

**LINWOOD COMMON COUNCIL
MINUTES OF REORGANIZATION MEETING
JANUARY 7, 2026
6:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

Councilman Eric Ford called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M., noting the meeting had been advertised in compliance with the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act.

FLAG SALUTE

Councilman Ken Kelly led the flag salute.

INVOCATION

Pastor Jayson Byrd delivered the Invocation.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Darren Matik; Councilwoman Blair Albright; Councilman Eric Ford; Councilman Ken Kelly; Councilman Matt Levinson; Councilman Todd Michael; Councilman Michael Salerno; and Councilman Adam Walcoff.
Absent: None
Also Present: Joseph L. Youngblood, City Solicitor; and Leigh Ann Napoli, City Administrator/Municipal Clerk.

OATHS OF OFFICE

Mayor Darren Matik administered the Oath of Office to Michael Salerno to the office of Council, Ward 1
Mayor Darren Matik administered the Oath of Office to Todd Michael to the office of Council, Ward 2
Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson administered the Oath of Office to Matthew Levinson to the office of Council, At Large

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The City Clerk opened the floor for nominations for Council President. Councilman Michael motioned to nominate Eric Ford with a second from Councilman Walcoff. The City Clerk called for any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed by motion from Councilman Kelly and a second from Councilwoman Albright. The City Clerk called for a voice vote to close the floor for nominations. All members of Council were in favor to close the floor for nominations. The City Clerk called for a voice vote for Eric Ford to Council President. All members of Council were in favor. The nomination of Eric Ford for the position of Council President was approved. City Clerk Leigh Ann Napoli administered the Oath of Office to Eric Ford to the office of Council President.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Council President Ford opened the floor for nominations for Council President Pro Tempore. Councilman Kelly motioned to nominate Blair Albright with a second from Councilman Michael. Council President Ford called for any other nominations. Hearing none, nominations were closed by motion from Councilman Michael and a second from Councilman Kelly. Council President Ford called for a voice vote to close the floor for nominations. All members of Council were in favor to close the floor for nominations. Council President Ford called for a voice vote for Blair Albright to the position of Council President Pro Tempore. All members of Council were in favor. The nomination of Blair Albright for Council President Pro Tempore was approved. Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr., Esq., administered the Oath of Office to Blair Albright to the office of Council President Pro Tempore.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

The Mayor welcomed and thanked everyone for attending another reorganization meeting and his 6th one as Mayor.

“When people ask what kind of place Linwood is, the answer isn’t found in a slogan. It’s found in what happens when someone needs help. It’s found in who shows up — and how often.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

Tonight isn't about pretending everything is perfect. It's about being honest about what this city does well, where we've made progress, and why Linwood continues to work the way it does, because people here stay involved. That's the real state of our City.

This past year, that involvement showed up everywhere.

It showed up with the City Council who spend countless hours on behalf of the residents. Council President Ford is the rudder that steers the city in the right direction, and I would like to thank him for his integrity and work ethic on behalf of the residents and staff. I would also like to commend Councilman Kelly as head of neighborhood services for his tireless efforts on important services the city provides. Councilman Levinson for his important work on the budget and hours of time spent creating incredible value for our residents. Councilman Salerno who was appointed and now elected to this body. He brings a new fresh perspective to Council, and I am eager to see his progression in the years to come. (Mike is so dedicated that he is actually becoming a volunteer firefighter in town)

It showed up in public safety which is chaired by Councilman Michael whose work sometimes goes unnoticed because of our very capable department heads but he is a very valuable asset and his hours spent led to the following. In 2025, our Police Department reached a milestone it had never reached before, achieving accredited agency status through the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police. That doesn't happen by accident. It means policies, training, and daily operations met the highest professional standards statewide. Chief Steven Cunningham's leadership, including his graduation from the FBI National Academy, reflects a department that is planning ahead, not just reacting. We would like to thank and congratulate Sgt Devine for his 25 years of service and the thankless job of putting together a good portion of the accreditation paperwork.

But what matters most isn't the certificate on the wall. It's trust.

That trust is built at National Night Out, which was the largest in our city's history. It's built at school visits, senior lunches, and conversations that don't make headlines. It's built when officers are visible, approachable, and part of the community they serve. I would also like to thank Lt. Martin for all his efforts this year helping to manage such great work.

The same is true for our Fire Department led by Chief Walley and Captain Gabriel.

In just six months, our new first responder program handled 339 calls. The department responded to nearly 600 calls overall this year. And behind those numbers are moments that matter, like the CPR save on New Road in December. That's not a statistic. That's a life.

Our firefighters didn't just respond to emergencies this year. They showed up in classrooms, senior programs, and community events, because safety doesn't start with sirens. It starts with connection.

Public Works chaired by Councilman Walcoff and led by Joe Olden is another place where that connection is easy to overlook, until you need it.

This year, the department completed more than 1,400 work assignments. They collected dozens of large leaf containers, maintained over 500 storm drains and outfall pipes, responded to multiple snow events, patched potholes, maintained street signs, and kept our parks and playgrounds safe and welcoming. They also supported nearly every community event we host, from National Night Out to senior luncheons and the holiday tree lighting.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

They played a hands-on role in advancing major city projects, assisting with renovations to the rescue squad building, the new field house, turf field improvements, and upgrades at Poplar Avenue Field. And this year, we said goodbye to Chip Jones after 42 years of service. That level of commitment doesn't show up on a balance sheet, but it's part of why Linwood functions the way it does.

It took a lot of convincing to get Councilman Walcoff to join the team, but we are extremely lucky that he relented. We continually use him as a soundboard for ideas and is a constant presence in a sometimes-chaotic environment.

The word Recreation is boldly presented on our city seal and is solidly represented by the efforts and thankless work of our Parks Director Colleen Kaufields. She is the backbone of our community events and athletic programs. We cannot thank her enough for her exemplary work.

Behind the scenes, our city's operations continue to run with discipline and professionalism.

Our Tax Office led by Sylvia Washington and assistant Tonya Chrysler-Fortino maintained a 98.83% collection rate in a year when delinquent properties increased. Diane Hesley our Tax Assessor navigated a strong real estate market while modernizing records, improving data accuracy, and increasing efficiency in responding to public requests. City Hall appointed a Qualified Purchasing Agent for the first time, allowing us to operate more efficiently and responsibly with taxpayer dollars. We did not have to look far as that QPA is our own Leigh Ann Napoli, City Administrator and the glue who holds this city and council together. The council and I hope she realizes her value, and we thank her for her service to Linwood and its residents. Leigh Ann is not without a very competent staff, and we also would like to recognize the work of her deputy Mary Cole and our newest addition Mindy Parson who has handled everything thrown at her and more.

The finance office led by our CFO Anthony Strazzeri keeps us on the right path with our budget and delivered another perfect audit. I would like to thank our Auditors Leon Costello and Carol Russ for their efforts to help us become better every year. Joe Youngblood who has been our solicitor longer than some of the council people have been alive, continues to be an important part of what we do every day.

These are quiet improvements, but they matter.

So do the visible ones, particularly the work done by our Engineering Department led by Councilwoman Albright whom, which you will hear about in moment, spends way more time than she ever intended doing a phenomenal job in juggling many projects at once, with professionalism and grace. Our city Engineer CJ, who joined us this year, had no problem stepping in and hitting the ground running.

In 2025, the Engineering Department delivered a substantial list of completed projects across the city. These included the full turf field conversion at Memorial Park, Phase One improvements at Memorial Park with drainage upgrades, additional parking, new fencing, hockey decking, concrete pads, and bike racks. At Poplar Field, landscaping improvements and field upgrades were completed to enhance safety and usability.

Major roadway projects were also completed, including improvements to Oakcrest Avenue and Monroe Avenue, resurfacing of Wabash Avenue Phase Three, resurfacing of Barr Avenue, and completion of a sewer lining project to extend the life and reliability of critical underground infrastructure. The new field house building was also completed, providing a modern, shared facility for residents, athletes, and community programs.

MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

In addition to completed projects, significant work is already underway or planned. Memorial Park Phase Two plans are moving forward, along with miscellaneous road, drainage, building, and grounds projects throughout the city. Plans are in place to widen the full length of the bike path, further expanding safe and accessible recreation and transportation options. The Safe Routes to School project will add sidewalks along Shore Road, Greenwich Avenue, and portions of Tabor Avenue, improving pedestrian safety for students and families. The long-awaited library elevator replacement project is also progressing, ensuring accessibility for all residents.

These projects reflect careful planning, responsible investment, and a focus on long-term value, not quick fixes.

Speaking of the library led by Hannah Bishop a lifelong resident of Linwood, welcomed more than 500 new patrons this year and checked out over 31,000 materials. It continues to be one of the most active community spaces in Linwood, serving families, seniors, and students alike.

And through it all, our Construction Department led by Angela Marshall and assistant Donna McBride processed over 600 permits, conducted more than 1,700 inspections, and saw increased activity across the city — clear signs of continued investment in Linwood's future. Fire Inspectors Tom Flynn and Ray Conover continue to set records in inspections and keep our homes and businesses safe.

Council and I would like to thank the numerous boards and the volunteers who serve. The Planning Board Chair Mitchell Gurwicz and Recreation Board President Marc Carpenter exemplify what is best about Linwood and its Volunteers.

None of this happens in isolation. It happens because people care enough to serve, as employees, volunteers, elected officials, and residents. It happens because this community believes in doing things the right way, even when no one is watching. That's what makes Linwood special.

As we look ahead, our focus remains simple: keep this City safe, fiscally sound, and connected. Keep investing in infrastructure. Keep supporting our employees. Keep listening to residents. And keep showing up for one another.

On a personal note, I want to thank my wife Brett and my sons, Zach and Xander, for their constant support. Public service is never a solo effort, and neither is leadership.

Linwood is not just a place we live. It is a place we take responsibility for. And as long as that remains true, the state of our City will remain strong. Thank you.”

ORDINANCES

1 OF 2026

AN ORDINANCE TO VACATE THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC STREET SITUATED IN THE CITY OF LINWOOD, COUNTY OF ATLANTIC AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AND TO RELEASE THE PUBLIC RIGHTS THEREIN – A PORTION OF PIERCE AVENUE, AND REPEALING OTHER ORDINANCES HERETOFORE ADOPTED, THE PROVISIONS OF WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT HEREWITH.

The City Clerk read Ordinance No. 1 of 2026 by title only. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilman Kelly, to approve Ordinance No. 1 for first reading. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion was approved.

RESOLUTIONS

15-2026 A Resolution approving the Temporary Budget for 2026

The Clerk read Resolution No. 15 of 2026 by title only. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilman Levinson, to approve Resolution No. 15. A roll call vote was heard with seven in the affirmative. Motion approved.

RESOLUTIONS WITHIN CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under item, Consent Agenda, are considered to be routine by City Council, and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed. Any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of Funds and any item requiring discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda and discussed separately. All Consent Agenda items will be reflected in full in the minutes.

- 1-2026** A Resolution setting dates for Caucus and Regular Council Meetings
- 2-2026** A Resolution adopting a Cash Management Plan for 2026
- 3-2026** A Resolution naming check signers
- 4-2026** A Resolution authorizing the Finance Office to maintain a Petty Cash Fund in the amount of \$100.00
- 5-2026** A Resolution setting interest rates on delinquent taxes
- 6-2026** A Resolution setting a service charge for checks returned for insufficient funds
- 7-2026** A Resolution authorizing the allowance of a grace period before charging a penalty for late payment of taxes
- 8-2026** A Resolution authorizing the imposition of a penalty on tax delinquencies in excess of \$10,000
- 9-2026** A Resolution naming the official City Newspapers, for purposes of publication, specifically, The Press of Atlantic City and The Ocean City Sentinel-Ledger
- 10-2026** A Resolution appointing an authorized agent for the sale of City owned land and/or property
- 11-2026** A Resolution appointing the Tax Assessor as Agent in appeals to reduce assessments for the year 2026
- 12-2026** A Resolution designating the Public Agency Compliance Officer for the City of Linwood
- 13-2026** A Resolution adopting Robert's Rules of Order and establishing rule of order and conduct for all City Council, Caucus, and Special Meetings in the City of Linwood
- 14-2026** A Resolution authorizing the City of Linwood to enter into a Contract with the attached list of vendors for State Contract Purchases
- 16-2026** A Resolution authorizing the canceling of small balances of tax refunds or delinquencies
- 17-2026** A Resolution authorizing the Tax Collector to substitute two mailings in lieu of advertising of the Tax Sale to be held in 2026
- 18-2026** A Resolution confirming Mayoral appointments for the year 2026
- 19-2026** A Resolution appointing Steve Cunningham and reappointing Tim Longnecker as Deputy Emergency Management Coordinators for the City of Linwood
- 20-2026** A Resolution awarding a Contract to Joel M. Fleishman as Municipal Bond Counsel for the Year 2026 for the City of Linwood
- 21-2026** A Resolution awarding a Contract to Ford Scott & Associates, LLC as Municipal Auditor for the Year 2026 for the City of Linwood
- 22-2026** A Resolution authorizing the award of a Non-Fair and Open Contract to Joseph L. Youngblood, Jr. as Municipal Legal Counsel for the Year 2026 for the City of Linwood
- 23-2026** A Resolution authorizing the appointment of Glenn Insurance as the Risk Management Consultant for the Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund

RESOLUTIONS WITHIN CONSENT AGENDA (continued)

24-2026	A Resolution authorizing submission of a Grant Application for the Linwood Municipal Alliance Grant Fiscal Grant Cycle July 2026 – June 2027
25-2026	A Resolution approving temporary signage for the Atlantic County Numismatic Society Coin Show
26-2026	A Resolution authorizing the issuance of a Bingo License, #2026-02, to Our Lady of Sorrows Church

Council President Ford asked if any member of Council would like to remove any items from consent. No items were removed. Councilwoman Albright motioned, seconded by Councilman Levinson, to approve Resolutions No. 1-14, 16-26 of 2026. All members of Council were in favor. Motion was approved.

APPROVAL OF BILL LIST: \$2,875,612.19

Councilman Walcoff motioned, seconded by Councilman Kelly, to approve the bills for payment. A roll call vote was heard with five in the affirmative and two abstentions by Councilwoman Albright and Councilman Levinson. Motion approved. (The bill list is attached as Exhibit A)

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Council President Ford opened the floor to the public for discussion on any topic.

Glenn Wagner, Linwood Gospel Chapel, 900 New Road, Linwood – Mr. Wagner reference the street vacation ordinance on the agenda and asked if the City can have the property corners marked out to identify the paper street. Seeing and hearing no other members from the public wishing to be heard, Council President Ford closed the floor.

FINAL REMARKS BY COUNCIL

Councilman Michael – Councilman Michael thanked everyone for attending. The year went by very quickly and as the Mayor mentioned in his speech, there were a lot of accomplishments in 2025 that he is very proud to be a part of. He thanked everyone involved for their efforts and thanked the Police and Fire Departments for their continued assistance.

Councilman Levinson – Councilman Levinson congratulated the Mayor on his speech and how nice it was to hear all the accomplishments by the City. He congratulated Councilman Salerno on his election and Councilman Michael on his re-election. Councilmen Levinson, Salerno, and Michael all grew up in Linwood and now raise their families here. He thanked his family for their continued support.

Councilman Salerno – Councilman Salerno reiterated Councilman Michael's comments. He is also very proud to be a Linwood resident and honored to serve on Council. The past six to eight months on Council has been a great experience. He is looking forward to continuing to serve.

Councilman Walcoff – Councilman Walcoff thanked the Mayor for his year in review. A lot of things did happen. He is proud to service on Council with all that was completed. Especially all the recreation improvements. Everyone works very hard for the City and he looks forward to continuing.

Councilwoman Albright – Councilwoman Albright thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She attended the recent ribbon cutting at the new Veterans Clinic. It was a great event. She believes it will be an asset for Atlantic County. She thanked her fellow members on Council for electing her as Council President Pro Tem and thanked Mr. Youngblood for swearing her in. She appreciates all the work everyone does to get things done for the betterment of Linwood. She is very proud to serve.

Councilman Kelly – Councilman Kelly thanked everyone for attending. The governing body is made up of very strong, intelligent people and the Mayor is a great leader. Councilman Kelly is proud to be a part of it. The group debates and listens to the residents. He thanked everyone for their support and leadership and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Council President Ford – Council President Ford congratulated Councilmen Kelly, Levinson, and Michael. He thanked the group for electing him as Council President. He enjoys working with such a great team, who all put countless hours in. It is what makes Linwood a great place to live. He also thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to be addressed by Council, Councilman Levinson motioned, seconded by Councilman Michael, to adjourn at 6:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Leigh Ann Napoli, RMC
City Administrator/Municipal Clerk