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

October 20, 2026

The following are the Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Lawrence Township Council that was held on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

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

At the commencement of the meeting Mayor Bobbitt 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, October 20, 2026, 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 12, 2025.

Mayor Bobbitt stated that, additionally, notice was posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board and the Lawrence Township website.

The roll was then called as follows:

Present: Councilmembers Farmer, Giglio, Kownacki, Santos and Mayor Bobbitt.
Absent: None.

Also in attendance were Christopher Longo, Acting Municipal Manager, and Tyler Newman, Esq., Acting Municipal Attorney.

Special Proclamations, Recognitions and Presentations

Mayor Christopher Bobbitt stated that tonight he will read into record a special proclamation in celebration of Younity's 2026 Communities of Light Day.

Proclamation

WHEREAS, it is the policy of Lawrence Township to recognize organizations that have contributed to the overall benefit of the community; and

WHEREAS, Younity (formerly Womanspace), founded in 1977, has demonstrated a unique ability to provide comfort, support services, crisis intervention and safety to women, men and children who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and strangulation; and

WHEREAS, Younity (formerly Womanspace), in the belief that "peace begins at home", has asked the Mercer County Community to join them in their struggle against family violence by participating in their annual Communities of Light project; and

WHEREAS, Younity (formerly Womanspace) has provided emergency shelter in secure locations and comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence since 1977, sexual assault since 2002 and strangulation since 2024, for more than 130,204 women, 17,782 children and 9,397 men. Additionally, Younity (formerly Womanspace) has assisted more than 332, 296 hotline callers over the last 48 years; and

WHEREAS, Younity (formerly Womanspace) proudly **celebrates 50 years** of serving the Mercer County Community, while honoring Womanspace's legacy. Their name reflects their mission of fostering unity, empowerment, and healing for survivors from ALL backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, Lawrence Township commends Younity (formerly Womanspace) for their efforts to bring an end to the cycle of interpersonal violence imposed on women, men, and children; and

WHEREAS, as Mayor of Lawrence Township I urge that each and every household demonstrate their support of the concept that "peace begins at home" by placing luminaries along their driveways and sidewalks on Monday, October 26, 2026, as a visible symbol of that support; and

WHEREAS, the proceeds from Communities of Light 2026 will be used to fund vital services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, strangulation and human trafficking.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Christopher Bobbitt, Mayor of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim October 26,2026, as

COMMUNITIES OF LIGHT DAY

and hereby honor Younity (formerly Womanspace) on its many accomplishments and wish them continued success with Communities of Light in the years to come.

"Peace Begins at Home. It Shines Through Our Communities."

Date: October 20, 2026

Public Participation

Mayor Bobbitt read into record the following statement:

The focus of the Public Comment Period is for members of the public to inform the Governing Body of their views. This time is an opportunity for Township Council to listen with care to the public and to consider what we hear in our deliberations. It is not a time for back-and-forth dialogue, as that can be difficult for us to give accurate responses to critical and complex issues on the spot. Rather, one can call or email members of Council, Manager or Clerk seeking additional information or response to an issue.

Mayor Bobbitt also read two excerpts from the Lawrence Township Administrative Code regarding the manner in addressing Council:

Chapter 10-22 Manner of Addressing Council: A person may address the Council upon recognition by the Chair. A person addressing the Council shall write down their name and address on the sign-up sheet, shall step up to the microphone, shall give their name in an audible tone of voice for the record, and shall have the right to address the Council for the amount of time designated by the Chair. No person having the floor shall be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through a member of the Council, without permission of the Chair. No question shall be asked of Councilperson except through the Chair.

Chapter 10-23 Decorum at Council Meetings: Any person making impertinent or slanderous remarks or who shall become boisterous while addressing the Council shall forthwith be barred from further audience before the Council by the Presiding Officer unless permission to continue or again address the Council be granted by the majority vote of Council.

Mr. Edward Oskay stated he is present tonight to address the official Lawrence Township policy regarding the return of property subsequent to a citizen voluntarily giving their property to the police. He detailed a series of events that transpired on November 29, 2023 that resulted in his voluntarily surrendering his weapons to the Lawrence Township Police and participating in a psychiatric evaluation. Mr. Oskay revealed that he decided to sell his weapons but soon came to regret this decision, and subsequently applied for a new permit to purchase a firearm. He relayed that his application was denied on June 5, 2025. After unsuccessfully going through several channels to obtain various reports regarding the November 29, 2023 incident, Mr. Oskay expressed his belief that, ultimately, his First, Second, and Fifth Amendment rights had been violated by the Lawrence Township Police.

Mr. Bobbitt thanked Mr. Oskay for bringing this issue to Council's attention, and assured him that he will speak to Municipal Attorney, Arthur Sypek, Esq. upon his return.

Mr. Tom Wilford stated that he was Mayor of Lawrence Township over thirty years ago, but is here tonight as a member of the board of Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. to

speak on behalf of their RFP proposal regarding the Lawrence Community Center. He informed Council that the board worked hard on this proposal, and took into consideration the findings of the Mayor's Task Force when crafting the document. Although they had questions during the drafting process, Mr. Wilford explained they understood that questions to Council were not permitted under RFP rules. In spite of this, he considered theirs to be a good proposal, and disagreed with the belief that the document contained legal defects. For this reason, Mr. Wilford asked that Council table Resolution 352-26 and allow for a thirty-day extension in order for the board to discuss their proposal with Council, correct the alleged flaws, rebut the legal opinion, and reschedule action on Resolution 352-26 for November 16, 2026.

Mr. Fred Vereen, Jr. posed the question to Council, "Do you really want this building to be a community center for the residents of Lawrence Township, for *all* the residents of Lawrence Township, or do you want it to be a recreation facility for a segment of our Township?" He then provided a brief history of the community center, highlighting its accomplishments since its establishment in 1967, as well as the history of the founding of the Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc., which ultimately led to the development of the Eggerts Crossing Community. Mr. Vereen emphasized that he and his fellow community volunteers have had to fight for every improvement they have achieved in the Eggerts Crossing Community, beginning as early as 1965, and stressed that it takes courage to do the right thing. Finally, he expressed his agreement with Mr. Wilford's idea with regard to the thirty-day extension, stating that it was the right thing to do.

Mr. Edward Oskay once again introduced himself and wished to briefly state that, with regard to the previously mentioned November 29, 2023 incident, he attempted to address the issue with the Lawrence Township Mayor, the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, the Attorney General's Office, and the Governor's Office, but received no response. He believes it is an abomination that no one will respond to his letters in writing.

Mr. Gary Backinoff stated that he is an attorney for Lawrence Nonprofit Housing Inc., and conveyed that it was their impression that Council wanted to cooperate with the nonprofits in the community to develop the Community Center. He believes the problem is a lack of communication, and is unsure where the Council stands on the proposal. Mr. Backinoff expressed that discussions between Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. and Council would be highly productive and that much could be accomplished through collaboration among the Township, the nonprofit organizations, and the community at large.

Mr. Carlos Hendricks stated that he is here tonight because he believes this is an important issue, as the Community Center has been instrumental in assisting in the development of many Township children over the years, including himself. He shared that, as a child, he participated in many Community Center events and ultimately went on to become the Center's director, crediting Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. for the opportunities that made this possible. Mr. Hendricks relayed that he was pleased to hear that Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. was involved in the RFP process, noting that the organization helped establish the Community Center, and elevate it to national

recognition through their award-winning programs. He revealed that, throughout his professional career, he has reviewed RFP's at the municipal, county, state and federal levels, and is confident that Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. has a proven track record of success, and is an organization the Township should consider entrusting with the operation of the Community Center. He then thanked everyone who was a part of the RFP process, and asked that the Council consider tabling the Resolution tonight.

Mr. Craig Pasko stated that he is here not only as a board member and past president of Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc., but also as a fifty-year citizen of Lawrence Township. He reflected that in the past, Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. had yearly financial support from the Township to help them maintain their budget, and today, their finances are in much better shape. Mr. Pasko emphasized that, beyond the strength of Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc.'s finances is the quality of the individuals who work at the organization, which he feels is of the utmost importance.

Mr. Samual Orlando stated that he worked for the Lawrence Township Community Center when it was run by the HomeFront organization. He asked that Council allow Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. time to fix any problems found within their RFP. Mr. Orlando also relayed that the Community Center should be updated to allow for more space to better serve the disabled within the community, as well as those with special needs, as he believes they were largely ignored for a many years.

Review and Revisions of Agenda

There was no review and revision of agenda.

Adoption of Minutes

On a motion by Councilwoman Amanda Santos, seconded by Councilwoman Patricia Farmer, the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 6, 2026 were approved without corrections on the following roll call vote:

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

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On a motion by Ms. Santos, seconded by Ms. Farmer, the Minutes of the Closed Session Meeting of October 6, 2026 were approved without corrections on the following roll call vote:

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

Awarding or Rejecting of Bids

There was no awarding or rejecting of bids.

Introduction of Ordinances

There was no introduction of ordinances.

Adoption of Ordinances

There was no adoption of ordinances.

Manager's Report –

Acting Municipal Manager, Mr. Christopher Longo, reported that the Township is continuing to investigate the employment issue between the Lawrence Township crossing guards and *Golden Building Maintenance* that was discussed at the October 6th Council meeting. He stated that he hopes to have an update by the November 5th Council meeting.

Attorney's Report –

There was no attorney report.

Clerk's Report –

Municipal Clerk, Ms. Tonya Carter-Jones, reported several dates to be aware of with regard to 2026 Elections:

- **Early Voting:** *October 24, 2026 through November 1, 2026, Monday – Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Mercer County Library located at 2751 Brunswick Pike.*

- **General Election:** November 3, 2026, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Carter-Jones stated that the next Council meeting will be moved to Thursday, November 5th due to the elections.

Ms. Carter-Jones asked Council to consider if they would like to perform the swearing in of the newly elected Councilperson at the January 5th Council meeting, as there is no need for a Reorganization Meeting due to the fact that a new Mayor is not being elected, or if they would prefer to have a Reorganization Meeting on January 1st and perform the swearing in at that time.

Unfinished Business –

There was no unfinished business.

Old Business/New Business –

There was no old business/new business.

Public Participation (3-minute limitation per speaker) –

Ms. Martha Friend stated that, although she is ignorant of the rules regarding the bidding process, she believes that the idea of a thirty-day extension to allow for more communication is a good thing, and asked that Council consider this course of action.

Ms. Sylwia Kolbus stated that, speaking as a resident who consistently shows up for special meetings for the Community Center, she feels it is very important for the Township to bring back the Community Center under the leadership of the original founding organization, as they have proven that they can handle the responsibility of running the Center for the Township. For this reason, she asked that Council consider the thirty-day extension to allow for communication with the provider of the RFP.

Mr. Michael Smith stated that he has lived in Lawrence Township since he was nine years old, and was a Lawrence Township Police Officer for twenty-five years. He expressed frustration with the current situation regarding the Community Center and Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc.'s RFP, and asked Council why the issue of paperwork is the reason that discussion of the Center's future has stopped. Mr. Smith disagreed with the thirty-day extension, indicating that there should be no limitation pertaining to how long discussions should be held to remedy the situation.

Resolutions

Discussion was had regarding pulling Resolution No. 352-26, "Authorizing the Rejection of Proposal Regarding the Lease of Municipal Facility (Lawrence Neighborhood Center)" to be voted on separately, to which Council unanimously agreed.

Resolution Nos. 347-26 (18-A.1) through Nos. 351-26 (18-H.1), and Resolution Nos. 353-26 (18-H.3) through Resolution Nos. 357-26 (18-H.7) were approved by the following roll call vote:

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

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

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Mayor Bobbitt began the discussion by reading Resolution No. 352-26 into record:

Resolution No. 352-26

RESOLUTION REJECTING PROPOSALS IN RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR LEASE OF MUNICIPAL FACILITY (LAWRENCE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER - EGGERTS CROSSING ROAD, LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY)

WHEREAS, the Township of Lawrence ("Township") is the owner of certain municipal property and improvements commonly known as the Lawrence Neighborhood Center located at 295 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrence Township, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, on June 16, 2026, the Township Council adopted Resolution No. 217-26 authorizing the issuance of a Request for Proposals ("RFP") entitled "Request for Proposals (RFP) – Lease of Municipal Facility (Lawrence Neighborhood Center – Eggerts
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Crossing Road)" to solicit proposals from qualified nonprofit organizations for the lease, operation, and programming of the facility for community-oriented purposes and services; and

WHEREAS, in paragraph 4 of Resolution No. 217-26, the Township expressly reserved the right to reject any and all proposals; and

WHEREAS, as part of the procurement process to award a lease agreement pursuant to the terms of the RPF, the Township accepted and answered questions from prospective Respondents and incorporated the answers into the RFP as Addendum #2 to the RFP; and

WHEREAS, in response to a question inquiring as to whether the Township would commit to financially support the operational support for the programming pursuant to the RFP, the Township answered that Respondents would have to fund its own operations and programming and that the Township would not commit to financial support of the respondents' operations and programming; and

WHEREAS, on August 24, 2026 the Township received a single proposal in response to the RFP from an entity called Lawrence Non-Profit Housing, Inc. ("LNPH"); and

WHEREAS, the proposal submitted by LNPH was not in conformance with RFP as LNPH proposed, because: (i) LNPH proposed a lease arrangement with the Township to begin "at the level of $1/year," but also stated that rent would be subject to renegotiation on an annual basis "in consideration of program costs and generated income;" and (ii) LNPH included a proposed operating budget which included and relied upon, in part, a $135,000 financial contribution from the Township in the first year of the proposed lease and a $110,000 financial contribution from the Township in the second year of the proposed lease; and

WHEREAS, the reservation to renegotiate rent on an annual basis and the reliance upon financial contributions from the Township deviated from the terms and conditions of the RFP and constitute material defects in LNPH's proposal;

WHEREAS, according to Meadowbrook Carting Co. v. Borough of Island Heights, 138 N.J. 307, 315 (1994), a contracting unit cannot waive a nonconforming bid proposal if that bid materially deviates from the bid specifications.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Lawrence, County of Mercer, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. *The Township Council hereby authorizes the rejection of all proposals submitted in response to the Township's Request for Proposals ("RFP") entitled "Request for Proposals (RFP) – Lease of Municipal Facility (Lawrence Neighborhood Center – Eggerts Crossing Road)."*

2. *The Municipal Manager, Municipal Clerk, Municipal Attorney, and such other Township officials as may be necessary are hereby authorized to review the RFP to determine what, if any, amendments, revisions or changes should be incorporated prior to any readvertisement of the RFP subject to approval from the Township Council.*

3. *This Resolution shall take effect immediately.*

Acting Municipal Attorney, Tyler Newman, Esq., addressed the comments made during public participation regarding requests for further conversations and communications between Lawrence Housing Nonprofit, Inc. and the Township pertaining to their RFP bid submission, stating that New Jersey RFP laws do not contain any type of mandate to negotiate, meet, confer, or work out issues with bidders. He further clarified that there are strict compliance requirements, and when a legally deficient bid is submitted, it remains a legally deficient bid, with no legal basis for an extension.

Ms. Santos stated that, in her current position with the State of New Jersey, her daily responsibilities include both issuing and reviewing RFP's. Although she is not in disagreement with the sentiments that were expressed at tonight's meeting regarding Lawrence Housing Nonprofit, Inc.'s impact on the community, as well as the importance of having clarifying conversations, she revealed that, per her review of the proposal, she found items that were materially deviant from the RFP. Ms. Santos explained that if the Township were to open this up to negotiation, it would weaken the entire public bidding process, as precedent would be set to opt for negotiations with any bidder who wished to renegotiate the terms of the RFP. She expressed her belief that the path forward to having conversations like the ones suggested lies in the rejection of this bid proposal in order for both parties to explore how they may work together in the future.

Councilwoman Bonnie Giglio relayed that, like her colleagues, she believed the RFP process was the correct way to go to fill the need that was outlined during the Mayor's Task Force process as it pertained to the Community Center. She indicated that, as a member of the Mayor's Task Force, she heard many wonderful ideas regarding what could fill that space, and hoped that they would soon find an organization that could "take the reins" of the Center. Ms. Giglio stated that it was unfortunate that the only proposal the Township received was non-responsive as it left the Council with no other choice but to reject the proposal. She shared her wish that the outcome was different, but understands that the law is clear, and with the proposal being unresponsive, Council must do what they are legally required to do.

Councilman James Kownacki stated that, although he was not happy with what must be done tonight, he felt his hands were tied. He emphasized, however, that rejecting the RFP would not mean the end to the Community Center. Mr. Kownacki expressed his desire to begin making improvements to the building to bring it up to code, and noted that discussions could resume once the redevelopment process was underway.

Ms. Farmer asked Mr. Newman several legal questions regarding the RFP process, and questioned whether the avenue forward for Lawrence Nonprofit Housing, Inc. would be to submit a new RFP. Mr. Newman agreed that submitting an RFP for a new bidding process would be another option for the future, but cautioned that it would not be a way to provide an "extension of time," as it would be a part of a completely new bidding process.

Mayor Bobbitt stated that he heard what was expressed tonight and understood the feelings of consternation and frustration with the situation, but Council's decision was based on the proposal with which they were presented. He explained that they had sought legal counsel from both the Municipal Attorney as well as an independent third party who reviewed the document and reached this determination. Mr. Bobbitt emphasized that, given his oath as a Councilmember to uphold the law, he could not disregard the law or the attorneys' guidance regarding the bid's non-responsiveness and deficiencies. However, he does not believe this is the end of the story, as renovations on the building's external work have begun, and the Township has received generous federal and state support from Congressman Herb Conaway and New Jersey State Senator, Shirley Turner, to go towards building renovations.

Further discussion took place regarding the estimated timeline for the Community Center's exterior work to begin, the DCA's letter pertaining to the two-million-dollar award which will be placed in next year's capital budget, and the notification to Lawrence Nonprofit Housing of their RFP's deficiencies.

Resolution No. 352-26 (18-H.2) was approved by the following roll call vote:

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

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

Mayor Bobbitt then requested a five-minute recess before beginning Council Initiatives/Liaison Reports.

Council Initiatives/Liaison Reports –

Mayor Bobbitt reported that the Planning Board met last night and provided Council with a referral regarding Ordinance #2528-26, which would prohibit data centers within Lawrence Township. He relayed that a robust conversation took place regarding what constitutes a data center, how they should be regulated, what guidance Planning Board members would like to have if the ordinance should pass, and an outright ban versus

implementing performance standards. Mayor Bobbitt stated that, at this time, the Planning Board tabled its decision pending further research to determine whether the ordinance conforms to the Township's Master Plan.

Ms. Farmer reported that the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI) held a workshop last Thursday regarding the New Jersey Fair Share in Housing Act. She stated that there was vigorous conversation regarding the legal issues surrounding housing and the civil rights of individuals.

Ms. Santos relayed that the Business and Economic Growth Committee met on Tuesday, October 13th, and reported that they have rescheduled their job fair to February 18, 2027.

Ms. Giglio wished to offer her congratulations to Recreation Advisory Committee member, Mr. Billy Chester, who won the Unsung Superhero in Education Award this morning at the New Jersey School Board Association's annual workshop. In addition, she reported that Trunk or Treat will be held this Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Lawrence Township High School, and the Halloween House Map is now available for those who wish to admire their neighbor's decorations and vote for their favorite house.

Ms. Giglio reported that she attended the Planning Board meeting and found the conversation regarding the data centers to be amazing, and shared that it was exactly what she had hoped for when she had proposed the ordinance.

Written Communications –

There were no written communications.

There being no further business to come before this Council, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____
Tonya D. Carter-Jones, Municipal Clerk

Attest:

_____
Christopher Bobbitt, Mayor