

TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

September 22, 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** **Council VP Clark**
5. **ROLL CALL** – Council Members Present – Kennedy, Clark, Fey (6:05), Wanisko
Absent – Saultz
-Also in attendance: Mayor Piazza, Attorney Wenner, Acting Municipal Clerk Turner
6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Regular Meeting Minutes September 8, 2026
Executive Session Minutes September 8, 2026

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			

7. **BILLS LIST**

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			

8. **MAYOR'S REPORT –**

Over the past several weeks, Phillipsburg has had a lot to celebrate while continuing to move forward on several important long-term initiatives.

I want to thank everyone who helped make our America 250 and Phillipsburg 165th Anniversary Celebration such a success. The parade, festival at Shappell Park and fireworks brought residents, businesses, organizations, volunteers and visitors together for a great day celebrating our community and our nation's history.

Our business community also continues to grow. Congratulations to Burley's Gym & Fitness on its grand opening at its new Broad Street location and to Thistle & Sage on its grand opening on South Main Street. Every new or expanding business represents another investment in Phillipsburg.

We are also preparing to begin another significant round of paving in the coming weeks. This will mark the second year in a row that multiple miles of Phillipsburg roadways are being improved, along with related curb, ADA and infrastructure work.

At the same time, we continue working on major long-term priorities. This includes hopefully acquiring the privately owned Howard Street property in conjunction with the NJDEP and other partners. This is property that has previously been considered for housing or warehouse development, and our goal is to instead pursue its acquisition for open space and an expansion of the Delaware River Park footprint.

We are also continuing efforts to establish a permanent home for our municipal services, Police Department and Department of Public Works, while working toward a long-term solution for our aging sewer infrastructure. These are major projects that require careful planning, outside funding and coordination, but they are important investments in Phillipsburg's future.

Recreation remains another priority. In recent years we have seen renewed basketball and pickleball courts, new playground improvements and upgrades to neighborhood parks. We will continue exploring grants, partnerships and other funding sources to replace outdated or broken recreational facilities throughout town.

There is still a great deal of work ahead, but progress continues on roads, recreation, economic development, infrastructure, municipal facilities and open space. Many of these projects take time, but we remain focused on moving them forward responsibly.

Finally, I am happy to announce that we will once again hold our Halloween Decorating Contest and, later this year, our Christmas Decorating Contest in conjunction with the Branching Out Foundation. For more information about the decorating contests, please reach out to Vickie Mendez-Brach at the Branching Out Foundation. We look forward to seeing our neighborhoods get into the holiday spirit once again.

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:07 pm** - Council VP Clark moved to enter Executive Session. Seconded by Councilman Wanisko. Ayes: 4, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 1. Motion passed. Attorney Wenner stated the topic to be discussed is redevelopment. No action will be taken.

RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE – 6:28 pm - Council VP Clark moved to resume Public Session. Seconded by Councilman Wanisko. Ayes: 4, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 1. Motion passed. Attorney Wenner stated the topic discussed was redevelopment. No action was taken.

10. **PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON AGENDA ITEMS –**

-Jennifer, resident – O2026-26 – based on the wording of this ordinance, a babysitter could be the responsible guardian and held responsible for the minor's actions. A babysitter should not be held accountable the same as a parent. Being held accountable for minor's motor vehicle acts is ridiculous. This ordinance is not necessary, overreaching, and just puts a band aid on the problem. Some parents try to control their child but the child continues their behavior. These parents shouldn't face punishment.

-Joe Meyner, resident – O2026-26 – He submitted an education plan to the federal government for the America 2000 education system reform setting up a constitutional school for grades 7 through 14 in which the students control the line function of the school. He will give a copy of the plan to the Acting Clerk for anyone who wishes to view it.

-Bill Benz, Phillipsburg Downtown Business Association – R2026-141 – requested a description of the activities included in the numbers given all the work being done on the sewer system.

-Dan Boyce, resident – O2026-26 – Instead of going after parents the town should provide things for kids to do. \$75,000 that was kept by a private entity could have funded three new youth organizations.

-resident – O2026-26 – This ordinance is a good thing. If parents are having trouble with a child they may welcome the extra help. Council may consider adding community service for the minor. There are too many kids creating havoc.

- Juan Mareno, Outreach Coordinator, Blessed Hope Church – The church will be holding a Basketball Tournament Sat, Oct 24 from 9 to 5. They hope to help create a bridge between the church and the community. All are welcome to attend.

11. HABITABILITY HEARING - 109 Chambers St

Attorney Wenner stated this is a continuation of the August 11 Habitability Hearing at which the property owner was ordered to remove personal property from inside the building within 30 days and was given 10 days to schedule an inspection of the roof repair previously done on the building. The property owner was not present at this hearing. Attorney Wenner swore in Phillipsburg Construction Official Scott Schofield. Mr. Schofield stated he visited the property about 30 days ago along with an inspector, a code official, and the Fire Chief. The building still needs to be cleaned out and the inspection was not scheduled. Attorney Wenner explained that the cost incurred by the town to clean out the building will be imposed as a lien on the property. The town will determine the next steps to be taken. All debris has to be removed so the structural integrity of the building can be determined. Additional discussion included options for the building if it becomes town property, if it is structurally sound.

ROLL CALL Approve clean out of debris from inside 109 Chambers St

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. ORDINANCES – 2nd Read and Public Hearing

O2026-26 ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, CREATING CHAPTER 380 ENTITLED “MINORS AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY” TO IMPOSE CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS AND/OR GUARDIANS OF MINORS ENGAGING IN CERTAIN OFFENDING BEHAVIOR

Public comments – Stuart Ridely, resident – agrees that something needs to be done but the Town Council may not be the best venue. This is not a well crafted ordinance, more a list of random thoughts. Felonies, high misdemeanors, and misdemeanors makes sense and should be the focus. Violations of penal law or municipal ordinance need a lot of explanation and clarity. The rest of the list should be removed as much of it is included in the first two items. Endangering the moral health or general welfare of the child and lack of supervision are listed, but the ordinance holds adults responsible for a child’s actions. That doesn’t make sense. These two may belong within the ordinance but not in the list of offenses.

Council comments – Councilman Fey stated this ordinance needs to be fine tuned and changes must be made. Councilman Wanisko stated there is a need for it but it needs to be refined. It is too broad and there is no carve out for responsible parents. Council President Kennedy stated he agrees it is needed but the ordinance needs revisions.

ROLL CALL Table Ordinance 2026-26

Motion Carries 4-0-1

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

13. ORDINANCE – 1st Read- Introduction

**** 2nd Reading and public hearing will occur at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 13, 2026 at which time any interested persons may speak for or against the ordinance ****

O2026-27 ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING THE PHILLIPSBURG TOWN CODE BY INCREASING CERTAIN FEES PROVIDED THEREIN

Council comments - None

ROLL CALL O2026-2

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			

O2026-28 ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PROPERTIES REFERRED TO AS THE RIVERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT AREA, DISTRICTS 1 THROUGH 6

Council comments – Councilman Wanisko questioned a provision regarding the developer’s option to develop all or a portion of the lot in accordance with the uses and standards for the underlying zoning or the standards outlined herein. Attorney Wenner stated this Redevelopment Plan is overlay zoning which leaves all previously existing zoning in place.

ROLL CALL O2026-2

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			

14. 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.

R2026-137 GOVERNING BODY CERTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT

R2026-138 RESOLUTION APPROVING THE CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

R2026-139 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY, AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A MINOR SUBDIVISION DEED CONCERNING A PORTION OF BLOCK 1218, LOTS 8 AND 9

R2026-140 AUTHORIZING THE NJ STATE CONTRACT PURCHASE OF EMERGENCY LIGHTING AND EQUIPMENT INSTALLATION FOR POLICE VEHICLES FROM ELITE VEHICLE SOLUTIONS

R2026-142 RESOLUTION DESIGNATING HANDICAP PARKING SPACES WITHIN THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG

R2026-143 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG 2026 DOWNTOWN PAVING PROJECT

ROLL CALL - Consent Agenda

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			

R2026-141 pulled from Consent agenda by Councilman Wanisko

R2026-141 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, IN THE COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING TOWN OFFICIALS TO UNDERTAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF NOT TO EXCEED \$24,992,000 BOND ANTICIPATION NOTES, SERIES 2026 CONSISTING OF \$20,492,000 GENERAL IMPROVEMENT NOTES, SERIES 2026 AND \$4,500,000 SEWER UTILITY NOTES, SERIES 2026

Councilman Wanisko stated he pulled the resolution in response to the resident's inquiry earlier. Mayor Piazza stated that the Sewer Engineer Dennis Yoder would be the best person to answer any questions. Councilman Fey stated he reached out to Mr. Yoder earlier this week but has not heard back.

ROLL CALL -R2026-141

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			

Council President Kennedy stated the "place hold" resolution 2026-143 in the published agenda has been updated to award the contract to Riverview Paving of Hackettstown, NJ with the lowest responsive bid for a total bid of \$2,829,422.11 (Base Bid, Alternate Bid A, B and C)

R2026-143 RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG, COUNTY OF WARREN, STATE OF NEW JERSEY AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG 2026 DOWNTOWN PAVING PROJECT

ROLL CALL -R2026-143

Motion Carries 4-0-1

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

Council President Kennedy stated that two additional resolutions are to be voted on. Attorney Wenner stated that Comcast is installing a power supply in a right of way for the cable they are installing. The two locations are 18-20 Market Street and 22 Market Street.

R2026-144 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GRANT OF EASEMENT FOR CABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS PURPOSES

ROLL CALL -R2026-144

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			

R2026-145 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GRANT OF EASEMENT FOR CABLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS PURPOSES

ROLL CALL -R2026-145

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** – Tabled August 11, 2026 - Check #5579 –
Mayor Piazza stated this check can be removed from this and future agendas.

ROLL CALL - Remove Check #5579

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			

16. **NEW BUSINESS** – None

17. **MOTIONS** – Special Event Applications – Pork Roll Palooza, Halloween Parade

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			

18. PUBLIC PETITIONS – Bill Timmans, resident – asked about progress on the Orphan Bridge. Mayor Piazza stated that NJDOT crews are working 24 hours a day, 6 days a week. NJDOT believes work will be completed mid to end of October. Norfolk Southern just recently gave permission for the work to progress. An alternate Halloween parade route may have to be planned.

- Tommy Courter, Phillipsburg DPW Employee – Chapter 53 of the Town Code established a Board of Ethics. He is proposing that council enforce this and create a board of ethics to make sure every employee, every elected official, and administration make ethical decisions.

- Bill Benz, Phillipsburg Downtown Business Association – regarding the property at 109 Chambers St. the Town should look into the Land Bank. The property would become part of the town's portfolio but be in a separate area and managed separately.

-Ms. Williver, resident – reading a statement on behalf of Michael Burke – read out incidents concerning Michael Burke in his capacity as a Phillipsburg Code Enforcement Officer including: a council member suggesting reconsideration of his employment, a council member contacting HR regarding a personal podcast being subject to town social media regulations, a council member making disparaging public comments about his character, a local political figure requesting security footage via OPRA of an incident involving him at Town Hall, a council member making public comments about a resident who was involved in legal proceedings with Michael Burke, a council member releasing Mr. Burke's town emails to this resident, the interruption of the Council meeting live stream while he was giving testimony, a council member contacting the Business Administrator about a Face Book post and suggesting disciplinary action, a council member questioning the purchase of t-shirts for a community clean up event organized and directed by Mr. Burke, a council member questioning his creation of a code enforcement Face Book post.

-Mike Burke, Phillipsburg Code Enforcement Officer – Mr. Burke spoke about additional incidents concerning him in his capacity as a Phillipsburg Code Enforcement Officer – The Facebook post was approved by the Mayor. A council member questioned the timing of an educational video released on Facebook. His coworkers have been questioned about him. Mr. Burke received a text from a former mayor containing hostile language regarding the current mayor. A local political figure requested his out of state employment records via OPRA. A council member spoke with Mr. Burke's supervisor and told him that Mr. Burke should not give testimony on 109 Chambers Street habitability at tonight's meeting. A council member visited the resident involved in legal proceedings with Mr. Burke. The optics of this do not look right. A council member made inquiries into why he was posting regarding Section 155. 20 different incidents and they were all by Democrats. This feels like political retaliation.

19. COUNCIL OPEN TIME –

-Councilman Wanisko – He could not attend the 165/250 Parade but heard it was well attended. He attended meetings at the Senior Center and attended the Firth Youth Center Annual Banquet. The volunteers for these organizations are genuinely appreciative and believe in the work they are doing.

-Councilman Fey – Recounted a time he helped a person he later found out was homeless. With cold weather approaching he asked people to open their hearts to those who need help.

- Council VP Clark – He attended the Open Space meeting at which chess tables for Shappell Park were approved. He would like Council to consider approving these when it comes before them.

Randy Piazza, Sr. made a presentation to the Open Space Committee regarding the Morris Canal arch. A \$300,000 grant was received years ago to fix it up and make it accessible to the public. The Open Space Committee would like Council to look into the site project and see how it may move forward. It will take a lot of money and cooperation between state departments, the county, the town, and possibly private investors. It would be a perfect connection to the Rails to Trails project. The Ethics Board is worth looking into, though it is hard to find volunteers for committees and boards.

- Council President Kennedy – stated the work on the Orphan Bridge is making progress.

Unfortunately, approval from Norfolk Southern delayed the work. NJDOT had prefabbed steel so work has accelerated. Council President Kennedy attended ribbon cuttings for two businesses, Burley's Gym, who renovated their building on Broad St, and Thistle & Sage, a new business. He encouraged residents to attend the Pork Roll Palooza on October 10 in Shappell Park.

20. ADJOURNMENT – 7:23 PM

Councilman Fey moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilman Wanisko.

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

Susan Turner, Acting Municipal Clerk