COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 11, 2026, 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL

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1. Mayor Viola called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. 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 28, 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 February 3, 2026, noting the meeting time change from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m."

3. 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/Municipal Clerk, Meghan Bennett, Township Counsel

   Absent: None

4. Resolution 2026-45: Executive Session – Potential Litigation and Personnel

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

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	

   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 7:15 p.m.

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

6. Mayor Viola asked for a moment of silence.

7. Minutes
   a. January 28, 2026 – Executive Session
   b. January 28, 2026 – Regular Meeting

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

8. New Business

   a. **First Reading/Introduction:** Ordinance 2026-01: Ordinance approving and authorizing extension of affordable housing controls for 34 owner-occupied units, payment of $40,000 to each owner extending, and continuation of 50% recapture lien.

      Mayor Viola advised that this item will be carried to a future meeting.

   b. Resolution 2026-46 – Authorization to Urge the Legislature to Defeat S-5028/A-6301 Which Will Reduce the Minimum Required Annual Thoroughbred Horse Racing Dates at Monmouth Park from 50 to 25 Days

      Mayor Viola advised that this affects the next budget cycle and is currently in the assembly tourism, gaming, and arts committee. Mayor Viola urge residents to reach out to the assembly to express their concerns for this legislation stating that there are hundreds of stables, farms, and equestrian locations in the Township that would be affected.

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

   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 2026-47 – Authorizing Payment to Retired Police Officer Richard Zarrillo
      B. Resolution 2026-48– Authorizing Exercising Third Year Option for Contract for Lawn and Field Maintenance Services
      C. Resolution 2026-49 – Accepting Resignation of Township Employee Cheryl Houss
      D. Resolution 2026-50 – Confirming Promotion of Lauren Ondrush Deputy Tax Collector
      E. Resolution 2026-51 – Confirming Hiring of Administrative Assistant/Finance Clerk Alexandra Tucker

Committeeman Tobia requested that consideration be given to including the Montrose Schoolhouse property in the fertilization and seeding program to ensure that it looks as good as the rest of the township properties.

Committeewoman Buss voiced her appreciation for the many years of service provided by Cheryl Houss who retired this month after 17 years dedicated service.

Mayor Viola echoed Ms. Buss's comments.

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	

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.

RECORD OF VOTE					
	M S	Yes	No	NV	Ab
Mayor Viola		X			
Deputy Mayor Buzzetta	M	X			
Rizzuto	S	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.

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

e. Administrator's Report

Administrator Capristo advised that she had no report.

f. Township Committee Reports

Committeeman Tobia:

- Committeeman Tobia advised that the Colts Neck Sports Foundation was formulating their maintenance plans and requests for the budget, is looking for an update on the restroom project at Five Points Park, and would like to have further discussions regarding field improvements at Laird Road Park.

Committeewoman Buss:

- Committeewoman Buss reported that the Friends of the Library upcoming book sales are scheduled for May 2, 2026 and May 3, 2026.

Committeeman Rizzuto:

- Committeeman Rizzuto reported that the date for the Third Grade Class visit to the schoolhouse is still pending.
- Committeeman Rizzuto reported that the Weekend at Old Monmouth is scheduled for May 2, 2026 and May 3, 2026.
- Committeeman Rizzuto reminded the public of the February 22, 2026 event scheduled at Colts Neck Inn as part of the 250th Celebration.
- Committeeman Rizzuto announced that the Police Department's Traffic Safety Unit was at Cedar Drive Middle School conducting an e-bike safety program.
- Committeeman Rizzuto reported that the final hearing in connection with the Police Department's accreditation is schedule for March 12, 2026.
- Committeeman Rizzuto reported that the LEAD (Law Enforcement Against Drugs) Team has been active at the area schools.
- Committeeman Rizzuto reported that he has been discussing mutual aid programs with the First Aid Squad.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta:

- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reported that a decision is still pending regarding the mediation program arising from the three objectors which included two developers and Fair Sharing Housing.
- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reported on the lawsuit spearheaded by the Mayor of Montvale advising that the first lawsuit was dismissed and that the coalition of 29 towns have sought an emergency stay from the United States Supreme Court.
- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reported that the Board of Education (BOE) met recently and discussed capacity in the K-8 schools.
- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reported that the BOE also discussed negotiations that are taking place between the BOE and Colts Neck Sports Foundation related to facility usage fees.
- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta commended the BOE for taking proactive measures to put in stop arm cameras on school buses noting that there have been a number of violations resulting in eight (8) citations.
- Deputy Mayor Buzzetta reminded the public that there is a Budget Workshop Special Meeting, Wednesday, February 18th at 4:30 pm.

Mayor Viola:

- Mayor Viola reported that the seniors held a luncheon last week that was attended by 103 members.
- Mayor Viola echoed Committeeman Rizzuto's comments regarding the upcoming George Washington Birthday event scheduled for February 22, 2026 and encourage the public to attend.
- Mayor Viola reported that he was invited to Washington DC by Congressman Smith and met with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy to discuss the Naval Weapons Station Earle encroachment issues advising that it was a long, detailed meeting and that he hopes to get some input from the Navy in the early part of March.

9. Public Comment:

Township Attorney Bennett stated that it had come to her attention that the minutes from a recent Executive Session Meeting were inadvertently disseminated to residents who had opted in to have same emailed to them. Ms. Bennett added that the Township has not released the minutes on the Township website and maintains that these materials remain confidential. Further, she advised disclosure was inadvertent and discussion of this matter will not be entertained by the Township until such time as the executive privilege no longer exists.

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.

Angelique Volpe, resident, stated that she is the President of the Board of Education and spoke to the recent decision to install stop arm cameras in the school buses to ensure the safety of the students. Ms. Volpe requested the Township consider allocating a percentage of the fees collected in connection to violations related to the stop arms be given to the Board of Education. Ms. Volpe also requested that the two BOE liaisons previously assigned to the Affordable Housing subcommittee be reappointed.

Attorney Bennett agreed to research the feasibility of sharing a portion of the violation fees with the BOE.

Mayor Viola advised that the appointments to the Affordable Housing Subcommittee are made by the Planning Board and suggestion Mr. Volpe reach out directly to them.

Scott Duprex, resident, shared details about his history as a fire fighter both in Bayonne, New Jersey and in Colts Neck as a volunteer with Fire Company #2. He detailed his experience with fire suppression, search, ventilation, rescue, and emergency response. Mr. Duprex also detailed his experience with high density housing structures, noting that he has a great deal of experience developing protocols and training for fires in these types of structures. Mr. Duprex also stated that two months ago he began efforts to help formulate SOPs and guidelines to deal with the new affordable housing structure being built on Route 537. Mr. Duprex noted that he made a decision to leave Fire Company #2 and go to Fire Company #1 as #1 was closer to his new place of residence and he wanted to work in an environment where the firematic chain of command and operational decision making and training remained clearly within the fire service structure of the firehouse and not the administrative part of the firehouse. Mr. Duprex stated he applied for membership at Firehouse #1 in hopes of continuing to contribute to the community, but his application was disapproved.

Justine Buzzetta, resident, read from a document prepared by Mr. Duprex that read in part, "…I respect that organizations have processes and votes, but I believe it is fair to ask a broader that affects more than just me. What message does it send when a township that promotes volunteerism declines someone with nearly four decades of fire service, including prior volunteer service here in Colts Neck, who wants to continue serving and share experience that could support the firefighter and community safety. This is also happening during a time when volunteer firefighter numbers are declining nationwide. Many communities are struggling to staff their departments and are being forced to move toward paid or hybrid paid staffing models to maintain response coverage. Changes that can significantly impact municipal budgets. Even nearby communities have had to adjust. Princeton, for example, moved from a historically all volunteer department to a combination system with paid firefighters to ensure coverage. When experienced volunteers are unable to serve, communities risk losing both operational depth and long-term cost stability. I'm not here to criticize individuals or create conflict. I'm here because transparency and consistency with the town's message about volunteer service matters. Residents should understand how volunteerism works in practice when someone with a lifetime of service offers to help. I remain willing to serve this community in any constructive way I can. Thank you for your time…"

Mayor Viola thanked Mr. Duprex for his service and his desire to continue to serve.

Committeeman Tobia suggested a deeper dive was needed into this matter to determine why this application was denied and asked Committeewoman Buss as the Liaison to the Fire Department to report back on the topic.

Committeewoman Buss thanked Mr. Duprex for his service to both the communities of Bayonne and Colts Neck and stated that she would be happy to look into the matter further.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta stated that he has been on fire calls with Mr. Duprex where Mr. Duprex took the lead and was instrumental in saving two (2) structures and praised Mr. Duprex's talents and experience.

Michelle Battista, resident, shared news of the passing of Ms. Joanne Jacoby. Ms Battista shared that she will be deeply missed by her husband, John of 70 years and her grandchildren, Jaime who were present in the audience from the CN Fire Co #1, Dillon and Emily. Ms. Battista also shared that John was recently readmitted to the hospital after Ms. Jacoby's funeral services and asked that he be kept in your prayers. Ms. Battista shared additional information about Ms. Jacoby stating that she was a lifelong friend of her husband's family as they lived on White Oak Drive and that she was an inspiration to her in joining the Seniors Club & Woman's Club.

Alan Ryan, resident, praised Mr. Scott Duprex stating that he is an asset that should be used, a good guy, and that he taught him a lot. Mr. Ryan added that he is what the brotherhood is all about.

Elaine Mann, resident, also spoke about Mr. Duprex asking if there was a precedent whereby a volunteer could not move from one house to the other. Ms. Mann also asked what sort of justification there was to deny Mr. Duprex' application. Ms. Mann characterized the fire department as a clique run by a few narrow-minded individuals.

Michael Kalisz, resident, opined that the snow removal contractor, Slope Brook Farm, did not do a good job moving snow off the roads during the last storm.

Kevin O'Brien, resident, spoke to Mr. Buzzetta's recent Facebook post responding to his recent Patch article. Mr. O'Brien specifically spoke to Mr. Buzzetta's comments about the bid price of the park bathroom project. Mr. O'Brien inquired as to whether the Township was in initial decision with the architect in connection with the building project. Mr. O'Brien, speaking of Mr. Buzzetta's Facebook post, stated that the CEO of Soldier On confirmed that the Township has not spoken to their organization. Mr. O'Brien, spoke of seeking the revised plans for the restroom project at Five Points Park, concerns that the project may saddle residents with a $1.3 million capital expense, the $539,272 playground project, the engineer's price of $522,335, a grant request being 47% higher, the grant request being $750,000 less than the average price of the four contact prices. Mr. O'Brien also spoke to the Township refusing to disclose the court order on affordable housing in December 2024, holding private meetings of the affordable housing subcommittee, and failure to disclose a letter from Green Acres denying a grant application for hundreds of thousands.

Mayor Viola responded advising that the Township is currently in mediation with the contractor in connection with the building repairs. Mayor Viola also stated that in connection with the portable restrooms, the cost is shared with the Colts Neck Sports Foundation. Mr. Viola added that the Sports Foundation is a separate entity and operates as a 501(c)(3) and raises funds for their programming and puts some of those funds towards the Township's recreational programs and assets. Mayor Viola stated that the affordable housing subcommittee is under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board.

Mr. Buzzetta stated that with respect to the bathroom project he believed the initial estimates were close to $700,000 and when the estimates came in much higher, the project was scrapped and there are plans now to build a more modest restroom facility.

Mayor Viola added that plans have not yet been developed.

Mr. Tobia stated that the issue of the bathrooms at Five Points has come up numerous times and he has heard different amounts for bids, different configurations of the bathrooms, and different issues regarding the grants available. Mr. Tobia requested the Township Administrator prepare a full report from the start of the bathroom project to where we are today including a listing of every single item including when it was bid and the architect's estimates and put this information in a clear, concise report so that he can understand and decipher actually where we are and what the plans are for moving forward.

Doug Letrenta, resident, referring to the Reorganization Meeting stated he was both encouraged and disappointed that the Mayor did not give more insights and plans for solutions to the tough issues the town is facing. Mr. Letrenta suggested a stop to the anonymous social media posts from fictitious Colts Neck citizens and the derogatory name calling. Mr. Letrenta encouraged members of the Governing Body to refrain from responding to anonymous posts. Mr. Letrenta also stated that in accordance with Robert's Rules, while the public may ask questions, it is at the discretion of the Governing Body to answer and encouraged members of the public to simply make comments. Mr. Letrenta, regarding legal fees being spent in connection with affordable housing, asked what the taxpayers were getting in return for this large expense.

Mayor Viola, regarding the comments about social media, responded, stating that he would never deny anyone their first amendment right to speak. Regarding legal bills, Mr. Viola stated that the budget has not yet been finalized as to what will be budgeted for legal fees in 2026 and that the 2026 budget will be very tight.

Committeeman Tobia stated that he can guarantee that he will not be answering any social media posts that do not have names associated with the post.

Mr. Letrenta stated that he did not want to stop anyone's freedom of speech but rather wanted the five members of the Governing Body to agree not to respond to fictious Colts Neck residents.

Deputy Mayor Buzzetta stated that he agrees with Mr. Letrenta and agreed anonymous posts are beneath Colts Neck and are an embarrassment to our town. He stated that other residents of other towns, mayors, and committee people have reached out to him asking what is going on in Colts Neck. Mr. Buzzetta stated that whoever is sending out the anonymous text messages should stop. Mr. Buzzetta added that last summer Mr. Letrenta accused him of sending out emails under a pseudonym and that he challenged Mr. Letrenta to bring forth evidence of his claim, which he never did. Mr. Buzzetta asked for an apology from Mr. Letrenta.

Elaine, Kryzanekas, resident, asked for the status of potentially reducing the speed limit on Montrose Road. Ms. Kryzanekas also spoke in support of Mr. Duprex and thanked him for his service.

Committeeman Rizzuto responded and agreed to provide the details of the speed study.

Alan Ryan, resident, reminded residents that tomorrow is February 12, 2025 which is the 16th President's, Abraham Lincoln's, birthday.

Chris Quincannon, resident, voiced support for Mr. Duprex and opined that the problem is the Executive Fire Council (EFC) and that the Township Committee has the opportunity to address this problem. Mr. Quincannon stated that the EFC is defunct and worthless. He added that there are people on the EFC that do not live in Colts Neck and are making decisions for the town. Mr. Quincannon stated that the EFC is governed by Chater 28 and should be changed. He added that it's political and that the leadership is not made up of firefighters, and they are telling firefighters what to do. Mr. Quincannon voiced that he is terrified that someone will get hurt if something isn't changed. He stated that it's a hostile environment that must be changed. Mr. Quincannon also asked for a response regarding firearm permit fees and his recent inquiries made in connection with this topic.

Committeewoman Buss voice appreciation for Mr. Quincannon's comments and thanked him for his service. Ms. Buss, addressing the firearms fee question, stated that she had discussed this matter with the Chief of Police. Ms. Buss noted that firearm fees are collected, a portion of the fee goes to the state, and a portion stays with the Township to cover the Township's cost. The Police Department runs a full background check on applicants, stated Ms. Buss. Some, she continued, take an hour or so but others may be quite extensive and time-consuming and as such there is a rather large cost to the municipality. Ms. Buss stated that she's happy to have the matter considered by the entire governing body but that she personally is not in favor of this

simply because she does not feel that as a taxpayer she should have to pay for another individual's firearm permit.

Mayor Viola stated that he also spoke to the Chief. He opined that fees have increased dramatically as a means by the state to keep firearms out of the hands of the public. Mr. Viola agreed with Ms. Buss that while the fees are high, it's an optional request from a resident to seek a permit and/or a concealed carry permit and they can exercise this right but the cost should not be spread across all taxpayers.

Committeeman Rizzutto added that the Township will make sure that the fee is simply a processing fee and not punitive or exclusionary.

Committeeman Tobia asked for a report from the Police Department as to how many permits are processed, how many denied, and how many refunded. Mr. Tobia stated that as a second amendment right, he is supportive of reimbursing the fee.

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.

2. **Adjournment:**
As there was no further business, Mayor Viola called for a motion to adjourn. On a motion by Committeewoman Buss, seconded by Committeeman Rizzutto and a unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Kathleen Capristo

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Kathleen Capristo, RMC
Municipal Clerk

APPROVED: February 25, 2025