COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 14, 2026, 6:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL

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1. Mayor Viola called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Mayor Viola asked everyone to join in the salute to the flag.

3. Mayor Viola asked for a moment of silence.

4. Administrator Capristo read the following Sunshine Statement: "The notice requirements of the New Jersey Public Meetings Law have been satisfied by noticing the Asbury Park Press and the Two River Times on January 3, 2026, stating that a regular meeting of the Township Committee would be held on January 14, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., 1 Veterans Way, Colts Neck, NJ 07722, Town Hall. A copy is on file in the office of the Township Clerk."

   "Further notice was provided to the Asbury Park Press and Two River Times on January 4, 2026 noting the meeting time change from 7:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m."

5. Roll call by Township Administrator/Municipal Clerk Capristo indicated the following:

Present:	Mayor Michael Viola, Deputy Mayor Dan Buzzetta, Committeeman Frank Rizzuto, Committeewoman Tara Torchia Buss, and Committeeman John Tobia
Also Present:	Kathleen Capristo, Township Administrator, Meghan Bennett, Township Counsel
Absent:	None

6. Resolution 2026-28: Executive Session – Potential Litigation

   Mayor Viola called for a motion to approve. On a motion by Committeewoman Buss, seconded by Committeeman Rizzuto and a unanimous voice vote, the resolution was adopted.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta		X			
Rizzuto	S	X			
Torchia Buss	M	X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

   After closed session, Mayor Viola asked for a motion to go back to open session. On a motion by Committeeman Rizzuto, seconded by Committeewoman Buss, and a unanimous voice vote, the Governing Body was back in open session at 7 :09 p.m.

7. Minutes
   a. December 10, 2025 – Executive Session
   b. December 10, 2025 – Regular Meeting

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	S	X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss	M	X			
Tobia					X
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

c. January 2, 2026 – Reorganization Meeting

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	S	X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss	M	X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

8. New Business

a. Resolution 2026-29 – Confirming the Hiring of Probationary Police Officer Connor McDevitt

Police Liaison Rizzuto offered his congratulations to Officer McDevitt and his family stating that he came to the Township with high recommendations. He encouraged Officer McDevitt to enjoy this special time and to be safe.

Chief DeVito provided background information about Officer McDevitt's education and past experience. The Chief extended his congratulations and welcomed him to the Colts Neck Township Police Department.

Committeeman Rizzuto administered the Oath of Officer for officer McDevitt.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	M	X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss	S	X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

b. Resolution 2026-30 – Confirming the Hiring of SLEO II Anthony Casiano

Police Liaison Rizzuto offered his congratulations to Officer Casiano emphasizing the importance of the Special Law Enforcement Officer program.

Chief DeVito provided some background information about Officer Casiano's education and past experience. The Chief extended his congratulations and welcomed him to the Colts Neck Township Police Department.

Committeeman Rizzuto administered the Oath of Officer for Officer Casiano.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	S	X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss	M	X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

9. Presentations

a. Colts Neck Police Department – Chief Devito

Chief DeVito began his remarks by thanking the Township Committee, Township Administrator, and Township Attorney for their support of the department. The Chief then provided an update on the recent reaccreditation process reflecting on the three-year effort congratulating the department and Lt. Savage, the accreditation manager, for their efforts. Chief DeVito added that this accreditation ensures that the Colts Neck Police Department is abiding by best practices, standards and policies in all they do. The Chief noted that the next step is a hearing scheduled for March or April and expressed confidence that the department will be approved for reaccreditation. The Chief again highlighted the hard work of the officers noting that they are the ones in the field, wearing body cams, getting recorded, putting in the hard work to keep the Colts Neck community safe. The Chief then spoke of the department's readiness to protect and serve the current and many new residents moving into Colts Neck Township stating that the department has been proactive in staffing up, anticipating traffic issues in the 537/Five Points area, and preparing for any new challenges. The Chief welcomed members of the community to reach out to him with any questions or concerns on this topic. The Chief then provided a three-year look back stating that the department addressed over 45,000 incidents reporting that burglaries, assaults, motor vehicle thefts, property thefts, and all major crimes have significantly decreased. The Chief thanked the public for their contribution by locking their car doors and not leaving their keys in their cars. Fraud continues to be a challenge as internet scams are on the rise, stated the Chief. The Chief encouraged everyone to be cautious of unsolicited emails, calls, or text messages and advised that if they receive anything that they are unsure of to feel free to contact the department for assistance. The Chief reminded the public of some upcoming events including National Night Out and Coffee with a Cop. He also reminded the public of the car seat installation program, their hopes of having the Youth Academy in 2026, as well as launching an e-bike safety program and a fraud prevention seminar for the seniors. In closing the Chief reminded the public that the department is available 24 hours a day and encouraged residents to contact them at any time.

Committeeman Tobia inquired as to whether the Chief is planning a staffing study in connection with future high-density housing. The Chief advised that the department is prepared to continue to assess their staffing needs should similar high-density development take place in the Township. The Chief reflected on the efforts they undertook in connection with the Livana apartment development.

Committeeman Tobia asked the Administrator who the Appropriate Authority was over the Police Department. The Administrator advised that it was the Governing Body. Mr. Tobia stated that this should be a topic of future discussion, stating that in the future he believes it should be switched to the Administrator.

The Mayor thanked the Chief for his presentation

b. Colts Neck Township 250th Committee – Sue Fitzpatrick

Sue Fitzpatrick began by speaking to the committee's two-fold purpose of adding to current events sponsored by Colts Neck, the County, and the State and also

making sure to include representatives from all our committees, all walks of life, and all age groups. Ms. Fitzpatrick then highlighted some of the celebration events planned including a kick-off birthday celebration event in honor of George Washington which will include a dinner, Laird Applejack, a minstrel group, period reenactors, and dancing. Ms. Fitzpatrick added that the Colts Neck Business Association (CNBA) is sponsoring the event and left flyers for the public to obtain more information. Ms. DeMaio advised that the tickets are now available for purchase at the Colts Neck Business Association website and encouraged everyone to attend. Ms. DeMaio also thanked the Colts Neck Inn for hosting the event. Ms. DeMaio then shared details of another planned event, a barn tour, which she advised will be a great opportunity to showcase some of the many beautiful barns in Colts Neck and honor horses who had a great impact on our country. The event, Ms. DeMaio shared, will be held May 6th. The next event, the Memorial Day parade, Ms. Fitzpatrick shared will be similar to past parades with some exciting additions including a cannon shoot off and a military salute with muskets. In July, Ms. Fitzpatrick shared, will be the annual Independence Day fireworks also sponsored by the CNBA. Ms. Fitzpatrick invited Ms. Phyllis Camera to speak about an event involving the schools that includes the development of a patriotic calendar created by K through 12th grade students. Winners of the contest for art to be included in the calendar will be announced at the Independence Day firework celebration, Ms. Camera added, noting that the 2027 calendar will be available for purchase from the PTO. Ms. Fitzpatrick added that there will also be a 1776 baseball cap for sale. Finally, Ms. Fitzpatrick and Ms. DeMaio shared some additional details to be added to the 9-11 memorial event in recognition of the 25th anniversary and the annual tree lighting in December. Ms. Fitzpatrick invited members of the public to pick up a flyer and to visit the website throughout the year for more updates on the events.

The Mayor thanked the 250 Celebration committee members, the CNBA, and all the volunteers for their efforts.

10. New Business Continued

c. Consent Agenda

All items listed on the "Consent Agenda" are considered routine by the Township and are adopted or approved collectively by a single motion and roll-call vote of a majority of the Township Committee. If discussion is desired on any item, it is considered separately.

A. Resolution 2026-31 – Confirming the Hiring of Deputy Court Administrator Sharon O'Conner
B. Resolution 2026-32 – Authorizing the Purchase of Mason Dump Truck
C. Resolution 2026-33 – Authorizing the Purchase of Toro Sand Pro
D. Resolution 2026-34 – Authorizing the Purchase of Two (2) 2025 Chevy Tahoes for Colts Neck Police Department
E. Resolution 2026-35 – Authorizing the Execution of Employment Agreement for DPW Foreman Frank Bradach
F. Resolution 2026-36 – Confirming the Hiring of DPW Laborer Anthony Roma
G. Resolution 2026-37 – Authorizing Execution of Employment Agreement for DPW Laborer Anthony Roma
H. Resolution 2026-38 – Extending Sergeants Promotional Eligibility List Through 2026 Calendar Year
I. Resolution 2026-39 – Authorizing the Execution of Memorandum of Agreement Between Naval Weapons Station Earle and Colts Neck Township
J. Resolution 2026-40 – Authorizing Renewal of Shared Services Agreement with the Township of Marlboro for the use of the Marlboro Swim Club

Committeeman Tobia expressed praise to Director Lou Bader for proactively getting the Toro Sand Pro stating that the Sports Foundation, at a recent meeting

Mr. Tobia attended, voiced that they have been looking for the fields to be maintained at a higher level for a number of years and that this was one of their top priorities. Committeemen Tobia also inquired if the two police vehicles being purchased were replacements approved in last year's budget and if they are replacing two vehicles, whether the replaced vehicles will be auctioned off. Mayor Viola advised that the vehicles will be repurposed for another use in town. Mr. Tobia then asked that the Administrator provide him details as to how the vehicles will be repurposed.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	S	X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss	M	X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

d. Approval of Vouchers

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta highlighted several key expense categories and advised that he found all to be in order.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta made a motion to approve the bills list.

Mayor Viola called for a second to his motion, seconded by Committeeman Rizzuto.

Committeeman Tobia interjected that in connection with the affordable housing legal bills, he would appreciate more detail on the bills as to who they specifically speak with as opposed to just the term "client".

Mr. Tobia then asked the Administrator if the bill associated with Resource Management Inc. was a monthly bill. Administrator Capristo advised that it was indeed a monthly bill in connection with the licensed operator's sampling and reporting related to the Township's septic system to ensure compliance with the Township's NJPDES permit.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta		X			
Rizzuto		X			
Torchia Buss		X			
Tobia		X			
M - Moved S - Seconded X - indicates vote		NV - Not Voting		Ab - Absent	

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta recuses from any bills/vouchers in connection with the Colts Neck Fire Department.

Committeeman Rizzuto recuses from any bills/vouchers in connection with the Colts Neck Fire Department.

Mayor Buss recuses from any bills/vouchers in connection with the Municipal Court.

Committeeman Tobia stated that he votes "yes" on all the bills except the affordable housing attorney legal fees to which he votes "no".

Mayor Viola recuses from any bills/vouchers in connection with Best Horticultural, Joleen Landscaping and Bucks Tree Service.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta, directed an inquiry to Committeeman Tobia stating that he noticed Mr. Tobia objected to the appointment of the affordable housing legal counsel and suggested Mr. Tobia offer recommendations for different counsel and that he would be happy to listen to a "pitch" from said counsel to see if they have a better strategy for Colts Neck. Committee Tobia advised that he shared an alternative during Executive Session for Ms. Buss to contact and that he would give forth some other contacts that he thinks would be worthwhile for the Township to consider. Deputy Mayor Buzzetta advised that they would meet with them and report back. Committeeman Tobia recommended that when the Township looks at other (legal counsel) options to address whether the Township goes to court, evaluates different affordable housing sites or locations, or considers changing zoning the Township would then have a team to do what's best for the Township and not simply rely on one firm. Mr. Buzzetta responded, stating that the team consists of the professionals, the planner, the engineers and the liaison positions held by he and Ms. Buss. Mr. Buzzetta then stated that it was his understanding that when Mr. Tobia was offered the affordable housing liaison position, Mr. Tobia first advised that he was conflicted but there was some confusion and asked Mr. Tobia to state why he was not interested in the liaison role. Mr. Tobia deferred to Attorney Bennett who advised that there was no conflict. Committeeman Tobia reflected on a hearing before the Planning Board of approximately one year ago and a fourth-round housing plan that was presented both of which he voted against because he did not think they were right for Colts Neck. Mr. Tobia stated that because of his past objections he did not want to put himself in a position to have to go before a judge and/or a court master to defend something, as a liaison, that he does not believe in. Mr. Tobia added that he also did not want to serve on an affordable housing subcommittee due to not being privy to information in the past when he sat on the Planning Board. Mr. Tobia further opined that the Township is in the situation right now that they do not want to be in due to the durational adjustment and because of the durational adjustment a developer can come in and build a development with a package plant in order to provide sewer. Further, Mr. Tobia opined that the impact to the schools and the police department should be taken into account with affordable housing as well as a cost analysis on what it's going to cost the Township versus the services that need to be provided versus purchasing properties and open space and what is the least cost option. For all these reasons, Mr. Tobia advised, he did not want to serve directly on the affordable housing subcommittee but noted that he will be participating in discussions, voicing his opinion, and making recommendations. Committeeman Rizzuto stated that for political purposes, you're going to sit on the sidelines and continue to throw snowballs. Mr. Tobia denied the accusation. Mayor Viola encouraged the dialogue to remain professional. Mr. Tobia stated that he provided an alternative in Executive Session that he believes would give Colts Neck additional credits but that he was not going to put himself or the Township in a position where he would have to go against what the Township Committee voted on in front of a judge. Mayor Viola interjected that the timelines were a bit off. Mr. Viola stated that the mediation and the settlements were completed before, we did not settle, we did not mediate or agree to anything with any of the three projects that have been proposed in town. That was closed on December 31st. Mr. Viola added, noting that Mr. Tobia was sworn in on January 2nd, the Township is starting new in round four. He continued, stating that the recommendation has yet to be made by the retired judge by the program judge in accordance with the legislation to the superior court, which is imminent any day. At that point, the Mayor added, the Township will move forward into round four with the legal strategy as well as updating our housing element fair share plan regarding the credits we already attained and those that we have in the queue. Mayor Viola opined that because Mr. Tobia stated he was not involved in anything prior to December 31, 2025, and there is no mediator, it goes to the court and moves to a second legislative period. Mr. Viola opined that while Mr. Tobia ran on a campaign of "Never Again" he was capable of contributing and taking a leadership position as affordable housing liaison. Mr. Tobia challenged Mr. Viola's remarks stating that whatever the court orders, the township may be in a position to appeal and be in litigation with the developers that have come forth already. Committeewoman Buss opined that no one is here for politicking and that she welcomes Mr. Tobia's background, experience, and opinions. Ms. Buss added that she believes there may be a difference of interpretation of what it means to be a liaison and that she did not believe it meant that Mr. Tobia would be in a position

to have to defend the vote of the Township Committee but rather in her opinion it means to take the lead and to report back to the entire committee. Ms. Buss added that everyone has a different opinion, and they may not always agree on everything but that everyone brings different things to the table. Ms. Buss stated that she would like Mr. Tobia to move forward and share his background and information with the entire committee and the other members do the same. Mr. Tobia responded, stating that he found it very interesting that there was so much concern about what liaison position he took on, yet eliminated the public works liaison role when he has 40 years of experience in public works. Ms. Buss stated that she welcomes him to share his experience with the Township Administrator and all of the members of the Township Committee. Mr. Tobia assured her that he would. Mr. Buzzetta added, to put a point on the discussion, Mr. Tobia declined being liaison to the Board of Education. Mr. Tobia deferred to the Township Attorney to address his comment. Attorney Bennett advised that Mr. Tobia does not have a conflict and there is no requirement for Mr. Tobia to defend why he does not want to accept a particular liaison role. Mr. Buzzetta suggested that the public should know that Mr. Tobia was offered the two liaison roles and declined. Mr. Buzzetta then offered his opinion of the liaison role stating that it's a communication position to interface with the professionals, gather information, and then bring it back to the entire committee. Mr. Buzzetta added that he and Committeewoman Buss do not present in court or argue the Township's positions in court. Mr. Buzzetta added that in his opinion being a liaison is an honor and a privilege and choosing not to be in a liaison role is choosing not to be a leader. Mr. Tobia responded that he can assure the committee that he will be bringing forth his opinions and recommendations.

e. Administrator's Report

Administrator Capristo reported that she had two (2) similar items for the Township Committee's consideration, both involve seeking the Governing Body's approval to serve and consume alcohol in Bucks Mill Park. The first, Mr. Capristo advised, was for a fund-raising charity event for Echo Rescue to be held on January 24th. The second is for the Colts Neck Lions Club's annual Kentucky Derby event scheduled for May 2, 2026. Ms. Capristo advised that details were in the Township Committee members' packets and asked if there were any objections. There were none.

f. Township Committee Reports

Committeeman Tobia:

- Committeeman Tobia reported that the Farmland and Open Space Committee plan to send letters out to all farmland owners encouraging them to consider the farmland preservation program.
- Committeeman Tobia also advised that the Farmland and Opens Space Committee will be looking at other funding opportunities through the County and State SADC.
- Committeeman Tobia reported that he attended a Colts Neck Sports Foundation (CNSF) meeting and again commended DPW Director Lou Bader for being proactive with maintenance activities at the Township's parks and ball fields. Mr. Tobia also reported that they discussed developing a 10-year maintenance plan for all the athletic fields in town to include capital expenses that would be required.
- Committeeman Tobia reported that he would like to advance a resolution opposing Senate Bill 5028 and Assembly Bill 6301 in connection with the reduction of the number of thoroughbred horse racing dates at Monmouth Park.

Committeewoman Buss:

- Committeewoman Buss announced that the Book Fair sponsored by the Friends of the Library will be held May 2, 2026 and May 3, 2026 and flyers regarding same will be forthcoming.
- Committeewoman Buss also reported that she had the honor of attending the First Aid Installation Dinner. Ms. Buss expressed her

personal appreciation for all they, and the other first responders do for the Township.

Committeeman Rizzuto:

- Committeeman Rizzuto congratulated the police department on the reaccreditation efforts.
- Committeeman Rizzuto thanked the Historic Committee along with those involved in the 250th Celebration and the CNBA for all their efforts.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta:

- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reported that the committees he is liaison to have not yet met and as such he has no report other than affordable housing which will be during the Discussion Item.

Mayor Viola:

- Mayor Viola reported that the Township has been awarded a direct grant from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for $200,000 that will be used to build restrooms at Five Points Park. Mayor Viola thanked former Mayor Buss for her efforts in making application for the grant.
- Mayor Viola reported that the Colts Neck Business Association (CNBA) will hold its first meeting on January 27, 2026 at Huddy's. Mr. Viola reminded the public that many of the members of the CNBA are residents and business owners and encouraged everyone to shop local to support the CNBA.
- Mayor Viola reported that the Seniors Club had 92 members attend their first meeting of the year.
- Mayor Viola reported that the Recreation Committee will hold their first meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 as Monday is the Martin Luther King holiday.
- Mayor Viola, referencing a recent letter written to Secretary of War Pete Hegseth from Congressman Smith in connection with the grave concerns over developer encroachment near the Naval Weapons Station Earle base, advise that as more information on this topic is received it will be posted and shared.
- Mayor Viola encouraged members of the public to register for News & Notices.

2. Discussion Item

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta gave an update on affordable housing reporting that the Township's obligation is 138 units from Round Three and 101 units from Round Four for a total of 239 units. In connection with Round Four, Mr. Buzzetta reported that there is mediation underway due to two (2) developers objecting to the Township's Round Four plans who are proposing developments on three (3) properties (WellSpring Farm, a farm on Obre Road, and a Dutch Lane/Boundary Road farm). Mr. Buzzetta noted that the Township objected to all of developers plans, did not settle or negotiate. Mr. Buzzetta advised that the Township expected a decision from the mediator by December 31, 2025 but has not yet receive one. Once received, Mr. Buzzetta advised, the Township will post the decision. Mr. Buzzetta shared details as to the arguments put forth by the Township against these developments. Mr. Buzzetta provided an update on the litigation spearheaded by Mayor Ghassali of Montvale, New Jersey noting that he believes it has not yet been appealed and advised that he will provide updates on this matter as they come available. Finally, Mr. Buzzetta reported on The Grande and the extension of the affordability controls noting that 34 owners have accepted the Township's tax-free offer of $40,000 to extend the controls and one owner opted to sell their unit and the Township exercised their right-of-first-refusal and purchased the unit. With these updates, the Township has reduced its outstanding obligation of 239 units to

183 units, a reduction of 56 units. Mr. Buzzetta reminded the public that by eliminating 56 units the Township has potentially eliminated 280 units from being built. Mr. Buzzetta advised that it cost $1,360,000 to accomplish this but opined that it is better than the alternative of potential 280 new units in town and the costs associated with that amount of new housing including the cost to the schools and township services. Mr. Buzzetta continued advising that alternative strategies are being explored including group homes, senior housing, 100% affordable housing, and other options to reduce the township's obligations.

3. Public Comment:

Mayor Viola called for a motion to open public comments. On a motion by Committeewoman Buss, seconded by Deputy Mayor Buzzetta and a unanimous voice vote, public comment was opened.

Elaine Mann, resident, asked how much money the Township recouped for the repairs to the new building. Ms. Mann asked why firehouse number one, number two, and St. Mary's were paid for the election and specifically why number one was paid more than number two. Ms. Mann asked for an explanation of the adult health care services expense. Ms. Mann asked why the DPW doesn't clean the Township buildings. And finally, Ms. Mann asked why the DPW liaison role was eliminated. Ms. Mann thanked Mr. Tobia for his questions stating that they were very good.

Mayor Viola asked the Administrator to address the question regarding the building. Administrator Capristo advised that no monies have yet been recouped as the matter is pending litigation. Deputy Mayor Buzzetta advised that he believed the adult health care services expense was in connection with the Jersey Shore Regional Public Health Consortium. Administrator Capristo agreed to confirm this and get back to Ms. Mann. Mayor Viola responded that the Township has a paid service to provide cleaning services to the Township noting that this is a more cost-effective approach than taking DPW staff away from other tasks such as road work, park maintenance, and the like. Committeewoman Buss added that there were changes made to the polling locations that could have accounted for the payments. Administrator Capristo added that the payment is from the County and is passed through the Township's account.

Kevin O'Brien, resident, advised that there seemed to be a problem with Mr. Tobia's email on the website. Mr. O'Brien stated that the November 12th, 2025 meeting minutes, page 10, member Rizzuto noted, there is a common sentiment that either the governing body missed something, or they were on the take and that he (Mr. O'Brien) could not remember a member of this public stating on the record a member of this committee is on the take. Mr. O'Brien stated that Mr. Rizzuto embellished the number of people watching the meetings and the numbers associated with the attendance at the June affordable housing meeting. Mr. O'Brien stated that Mr. Buzzetta has stated that he wants to be transparent and asked why, as parks liaison, he didn't offer an explanation of the difference between the $742,500 grant request and the average bathroom bid price of $1.5 million. Mr. O'Brien further asked if it was legal to extend a grant request with the knowledge that the average bid price was $757,000 higher and suggested the matter be extended to the state department of investigations or the prosecutor's office. Mr. O'Brien asked for an estimate of legal fees associated with affordable housing. Mr. O'Brien, referring to an October 14th planning board meeting, stated that Mr. Viola said that the Grande conversion cost would be $120,000 and the pilot cost would be $12,000 per year, yet when member Tobia asked for the total cost Mr. Viola softly said $600,000. Mr. O'Brien stated that Ms. Buss commented that this is not appropriate at this time. Mr. O'Brien stated that he is very confused by the math. Mr. O'Brien, referring to minutes of an October 29th meeting, referenced details about the offer of $40,000 to owners at the Grande and a comment by Mr. Buzzetta that the cost would be less than the requirement to build 300 units. Mr. O'Brien stated that he finds the committee to be disingenuous with repeated exaggerations and making unreasonable comparisons to an extreme situation to discredit a valid point from the public without having factual information to support the fallacies. Mr. O'Brien asked the committee members to talk about the facts and stop overexaggerating and spreading fertilizer.

Mr. Rizzuto responded, stating that he was using sarcasm when stating that there are thousands of people watching via YouTube and admitted that he occasionally exaggerates. Mr. Rizzuto did state that he has been in attendance at many meetings on the topic of affordable housing that he would consider "packed houses". He agreed that the June meeting was not a meeting that was very well attended. Mr. Buzzetta offered to meet with Mr. O'Brien to discuss his numbers and questions related to both affordable housing and the bathrooms at Five Points. Mayor Viola provided that there are 66 owner-occupied units and 22 rental units at The Grande, for a total number of 88. He added that the Township has preserved 14 of the rentals, 8 are moving to market rate over time as the residents exit those properties, and the Township will get 21 credits for those. Of the 66 owner-occupied, Mr. Viola continued, 34 accepted the extension and the cost associated with this will be $1.36 million. Mr. Viola added that the legal costs for affordable housing last year were approximately $450,000 for our legal defense and it was approximately the same in 2024 and in 2026 the Township is budgeting a similar amount.

Paul Banco, resident, advised that it was his first meeting in person and that as a member of the sports foundation he was happy to hear that the Township is putting in restrooms at Five Points Park. Mr. Banco then stated that he heard an interesting comment from a judge recently who said, "We walk the road before us." Mr. Banco stated, about Mr. Tobia, that his entire campaign was on affordable housing and to turn down the affordable housing liaison role due to being conflicted and then to advise that he wasn't conflicted Mr. Banco found extremely disingenuous, and that Mr. Tobia owes an apology to everyone that gave him the key to help the town with affordable housing. Mr. Banco further opined that he was happy Mr. Tobia turned down the opportunity to be affordable housing liaison as he feels Mr. Buzzetta will not make excuses.

Mr. Tobia responded, stating there is a lot of misinformation out there, including from Mr. Banco on Facebook. Mr. Tobia stated that he was not side-stepping his responsibilities with affordable housing and stated that he offered an alternative to something that was being discussed by the Township Committee during the Executive Sesson and that he will continue to be very proactive and give alternatives to this governing body. Mr. Tobia further stated that he guarantees he will be fighting affordable housing, researching, and having discussions with the Township Committee, the professionals, and additional professionals. Mr. Tobia added that the reason he has concerns about one of the attorneys is because that particular attorney has represented developers in the past that have built in Colts Neck and that he thinks the Township needs a cross-section of professionals. Mr. Tobia stated that he has a lot of resources that he is going to bring to this Township Committee, whether they use them or not, is up to them, he stated. Mr. Tobia further stated that he will be questioning things on the agendas and will be open and transparent to the public, which is what he campaigned on. Mr. Tobia invited Mr. Banco to call him at any time but he should not put misinformation on social media.

Mr. Banco stated that Mr. Tobia talks about fighting for the Township on affordable housing and yet turned down the very job of acting as the liaison stating that everything else is mute. Mr. Banco stated that he can't believe what Mr. Tobia says because he was given the opportunity to head up the committee on affordable housing and turned it down using a cockamamie excuse of conflict.

Attorney Bennett interjected that while there is no conflict there is no obligation for Mr. Tobia to take the role of affordable housing liaison.

Mr. Banco acknowledged Ms. Bennett's clarification and stated that he hopes Mr. Tobia proves him wrong.

Mr. Tobia stated that he believes in putting a team together of legal, planning, and engineering specialists to assess if there are better alternatives as it relates to affordable housing. Mr. Tobia stated that this Township Committee can pick and choose liaison roles and for the first time the liaison to the Department of Public Works was eliminated. Rest assured, Mr. Tobia added that his questions and opinions related to public works will be heard not unlike his comments today regarding the maintenance

of the ball fields being deficient for years and the need for a 10-year plan for park maintenance because that is also lacking in this Township. Mr. Tobia stated that this is a liability for the Township. Mr. Tobia stated that he is going to put his best foot forward and every single thing he proposes will be what's best for Colts Neck. Whether or not it gets approved.

Anthony Ursino, resident, stated that he's bothered by the "fire" that's going on at the dais and agreed with Ms. Buss's comments that this is not a political forum. Mr. Ursino stated that he values the work they are all doing and values all opinions but is upset by what he has seen. Mr. Ursino asked if the minutes could detail some of the numbers as he is having difficulty absorbing all of them. The Mayor advised as to the process of when minutes are approved and available for the public. Mr. Ursino said he was interested in seeing the numbers in writing.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta stated that he'd be happy to meet with Mr. Ursino or anyone else to discuss affordable housing or any other topic.

Daniel Kryzanekas, resident, asked about the status of the traffic study that was to take place on Montrose Road and wanted to know about the enforcement of the current speed limit. Mr. Kryzanekas also asked why the Township is being sued now if we have 10 years to build 183 units, why the Dutch Lane property was not put into farmland preservation, why the township can't build senior or veteran housing, and get a 10-acre plot and have contractors in town build with the assistance of raised taxes to help pay for it. Mr. Kryzanekas stated that he's ready to move. He further stated that he would definitely vote for an increase in farmland preservation tax and that he agrees with getting new attorneys to help the Township with affordable housing

Ms. Buss responded to the question about the traffic study on Montrose advising that the study was completed in December and there should be results soon but that from what she understands the speed limit will not be changing but that the police have been increasing enforcement in that area. Ms. Buss addressing the open space tax matter, stated that the Township and County are very supportive of each other's initiatives to preserve open space and that it is not a competition. Ms. Buss reminded the public that homeowners have every opportunity to preserve their property as farmland and she encouraged homeowners to do so.

Mr. Rizzuto added that even with preserved land there will always be developers looking to intervene and that the Township is looking into many of the things Mr. Kryzanekas suggested. Mr. Rizzuto further noted that Colts Neck has been quite successful, as compared to other towns, in navigating the affordable housing obligation and is doing a great job of chipping away at the numbers. Mr. Rizzuto stated that unfortunately the affordable housing matter became politicized during the campaign and was used quite successfully as a scare tactic. Mr. Rizzuto suggested that be left behind and that we all work together.

Ms. Buss added that the Township is meeting with people in the construction world, developers, and others and voiced that she wished it was as simple as build, donate, and get credit, but unfortunately it is not.

Mayor Viola added that there are very high thresholds to meet to make an all-affordable project work. To do something, Mr. Viola added, sooner versus later would be extremely expensive.

Mr. Buzzetta offered an example of the Township building an 80-unit all-affordable development at 4.5% tax credit to the builder, noting that the Township would be on the hook for $6 million for development which does not include the cost of the acquisition of the property, which could be $3 or $4 million or the cost of the package plant for sewer which could be another $2 million and then the Township would have to underwrite the project in case there is a shortfall in construction, meaning if there is a shortfall in the cost of construction the Township is on the hook. Mr. Buzzetta noted that raising taxes would not be a viable solution. Mr. Buzzetta invited Mr. Kryzanekas to reach out to him to discuss further.

Mr. Tobia addressed the resident's comment about the open space referendum stating that it was placed on the ballot a number of years ago but there was misinformation in the question and it could not go forward.

Marianne Cucolo, resident, voiced appreciation for all that the committee is doing and understands how negative the situation is. Ms. Cucolo stated that John is a breath of fresh air and she appreciates the new ideas. Ms. Cucolo added that she is sad at what she is seeing and suggested the governing body members get over the election stating that what she was hearing was a disgrace and that the board should be professional and not behave like a club. Ms. Cucolo added that if the members can't behave like members of a municipal entity, they were going to do something to get rid of them.

Elaine Mann, resident, stated that years ago Congressman Smith helped the Township as part of a group called Nope and suggested that the proximity of the base poses a unique security situation for Colts Neck. Ms. Mann urged the governing body to petition Washington to stop development in Colts Neck.

Mayor Viola encouraged residents to also contact Congressman Smith.

Elaine Kryzanekas, resident, asked for clarification of the cost per pupil.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta stated that he estimates it's about $34,000.

Ms. Kryzanekas voiced concern about the costs associated with additional units beyond the 360 units associated with the Livana property. Ms. Kryzanekas estimated that it would cost $19,800,000 to educate the children of the new units and suggested the governing body keep this in mind. Ms. Kryzanekas also asked about the status of a traffic circle at the end of Montrose by Boundary and Crine.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta stated that her numbers are accurate which is why the governing body is focusing on other alternatives such as senior housing, veterans housing, and 100% affordable housing.

Mr. Tobia, regarding the traffic circle question, stated that the blinking light is an interim measure and that there are a number of things being investigated one of which is a roundabout as well as some other traffic calming options. Mr. Tobia added that if there is any development on that corner, the developer would be involved. Mr. Tobia also spoke to the plan for a dedicated turn lane off 537 on to Bucks Mill Road stating that there are a number of County projects underway some of which are partnering with NJDOT.

Christine Tipton, resident, inquired as to the development activity near Stonehill Road.

Mayor Viola shared that this development is the Charleston Meadows project that was approved by the Planning Board a few years ago and is just now coming to fruition.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta added that the affordable unit credits are already accounted for and unfortunately do not reduce the current obligation.

Mayor Viola added that the property was zoned for affordable housing many years ago.

Bill Tipton, resident, stated that most of the concerns of the taxpayers was a transparency issue feeling that decisions were being made and only after they were made were they discussed with the public. Mr. Tipton added that it is refreshing to have a different voice and welcomes a healthy debate noting however that it should be kept more professional. Mr. Tipton asked for the number that the Township could get back if we built and sold affordable units.

Committeeman Rizzuto addressed the transparency issue noting that the topic of affordable housing has been discussed at many meetings going way back and at almost every Township Committee meeting. Mr. Rizzuto agreed things should be kept civil and that unfortunately transparency become politicized. Mr. Rizzuto added that whenever there was something to report it was either done at a town hall special meeting or a regular meeting.

Committeewoman Buss added that part of the reason it may seem as if there was less transparency is a function of the changes to the affordable housing legislation. Ms. Buss added that in previous rounds, everything was done behind closed doors, in courtrooms, or in judge's chambers and with the new legislation, the process is to mediate which gives the governing body more flexibility to discuss things publicly. Ms. Buss also added that the Township does not have a housing authority, which would add a whole new layer of government to allow the Township to buy and sell properties, as such the Township must work with non-profit developers to make it financially advantageous.

Bill Tipton, resident, asked if it was possible to set up a regional housing authority with neighboring communities such as Wall Township or Howell. Also, Mr. Tipton stated that his understanding of the Mount Laurel legislation was to give children from lower income homes a better chance at a better education but when he looks at the bedroom configuration of some of the affordable units it doesn't seem to make sense asking if all the affordable units are one bedroom.

Mayor Viola advised that there are 15 three-bedroom units that are all affordable.

Mr. Tipton stated that that makes more sense.

Mr. Creutz, resident, voiced concerns about the airspace near the naval base and asked what the rules were in connection with the buffer required between the base and developments. Mr. Creutz also voiced concerns about the height of the potential developments and the potential security issues around the base. Mr. Creutz asked if the Township had the necessary infrastructure in place in terms of schools and buses to handle the potential influx of students and if the Township was prepared for the increase in traffic. Mr. Creutz also asked if the Township would receive some benefit for the hardship it has put on the town and its taxpayers. Finally, Mr. Creutz inquired about the ability of a farm, who has been farmland tax assessed for years, to sell and realize a large profit.

Mayor Viola responded stating that he is not against affordable housing but rather he is against overdevelopment. Mr. Viola added that all of the implications related to new development, such as schools, police, DPW, additional equipment, firefighters, etc. are borne by the taxpayers and there is no payback from the County or the State. As for taxes received from the developments, Mr. Viola stated, using Livana as an example, the Township assessed its needs to support the new residents and that is what led to the addition of two new police officers. The taxes received from Livana will pay for these additions. But, Mr. Viola continued, if another 950 homes are built, the implications associated with that number of homes could not be paid for by the potential tax revenue. Mr. Viola, responding to the question about the base, stated that the Navy conducted a Joint Land Use Study back in 2016/2017 to assess base resiliency which resulted in a 3,000-foot set back encouraging the prohibition of any high density development and/or tall structures in that 3,000 foot area for obvious safety and security reasons. Mayor Viola added that the argument related to Dutch Lane is about deed restrictions. Mayor Viola noted that a deed restricted property is not applicable to purchase or preservation as it already has a deed restriction which must be protected and defended.

Mayor Viola thanked everyone for coming.

As there were no further comments and/or questions from the public, Mayor Viola called for a motion to close public comment. On a motion by Committeeman Rizzuto, seconded by Committeewoman Buss and a unanimous voice vote, public comment was closed.

4. **Adjournment:**
As there was no further business, Mayor Viola called for a motion to adjourn. On a motion by Deputy Mayor Buzzetta, seconded by Committeewoman Buss and a unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Kathleen Capristo, RMC
Municipal Clerk

APPROVED: January 28, 2026