

**MINUTES FOR COUNCIL MEETING SEPTMEBER 3, 2025**

The Meeting was called to order by Council President Gross at 6:00 P.M. The City Clerk read the Opening Prayer, all recited the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call was taken.

PRESENT: Councilwoman Dato, Councilman Lenahan, Councilman Reilly and Councilman Gross

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Fred A. Henry, Dan Balka, CFO, Deborah Brooks, City Clerk, and Kevin McManimon, Esq. The Following Department heads were also present: Greg Czoch, Mark Herdman, Chief Kanecke, Rafael Albarran and Jason Valetutto

The Clerk read the Certification of Meeting Notice.

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**CONSENT AGENDA:**

The following items are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be acted upon in one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member so requests. In this event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in the normal sequence of the Agenda.

**MOVED by:** Ms. Dato of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution NO. 25-166 through NO. 25-170 are hereby approved. **SECONDED by:** Mr. Lenahan. **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: dato, Lenahan, Reilly, Gross Absent: Conrad**

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- NO. 25-166 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A 750W TRAILER WITH MINI DOME PTZ AND MULTI SENSOR MD FOR OEM
- NO. 25-167 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A REFUND OF MISCELLANEOUS PAYMENT – RICHARD P. NICHOLS
- NO. 25-168 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZINGAPPLICATIONS OF GRANT FROM THE NEW JERSEY DCA FOR 5<sup>TH</sup> STREET CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
- NO. 25-169 RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE INSERTION OF A SPECIAL ITEM OF REVENUE IN THE BUDGET PURSUANT TO N.J.S.A. 40A:4-87 (CH. 159, P.L. 148) – PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REVENUES OFFSET BY APPROPRIATIONS
- NO. 25-170 RESOLUTION CERTIFYING ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP WITH SOUTH AMBOY FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR NEW JERSEY STATE FIREMEN’S ASSOCIATION ELIGIBILITY – RAFAEL TAVAREZ

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**RESOLUTIONS:**

**RESOLUTION NO. 25-17**

**APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF MINUTES**

**BE IT RESOLVED,** that the City Council of the City of South Amboy does hereby approve and release the Council Minutes of the August 13, 2025 Council Meeting.

**MOVED by: Mr. Lenahan** of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution No. 25-171 is hereby approved. **SECONDED by: Ms. Dato** **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: Dato, Lenahan, Gross Abstain: Reilly Absent: Conrad**

**RESOLUTION NO. 25-172 APPROVAL OF BILL LIST**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the City Council of the City of South Amboy does hereby receive and approve the payment of the bill list dated August 78, 2025, as presented by the Chief Financial Officer.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the bill list be appended to the official minutes.

**MOVED by: Mr. Lenahan** of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Resolution No. 25-172 is hereby approved. **SECONDED by: Ms. Dato. ROLL CALL VOTE: All in favor.**

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**ADOPTION/SECOND READING**

**ORDINANCE 2025-13**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 58 THE SOUTH AMBOY CITY CODE TO ESTABLISH A "TRAP, NEUTER & RELEASE PROGRAM"

**OPEN PUBLIC**

**Melissa Steel, Marge Petron and Brianne Rodgers all spoke in support of the ordinance and thanked all those involved in its inception. They noted it would be a help to strained animal rescue services and curb the cat population growth in the City.**

**CLOSE PUBLIC**

**MOVED by:** Mr. Reilly, of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Ordinance #2025-13 is hereby adopted.

**SECONDED by:** Ms. Dato **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: Dato, Lenahan, Reilly Gross Absent: Conrad**

**ORDINANCE 2025-14**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING ORDINANCE NO. 1036 ENTITLED "PARKING AND TRAFFIC REGULATIONS FOR THE CITY OF SOUTH AMBOY" IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY –HANDICAP SPACE 131 SOUTH PINE AVE AND 221 POTTER STREET

**OPEN PUBLIC – no comment**

**CLOSE PUBLIC**

**MOVED by:** Ms. Dato, of the Council of the City of South Amboy, that Ordinance #2025-14 is hereby adopted.

**SECONDED by:** Mr. Lenahan, **ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes: Dato, Lenahan, Reilly, Gross Absent: Conrad**

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**COMMENTS:**

Ms. Dato:

- Reminded everyone that it is the end of summer and start of school and the students will be walking so please drive carefully.
- Reminded everyone the election is coming November 4<sup>th</sup> and that mail in voting as well as early voting are available.

- Thanked the supporters of the TNR Ordinance that came to the meeting and spoke in support of its adoption. Thanked Mr. Kales and Mr. Conrad for their hard work in putting together this Ordinance.
- Sent condolences to the Reilly family and the loss of Mr. Reilly's mother-in-law.

Mr. Reilly:

- Sent condolences to the Dato family.
- Thanked the first responders and volunteers for their continued support.
- Wished the Firemen good luck at Wildwood.
- Thanked everyone for their outreach after the death of his mother-in-law.
- Wished the students and administration good luck in the new school year.
- Noted the Broadway Music series was a great success and hopes it can be expanded next year.
- Suggested that the Silver medalist at the US Judo Open and Olympic hopeful Toni Pepia be honored at an upcoming Council meeting.
- Noted the FOSA Charity event will be on December 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Reported the 9/11 services are scheduled at 6pm at the train station 911 Memorial.
- Asked the residents to support a two year old South Amboy boy with INAD, a rare disease, by donating to Jacks Miracle Mission.

Mr. Lenahan:

- Thanked the first responder and volunteers for their service noting it added to the quality of life to South Amboy citizens.
- Noted the battle of the bands for suicide prevention is September 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Noted the Murder Mystery event in Sayreville is Friday September 19<sup>th</sup>, \$60 per person. For tickets and information call Katie 732-672-0401
- Reminded everyone South Amboy Day is on the 27<sup>th</sup> – come out and enjoy!

Mr. Gross:

- Confirmed that the American Legion dinner honoring Gary Poland and Robert Moglia is October 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Reiterated South Amboy Day is September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Sent condolences to the Dato and Reilly families.
- Congratulated the representatives of the TNR support group on the adoption of the TNR Ordinance.

Mayor Henry:

- Congratulated the Broadway Music series on its success and is looking forward to next year's program.
- Reiterated the upcoming 9-11 service, South Amboy Day and City Wide Yard Sale.
- Sent condolences to the Dato and Reilly families.
- Spoke on the tragedy of the most recent school shooting noting the government should be spending more of its time and money to solve this crisis rather than on having the National Guard standing around with not much purpose.

Mr. Kales:

- Congratulated Melissa, Greta and Steven as well as Mr. Womack and Mr. Conrad on the adoption of the TNR Ordinance.
- Updated the Council and public on the status of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> round of COAH. The City met its filing deadline and office of Fair Share Housing has filed a light appeal that Mr. McManimon can detail.
- The recycling can issue is improving and over the last couple of weeks the number of unresolved issues has gone from 850 to 35.

Mr. McManimon:

- Noted the soft appeal was a good thing and that the City should be able to resolve the open issues within the time deadline. The issues were mostly requests of further documentation.

Mr. Gross:

- Thanked the Department Heads for attending this evening's meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mary Szaro confirmed that the information requested by Fair Share Housing could be resolved before the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Mr. McManimon hopes to have the submittal completed before the deadline.

Chris Smiga, 144 Second St., thanked the mayor for speaking up against the government inactions regarding mass shootings and noted the City should consider the use of ai gun detection software as a protective measure. He received confirmation that the Fifth St. grant money would be used to install pickle ball courts and suggested perhaps there are better uses for these funds. He stated he thought the purchase of the drone was a good one and hopes the City puts in proper policies and procedures on their deployment. He then mentioned that the Business Administrator had thrown South Amboy under the bus in regards to some flooding issues they are having saying South Amboy had not maintained their storm system. Mr. Kales agreed that they had been thrown under the bus but noted the City's storm water system had been checked and was fully cleared. He has offered to help Sayreville in any way they can. He noted this was also a County issue.

Brandon Russell read the following statement: I have a few questions but first, I'd like to read a personal statement regarding the ongoing issues at our schools. In 2010, the State Comptroller's Office warned that these agreements "result in significant foregone revenue and introduce tax inequities that deserve closer scrutiny". It's unfortunate this warning was not taken seriously and as a result, the structural inequities have only worsened for the schools. To make matters worse, we also found out that standard operating procedures were never established for the PILOT payments and the required annual audits. The following are some figures that I've referenced before and will keep mentioning until we find a fair solution: • The City has received \$6,790,706.91 in PILOT revenue since 2014. • If the schools received just 41% of that revenue, they'd have received \$2.78 million. • Without any PILOTs, total revenues would've exceeded \$20 million, with over 8 million going to the schools. While I'm aware of the chromebook initiative and the funding that was provided from SARA this year, that \$600,000 combined equals only 25% of all redeveloper fees collected between 2015 and 2024. In all, this amounts to barely 6% of total redevelopment funding going to the schools. By now, it's clear that PILOT agreements benefit the City, to the detriment of our schools. They make municipal budgeting easier at the direct expense of students, families, and taxpayers. The State sees the property values and income levels at places like Station Bay and Bayside Cove, so they adjust our expected school tax contributions accordingly. As a result, we've been losing the maximum amount of State aid annually and these PILOTs are locked in for another 20-25 years. Meanwhile, the same soccer field and track that was in disrepair when I graduated over 13 years ago still needs to be addressed. The upcoming school referendum, if passed, could fix the roofs and HVAC systems but it won't cover these athletic facilities. Months ago, students already came to one of these meetings to explain why these need to be fixed, yet no action plan has been discussed publicly. As a resident of South Amboy for nearly 32 years, I am committed to finding solutions while compromising wherever possible. That doesn't mean I can ignore reality as City officials ask for more school accountability behind the scenes while this governing body actively struggles with their own laundry list of problems. From the ferry

terminal building still needing \$10 million in funding to receiving incorrect PILOT payments, missing audits, questionable spending and rising debt, we need to look at the full picture. This is not a schools vs. city problem, this is a systemic funding imbalance that's been going on for a decade and it needs correction. As always, I remain available on and off the record to discuss my concerns. I've reached out to everyone on this Council so I appreciate everyone who has spoken with me in good faith. As I mentioned at the last meeting, my personal opinion is that we need to schedule a special joint meeting between the City Council and Board of Education so we can find a path towards a more equitable solution for all. Moving onto some questions on other matters: 1. What happened to our Human Relations Commission? 2. Regarding the March Development project, when can we expect the ordinance for the amended redevelopment plan and the renegotiated PILOT to be introduced? 3. How are negotiations with BNE progressing regarding public access to Schindler Drive from Roswell St? 4. Assuming Sherman is still the master redeveloper of the remaining parcels of land, has anyone engaged with their ownership team regarding phase 3 and 4 of the project? Thank you for your time.

Jason Galiota, 718 Bordentown Avenue, spoke about a rodent issue in the neighborhood due to construction at on the of the residences. Ms. Brooks stated she had just had a call regarding the issue and had reached out to both the Health Inspector and Code Official. Mr. Kales added his office is already working on the project in conjunction with the contractor.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

On motion by Ms. Dato, seconded by Mr. Lenahan and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Brooks  
Municipal Clerk  
Approved 9-17-2025