

MINUTES of the Lower Township MUA

Meeting Date: September 2, 2026

Call to order: A meeting of the Lower Township MUA was held at 2900 Bayshore Road, Villas, NJ, 08251. The meeting convened at 5:00 pm.

ROLL CALL OF THE MEMBERS

James P. Ridgway	via Telephone
Bryan Steere	Present
Karen Rechner	Present
Jacqueline Henderson	Present
Stephen Prince	Present

STAFF / PROFESSIONALS

Steven A. Morris, Esq., The Morris Law Firm, MUA Solicitor
Ronald N. Curcio, PE, Polistina & Associates, MUA Engineer
Stephen Testa, RHT & K, MUA Financial Consultant
Stephen Blankenship, Executive Director
Melissa Jasinski, Board Secretary

- Call to Order
- Determination of Quorum
- Sunshine Law
- Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence
- Comments or Questions from the Public on Agenda Items

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: August 5, 2026 Regular Minutes
2. Approval of Bills
 - a. **Resolution No. 123-2026 \$49,629.67** Operating Account (Authorizes payment of operating expenses up to \$50,000)
 - b. **Resolution No. 124-2026 \$441,502.08** Excess operating account (Authorizes payment of operating expenses in excess of \$50,000)
3. **Resolution No. 125-2026** Authorizing Transfer from the Sturdy Capital Improvement Fund Account to Sturdy Operating Account. For Payment of **Sewer** Capital items in the amount of **\$87,847.81**
4. **Resolution No. 126-2026** Authorizing Transfer from the Sturdy Capital Improvement Fund Account to Sturdy Operating Account. For the Payment of **Water** Capital items in the amount of **\$675,091.77**
5. **Resolution No. 127-2026** Customer Change Resolution Approving Reductions to Accounts
Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner for the approval of the Business Consent Agenda and seconded by Mr. Prince.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
The Chair asked the public if there were any questions on the Regular Agenda: There were none.

REGULAR AGENDA

6. **Resolution No. 128-2026** - Awarding an Engineering Contract to DeBlasio & Associates for the Landing Water Main Improvements Project
Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 128-2026 Awarding an Engineering Contract to DeBlasio & Associates in an amount not to exceed \$40,000.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Abstain, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
7. **Resolution No. 129-2026** - Authorizing a Contribution to the Township of Lower Pursuant to NJSA 40A:5A-12.1
Motion was made by Mr. Prince and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 129-2026 Authorizing a Contribution to the Township of Lower Pursuant to NJSA 40A:5A-12.1 in an amount not to exceed \$160,000.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye

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- 8. Resolution No. 130-2026** - Authorizing Advertisement of Notice of Proposed Rate Changes
Staff presented proposed rate adjustments of 5% for water and sewer, and requested authorization to advertise these proposed changes for a rate hearing to be held at the October 7th meeting.
Motion was made by Mrs. Henderson and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 130-2026 Authorizing Advertisement of Notice of Public Hearing Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 14:14B-23.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 9. Resolution No. 131-2026** - Accepting the Retirement of the Executive Director/Chief Engineer
Motion was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mr. Prince for Resolution No. 131-2026 Accepting the Retirement of Executive Director, Stephen Blankenship.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 10. Resolution No. 132-2026** - Appointing an Executive Director
Mr. Steere expressed the Board's enthusiasm regarding the appointment of Mr. Steven Pierce as the Authority's Executive Director. Mrs. Henderson thanked the Personnel Committee for their efforts throughout the interview and selection process and expressed her support for Mr. Pierce's appointment. Mr. Pierce thanked the Personnel Committee and the Board for the opportunity to serve as Executive Director, as well as staff members in attendance for their support.
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Ms. Prince for Resolution No. 132-2026 Appointing Steven Pierce as Authority Executive Director.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 11. Resolution No. 133-2026** - Appointing the Executive Director as the Public Agency Compliance Officer
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 133-2026 Appointing the Executive Director as the Public Agency Compliance Officer.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 12. Resolution No. 134-2026** - Appointing a Fund Commissioner to the New Jersey Solutions Joint Health Insurance Fund
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 134-2026 Appointing Steven Pierce as the Fund Commissioner to the New Jersey Solutions Joint Health Insurance Fund.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 13. Resolution No. 135-2026** - Appointing a Fund Commissioner to the New Jersey Solutions Joint Health Insurance Fund
Motion was made by Mrs. Henderson and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 135-2026 Appointing Steven Pierce as the Fund Commissioner to the New Jersey Solutions Joint Health Insurance Fund.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 14. Resolution No. 136-2026** - Approving a 2-Year Agreement with the Operations Supervisors Personnel Bargaining Unit
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 136-Approving a 2-Year Agreement with the Operations Supervisors Personnel Bargaining Unit.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye

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- 15. Resolution No. 137-2026** - Approval of a Compensation Adjustment (Operations Supervisors)
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Mrs. Rechner for Resolution No. 137-2026 Approving of Personnel Compensation Adjustment.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 16. Resolution No. 138-2026** - Awarding a SCADA Contract to Complete Control Services for the Poplarwood, Racetrack and Route 9 Wastewater Pump Stations
Motion was made by Mr. Prince and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 138-2026 Awarding a SCADA Contract to Complete Control Services for the Poplarwood, Racetrack, & Route 9 Wastewater Pump Stations in an amount not to exceed \$90,691.80 (\$30,230.60 per station).
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 17. Resolution No. 139-2026** - Awarding of an Alternative Method Contract to Aqua Matric LLC for Utility and Asset Management Services
Mr. Morris recommended awarding the contract subject to minor clerical revisions to the draft version of the resolution that was provided to the Board.
Motion was made by Mr. Steere and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 139-2026 Awarding Professional Services Contract to Aqua Matrix, LLC for Utility and Asset Management Consultant Service in an amount not to exceed \$30,000.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye
- 18. Resolution No. 140-2026** - Authorizing the Advertisement & Recruitment of Operations Management Positions
Motion was made by Mr. Prince and seconded by Mrs. Henderson for Resolution No. 140-2026 Authorizing the Advertisement and Recruitment for Operations Management Positions.
Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Aye, Mr. Prince- Aye

Administrative Reports

Solicitor

- Commended the Board, and specifically the Personnel Committee, for their efforts in navigating the transition to a new Executive Director. He acknowledged the significant forethought, time, and dedication involved in managing a leadership transition and praised the Board and Committee for handling the process smoothly.

Engineer

- The Airport PS Emergency Generator and Well 2 Upgrade- Contracts were awarded last month and have been executed. The Well 2 upgrade is projected to be completed before the end of 2026. The Pump Station Generator Project is anticipated to have an extended timeline due to generator lead times, with completion expected in Spring 2027.
- Poplarwood PS- The site is currently operating under bypass pumping while the contractor completes the necessary work. Completion is anticipated by the end of the month, at which time a permanent solution is expected to be in place and bypass pumping will no longer be necessary.

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- Diamond Beach PS- The project was temporarily suspended for the summer due to increased flows. The contractor is expected to resume work in early October, with project completion anticipated by the end of November.
- Pump Stations Rehabilitation Project- The valves for the Route 9 pump station were secured at a cost significantly lower than anticipated. Work is expected to begin in late October or early November, with completion anticipated by Christmas. The Headwork PS and Racetrack PS, which are associated with I-Bank funding, are anticipated to proceed in 2027.
- Andrew Tague, DeBlasio & Associates, provided updates on the following projects:
 - North Cape May Watermain Project- Phase I: The contractor has completed all water main installation and cut-and-cap work on the existing water main. The next phase of work will include grouting the existing water main before the contractor moves out of the North Cape May area in the coming weeks to begin the Lower Township Public Works Water Main Extension Project on Seashore Road. The North Cape May Water Main Project Phase I staging area is currently being cleared, with all remaining materials and equipment to be relocated to the Lower Township Public Works yard.
 - North Cape May Watermain Project- Phase II- Project plans and specifications have been uploaded to H2LOans. Authorization to advertise is anticipated within the next month, with construction expected to begin in late fall.
 - Schellenger's Landing Project- Design work is projected to begin and go out to bid shortly.

Financial Consultant

- A few line items on the current budget are running higher than anticipated, particularly sludge removal, which is consistent with increased costs being experienced by other authorities. Overall, year-to-date revenues and expenditures remain in line with budgeted amounts.
- Will begin working with staff on the 2027 budget in the coming weeks, with the expectation that it will be available for introduction at the October meeting.
- Regarding the capital budget, the Authority will review available balances to determine whether sufficient funds can be transferred within the current budget for the landing project. If necessary, a capital budget amendment may be prepared for introduction at the October meeting.

Executive Director

- Staff is hopeful that the Landing Watermain Project can proceed as quickly as possible; however, due to the time required to order equipment and begin construction, it is anticipated that the majority of construction costs will not be incurred until the new fiscal year beginning December 1st.
- Requested the members of the Board complete the annual USDA forms provided to them and return them prior to leaving the meeting.
- Thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve the Authority and stated that he greatly enjoyed his time with the organization. He expressed that his departure was bittersweet and thanked the Board for their assistance and support in making his tenure with the Authority a positive experience.

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Mr. Pierce announced that fall hydrant flushing is scheduled for October 5th through October 9th. The flushing schedule has been advertised to the public, and notification postcards have been mailed to homeowners. He also reported that maintenance and painting of the water tower are expected to begin in late September or early October.

Public Comments-

- Dawn Patterson, North Cape May resident, followed up on concerns she voiced at previous meetings regarding reimbursement for repair costs.
- Alana Kutepow, Erma resident, expressed concern about installing a well on her property if public water service were to become available in the area shortly thereafter. Mr. Blankenship advised that there are currently no plans to extend public water service to the area within the next several years. He further stated that, should such a situation arise in the future, the Board could consider a waiver similar to that provided in connection with the sewer project.
- Joe Schneider, North Cape May resident, thanked the Board for providing residents with the opportunity to discuss their concerns at previous meetings and for acting promptly to address the matter.
- Dave DeSheilds, North Cape May resident, thanked the Board for addressing residents' concerns regarding the staging area. He requested additional information regarding the Phase II project, and Mr. Pierce advised that he would provide Mr. DeSheilds with a map identifying the streets to be included in the project.

Comments from the Board—

Mr. Ridgway congratulated Mr. Pierce on his appointment and the beginning of a new chapter for the LTMUA. He also extended special thanks to Mr. Blankenship for his time and service to the Authority, noting the successes achieved during his tenure.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:32pm was made by Mrs. Rechner and seconded by Mrs. Henderson.

Roll call vote: Mrs. Henderson- Aye, Mrs. Rechner- Aye, Mr. Ridgway- Aye, Mr. Steere- Absent, Mr. Prince- Aye