is being paid through the Sewer Capital account. Councilman Fey asked if it would be better, given the condition of the collection system/sewer lines, if a 3 to 4 year service contract to address emergency situations were implemented. Pricing of hourly wages, cost per foot of pipe, etc. could be specified in such a contract. Attorney Rich Wenner, Engineer Tim O’Brien (audience) and Mayor Piazza confirmed that an emergency contract for these situations is paid through the Sewer Capital account. A service contract would not be a professional services contract, it would have to go out to bid. The funds, calculated by reviewing previous emergency sewer incidents and marking up wage and material costs, would have to be built into the municipal budget, with municipal funds encumbered.

9. PROCLAMATION – Read by Council VP Clark

Phillipsburg as a Documented Underground Railroad Community

WHEREAS, the Town of Phillipsburg recognizes that the promise of America is freedom and that those who fight for their freedom and for the freedom of others deserve recognition of the highest caliber and that the sites upon which such freedoms are won should be marked for posterity and venerated;

WHEREAS, historical records show that the building in Phillipsburg at 360 Chambers St., formerly known as the Eagle Hotel, was a stop on the famed Underground Railroad, the informal but critical route of places and people that gave refuge, comfort, and resources to runaway slaves on their journey to freedom;

WHEREAS, after 1850, the penalty for assisting escaped slaves in any way brought fines of up to \$1,000 (equivalent to approximately \$38,700.00 in 2025) and imprisonment for up to six months, and the law further “commanded” all Northern law enforcement agents and “all good citizens... to aid and assist” in the capture of escaped slaves;

WHEREAS, despite such risks and penalties, in an extensively researched Report to the New Jersey State Legislature from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the New Jersey Department of State, entitled “The Underground Railroad Project,” dated February 2002, lists Phillipsburg as a “Documented Underground Railroad Community”;

WHEREAS, the Report to the New Jersey State Legislature further identifies in Phillipsburg the “Eagle Hotel at the corner of Stockton and Chambers Streets” among the “Documented” and “Extant Underground Railroad Sites”;

WHEREAS, at 360 Chambers St. (on the corner of Stockton and Chambers streets) stands the building formerly known as the Eagle Hotel, which is currently owned by the Edwards family and is home to ASE Media and Underground Railroad Records;

WHEREAS, The Town of Phillipsburg is exceedingly proud to be a Documented Underground Railroad Community, a safe harbor stop on the road to freedom and home to those who risked nearly all for the freedom of others;

WE DO HEREBY CELEBRATE OUR STATUS AS A DOCUMENTED UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMUNITY AND DEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE PROFOUND PROPOSITION OF THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE US: THAT ALL MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED EQUAL AND THAT AS LONG AS ONE OF US IS NOT FREE, NONE OF US IS FREE. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FINDINGS OF THE NEW JERSEY HISTORIC COMMISSION AND THE NEW

JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF STATE WE FURTHER RECOGNIZE AND
PROCLAIM 360 CHAMBERS ST. TO BE A HISTORIC PHILLIPSBURG
HERITAGE SITE, FORGOTTEN NO MORE.

10. PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS – Council President Kennedy stated that two additional resolutions have been “walked on” for tonight’s Consent Agenda. Copies of the resolutions have been provided to the public with the agenda.

R2026 – 90 A Resolution authorizing the Town of Phillipsburg UEZ to submit an application to the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Authority for funding in the amount not to exceed \$158,076 for UEZ Tourism and Event Public Safety Program. This resolution was passed earlier this year but new dates had to be added. R2026-91 A Resolution authorizing the Town of Phillipsburg to enter into an Emergency Contract with Montana Construction for Sewer Line Repair.

-Joan Pierce, resident – O2026-15 – When she spoke on this ordinance at the last meeting some Council members and HR rolled their eyes. This is very disrespectful. It would have been nice if Council had taken a bigger pay cut.

-Joe Meyner, resident – O2026-17- asked where this property is located. Council President Kennedy stated by the old Ice House. Mr. Meyner asked if another town could take over this low cost housing responsibility. Mayor Piazza stated he does not know if it fulfills the developer’s obligations but it fulfills part of our town’s state obligation.

-Bill Timmans, resident – O2026-17 – asked if there is any guarantee that this will be senior housing and local seniors will be housed there. Council President Kennedy stated he believes this project will be age restricted. Attorney Wenner stated it would be open to but not limited to local residents.

- Gail Rogers, resident – Bill list – asked where the funds for check #5131 come from. Mayor Piazza stated it was funded two years ago through a grant. Ms. Rogers asked if check #5133 is for professional services. Mayor Piazza stated this is for Hudson Street and funded through a NJDOT paving grant. Mayor Piazza stated the grants are phased to cover different sections through different years. Ms. Rogers asked where the curb ramp improvements (check #5140) are being done. Mayor Piazza stated throughout the town. Ms. Rogers asked why there is a check for dog food. Mayor Piazza stated it is for the police K9 unit. Regarding the Proclamation, Ms. Rogers asked where the site is documented. Council VP Clark stated it was documented by the NJ State Historical Society.

-Jennifer, resident – O2026-17 – asked if this complex will be run by the town, are all the units 2 bedroom, and who is responsible to make sure it is age restricted. Mayor Piazza stated it will not be run by the town, Tim O’Brien stated that plans can be viewed on the Land Use Board webpage, and Attorney Wenner stated that the property owner would have to comply with the strict state funding requirements for age restrictions. Jennifer asked why there is a request to deviate from the required number of parking spaces. Tim O’Brien stated that this is done to allow for future parking areas which encourages additional building. This request will have to go before the Land Use Board.

11. ORDINANCES – 2nd Read and Public Hearing

O2026 -15 ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2026-14 REGARDING SALARIES

Public comments – None

Council comments – None

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey			X			
Councilman Saultz						X

Councilman Wanisko	X		X			
Council VP Clark		X	X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

12. ORDINANCE – 1st Read- Introduction

** 2nd Reading and public hearing will occur at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, 2026 at which time any interested persons may speak for or against the ordinance **

O2026-17 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, ADOPTING REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PROPERTY REFERRED TO AS THE “SOUTH MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT ZONE” CONSISTING OF BLOCK 2806, LOTS 2, 3, 4, 5, AND 7 AS IDENTIFIED ON THE TAX MAP OF THE TOWN

Council comments - None

MOTION

ROLL CALL Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

13. RESOLUTIONS ** CONSENT AGENDA **

Matters listed on the Consent Agenda Resolutions are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion of the Council and one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member requests an item to be removed for consideration.

R2026-82 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF INSPECTION FEE AND ESCROW BOND FOR STREET OPENING

R2026-83 A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE INSERTION OF SPECIAL ITEM OF REVENUE IN THE BUDGET OF ANY COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY PURSUANT TO N.J.S. 40A:4-87 (CHAPTER 159, P.L. 1948)

R2026-84 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION – Block 2313 Lot 18

R2026-85 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION- Block 2308 Lot 14

R2026-86 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION – Block 1309 Lot 12

R2026-87 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION – Block 905 Lot 1

R2026-88 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION - Block 815 Lot 4

R2026-89 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING REFUND OF PROPERTY TAX OVERPAYMENT DUE TO DISABLED VETERAN EXEMPTION – Block 807 Lot 13

R2026 – 90 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG UEZ TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE NEW JERSEY URBAN ENTERPRISE ZONE AUTHORITY FOR FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$158,076 FOR UEZ TOURISM AND EVENT PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM.

R2026-91 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG TO ENTER INTO AN EMERGENCY CONTRACT WITH MONTANA CONSTRUCTION FOR SEWER LINE REPAIR

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

14. HABITABILITY HEARING – 109 Chambers St

Attorney Wenner stated this hearing is being held due to a fitness of building complaint. The property owner was provided notice of the date and time of this hearing via certified and regular mail. The property owner is not present at this hearing. Based on the findings of this hearing, Council can decide the required actions/repairs for this property. If those actions/repairs are not done by the property owner, Council has the right to direct the town to undertake said actions/repairs and impose a lien on the property for the cost of undertaking them. If the lien is not paid the town can foreclose on the property and potentially sell it at auction. Mr. Wenner asked the town to present its argument. Mr. Michael Burke, Phillipsburg Code Official, will present information for the town. Mr. Burke was sworn in by Mr. Wenner. Mr. Burke stated that when he became employed by the town in early 2026, the Mayor tasked him with following up on this property. A Habitability hearing was held in 2020 for this property with additional hearings through 2023, with the last one being tabled and no additional hearings scheduled. Attorney Wenner stated that at a hearing on Feb 27, 2023 Council directed the property owner to, among other requirements, secure the structure, make the structure watertight, repair holes in the roof, secure the basement door, provide licensed contractor estimates to bring the structure up to code, and permit access to the property for interior inspection. Mr. Burke stated the last time this property was inspected was in 2023 and violation notices were issued. In 2024 additional violation notices were issued. The property owner did not attend the Court session to address these violations. Mr. Burke stated that the property owner did not attend a meeting with himself and the administration to address violations and concerns about the property. Holes in the roof were covered by sheathing but the property owner did this before the underlying roof structure was properly inspected, incurring a \$2000 fine. Mr. Burke stated that the property owner told him the fine was appealed but there is no record with Warren County of an appeal request. To date, no appeal has been made nor has the fine been paid. Mr. Burke has observed mold at the property, extensive debris, no railings, damaged sidewalk, no repairs to the basement door, and the building is not secured. In addition, there are vermin present which is a health code violation.

Council VP Clark remembers this case from 2023 and recalls that Director Kays stated he was confident the repairs would be completed, causing the final hearing to be tabled. All Council members agreed that this is a public nuisance that has gone on for too long, and action is required especially with vermin on the property. Mayor Piazza stated that the property owner called him on Friday and indicated he would be selling the property. The Mayor told him the property cannot remain in its current condition.

Attorney Wenner stated that Council can issue an order directing the homeowner to permit access to the building for interior inspection purposes, remove debris, secure the premises and have the vermin exterminated within 30 days.

The owner of the attached residence asked why nothing else can be done at this time. Attorney Wenner stated that under New Jersey law, the town has to provide 30 days to the property owner to complete the required actions before it can order the repairs/actions done by the town and have a lien for those services placed against the property. This is the only legal way to expedite it.

Motion – The Property Owner of 109 Chambers Street has 30 days to carry out the required repairs and actions - to permit access to the building for interior inspection purposes, remove debris, secure the premises and have the vermin exterminated

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			
Council President Kennedy			X			

15. OLD BUSINESS – Council VP Clark asked for an update on Brandywine redevelopment progress at 441 Heckman Street. Mayor Piazza and Business Administrator Brotons (audience) stated that Brandywine is working on the ground environmental aspect. They will come before Council with a report when it is completed.

16. NEW BUSINESS – None

17. MOTIONS – DATA CENTERS – Attorney Wenner stated Council had adopted an ordinance prohibiting Data Centers throughout the town. The Town Planner recommended Council direct the Land Use Board to reexamine the Master Plan in regards to Data Centers. If the Land Use Board's determination agree with the earlier ordinance an additional ordinance will be presented pursuant to the recommendations of the Land Use Board reaffirming the prohibition of Data Centers within town lines.

Motion to direct the Land Use Board to reexamine the Master Plan in regards to Data Centers

ROLL CALL

Motion Carries 4-0-1

Councilmembers	First	Second	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Fey	X		X			
Councilman Saultz						X
Councilman Wanisko		X	X			
Council VP Clark			X			

Council President Kennedy			X			
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18. PUBLIC PETITIONS –

-Joe Meyner, resident – asked what the property owner of 109 Chambers Street has to do to satisfy the town. Attorney Wenner stated he has to remove debris, secure the structure, rid the structure of vermin, and permit access for inspections. If he does not, the Town Council can authorize this work be done and have a lien placed on the property for that cost. Mr. Meyner asked if the owner loses rights to the property. Attorney Wenner stated that if a lien is placed on the property, and the lien is not paid, the town can foreclose the property and sell it at auction. The lien impacts the owners clear title, and the owner can pay the lien at any time and remove the foreclosure.

-Joan Pierce, resident – the town keeps giving the owner of 109 Chambers St leeway, when will you say enough is enough? He doesn't appear to care about any fines, he keeps promising to do work but never does. His neighbor should not have to live like this. The town needs to give him 7 or 15 days to comply. Attorney Wenner stated that was the purpose of this habitability hearing. The owner had previously been told he was responsible for the repairs. Now he has 30 days to complete the repairs or the town will do them. The town now has the legal right to go in and do them.

-Ron, resident – His girlfriend lives in the attached home next to 109 Chambers St. His biggest concern is if there is mold in that basement could it travel into the attached basement. Would it be possible to gain access to that basement and if mold is found how will it be handled? Mayor Piazza stated that if mold is found, a professional would be called in to handle it.

-Mike Burke, Code Enforcement Official, Phillipsburg – asked if health and fire inspections and enforcements could be done during the 30 day period. Attorney Wenner stated that they can.. If vermin are found through a health inspection, a 10 day notice will be issued. If the grass is left uncut, a 10 day notice can be issued, and a lien imposed.

-Bill Timmans, resident – stated he has not seen an ordinance relating to holding parents accountable for the actions of their children. Attorney Wenner stated he is still working on it.

-Jennifer, resident – asked if the property owner of 109 Chambers St begins repairs within the 30 days, does everything go on hold. Attorney Wenner stated that all the repairs must be completed within the 30 days. The property owner can appeal but these are repairs than can be done within 30 days.

-Gail Rogers, resident – Wanted to share opportunities for our youth and adults interested in various arts media. PeacePalsInternational.org is holding a contest for youth ages 5 to 16 in 23 countries around the world to submit artwork showcasing this year's theme of Together in Peace. The deadline is August 31st and winners will be announced November 22nd. MyHero.com is accepting submissions of any art media such as poetry, short films, or videos, for various contests with prizes ranging from \$1000 to \$2500. Their site also has many Media Arts Education resources. Visualize Heroism Art is open to Pre-K through college age children to submit art that celebrates the hero in their lives. This contest has a December 1st deadline. Ms. Rogers hopes spreading awareness of these will help support our community.

-Dustin Pierce, resident -I want to thank those who were able to attend the Pride event this past Saturday. A special shout out to all those who helped make that event possible. It was an amazing event and we had an amazing day even though it was a little hot and some rain later in the day. I do want to address though the speech that was given by a Councilmember during the Pride event. It was disappointing and missed an important opportunity to demonstrate genuine support for the LGBTQ+ community.

Pride is intended to be a time of recognition, celebration, and affirmation of LGBTQ+ individuals and families. Rather than embracing that purpose, the event became overshadowed by political theater and unnecessary division. Community events should bring people together, not be used as a platform for political posturing.

What was especially troubling was the absence of any formal dedication or proclamation recognizing June as Pride Month. Across New Jersey and the nation, municipalities take time to acknowledge the contributions, history, and ongoing struggles of LGBTQ+ residents. Failing to do so sends a message that

this community is not worthy of the same recognition routinely afforded to others. We have done one in the past by all councils before, and I have spoken to council members at the event and yet even tonight there was no proclamation done. Susan did a lovely job last year with the Pride proclamation, but it seems like it was not a priority to this council this year.

While I won't take away from the proclamation that was read - The LGBTQ+ community deserves more than symbolic attendance. It deserves meaningful acknowledgment, respect, and a demonstrated commitment to inclusion. Public officials have a responsibility to represent all residents, regardless of political differences, and that responsibility includes ensuring that community celebrations are treated with dignity and respect.

I'm not here to argue the validity of the speech I'm saying this was not the place to do so.

After this year, major changes are going to have to be put in place for future Pride events that will focus less on politics and more on the people they are intended to celebrate. Thank you.

-Stuart Ridley, resident – thanked Attorney Wenner for the excellent explanation he provided regarding the process around 109 Chambers Street and asked for confirmation that Council did the most it could legally do. Previous Council gave the property owner the benefit of the doubt. In 30 days, if the owner has not completed the repairs, the town will do them and impose a lien on the property.

19. COUNCIL OPEN TIME –

-Councilman Wanisko – As he was driving to the Pride event, he passed another driver who greeted him with “Good morning, communist”. While some have been critical of our Pride Event, the important part is that for many years the LGBTQ community has been forced to stay silent or invisible. He is proud of the Pride Event we held and is happy we did it. It is important to let people know they are not alone and he feels we accomplished that. Councilman Wanisko is looking forward to the Juneteenth observation.

- Councilman Fey – Two weeks ago, while he and his family were home, someone in a dark hooded sweatshirt attempted to break into their house. Fortunately, their dog scared them away. He asked everyone to keep an eye on their neighbors, their properties, and keep watch in their neighborhoods.

- Council VP Clark – On Friday, June 19th, Juneteenth events will begin at 11 am to honor the unknown black child buried at the Phillipsburg Cemetery. Then a commemoration will be held from 12 to 3 in Shappell Park. Details and organizers can be found on TapInto Phillipsburg. This is a great part of our town's history that we can now share thanks to the dedication of many volunteers. Council VP Clark thanked all the organizers of the Pride Flag Raising. It is always an honor to attend this event.

- Council President Kennedy – stated he is looking forward to the Juneteenth Ceremony and Ole Town Festival. The UEZ Facebook page and the Town website have information. Music in the Park will begin the last Thursday in June from 6 to 9 pm in Shappell Park. Information is available on the Town website. He encouraged everyone to attend these events.

20. ADJOURNMENT – 7:16 PM

Councilman Fey moved to adjourn. Seconded by Council VP Clark.

Ayes:4, Nays: 0, Absent: 1 Motion carries.

Susan Turner, Acting Municipal Clerk