

Florence, New Jersey  
February 21, 2026

The Florence Township Council held a Special Budget Session on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order by Council President Frappolli at 9:00 a.m. Council President Frappolli led the salute to the Flag.

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: Notice of the meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice was published in the Burlington County Times on Sunday, February 8, 2026, given to the Courier Post for information on February 10, 2026, and posted to the Municipal Bulletin Board and the Township website on February 4, 2026.

### **ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: John Fratinardo, Fred Gabriele, Talaya Loftin, Gina Sullivan, Joseph Frappolli

Also Present: Mayor Kristan I. Marter; Thomas A. Sahol, Township Administrator;  
Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk; Michelle Chiemiego, CFO;  
Christine Swiderski, Tax Collector; Marty Eckert, Recreation Director/Economic  
Development Liaison; David Wright, Public Works Superintendent; Ted Lovenduski,  
Administrative Assistant; Chief of Police Brian Boldizar; Captain of Police Nick Czepiel

Absent: None

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Motion of Gabriele, seconded by Fratinardo to open the public comment portion of the meeting. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was the Motion of Gabriele, seconded by Fratinardo to close the public comment. Voice vote – All ayes.

### **BUSINESS**

Review 2026 Municipal Budget

Administrator Sahol explained the budget process and said that we would look at each department's 2026 Budget. He encouraged Council to ask any questions they might have regarding the Budgets. He explained that for a majority of the department's salaries and wages are contractual. Hourly employees belong to a union and the yearly increases are negotiated as part of the contract. Salaried employees are not part of the union but historically salaried employees receive the same annual percentage increase as the hourly employees.

Tax Collector – Christine Swiderski

Ms. Swiderski handed out a synopsis of the tax department listing job descriptions and duties. She also provided fees for services as well as a list of services provided that do not carry fees.

Ms. Swiderski stated that in 2025 99.04% of property taxes were collected. The Water & Sewer collection rate is lower. The majority of the properties in tax sale are for delinquent Water & Sewer bills. Tax sale notices are mailed to the delinquent property owners prior to the tax sale. The state statute allows municipalities to charge a fee up to \$25.00 per mailing. This helps to offset the cost of the tax sale by charging the delinquent property owners rather than the tax payers. We have been charging \$10.00 for

each mailing. Ms. Swiderski stated that she will be preparing a resolution for Council to approve an increase of the fee. The process for the tax sale takes three months. We will start preparing mid March for a June sale.

Administrator Sahol stated that the Water & Sewer Department has been replacing non-working meters throughout the town. Even if a meter is not read by our radio-reading collection system, the usage is still being recorded electronically on the meter itself. Residents receive estimated bills until such time as the meters are changed out with new transmitters. When the meters are replaced, the usage that was above the minimum is captured and the homeowners are billed for the excess. If the meter has been not working for a long time the catch up bill could be high. Councilwoman Sullivan asked how many estimated bills are sent before we go in and change the meters? Ms. Swiderski stated that during the Covid years we were not permitted to enter anyone's home. This resulted in a long list of meters in need of replacement. Councilwoman Sullivan stated that she would like a schedule developed where no more than 2 or 3 estimated bills went out before we changed the meters.

Ms. Swiderski supplied Mayor and Council with a comparison of Long-Term PILOTS for 2025. The PILOTS generated 3 million in revenue. If these buildings were paying the normal tax rate we would have collected only 1 million dollars. CFO Michelle Chiemiego states that PILOTS help to stabilize our budget and the quarterly billing of the PILOTS keeps us from having to get temporary financing.

Finance – Michelle Chiemiego CFO

Ms. Chiemiego said there are two people in her office. Jennifer Allen handles payroll and payables. There have been very few increases in the Finance budget. Most expenses have remained the same from last year. The only increase is in salaries. We switched from a weekly payroll to a biweekly payroll in 2026 and will probably see the savings after this year and will be able to reduce that in next year's budget.

Councilwoman Loftin asked how the new procedure with Edmunds was working. Ms. Chiemiego stated that all employees were now obtaining purchase orders prior to placing orders, there shouldn't be any findings on the audit this year.

Council President Frappolli asked for a general overview of the surplus. Ms. Chiemiego answered that in 2024 the Current Fund Surplus was 1.5 million dollars. We are projecting a surplus of 2.3 million for 2025. Council President Frappolli stressed that this governing body is trying to be as fiscally responsible as possible. He said that this is a key budget, we went through some tough times and we need to be fiscally responsible without cutting costs and services. All aspects of the budget need to be thoroughly examined.

Township Clerk – Nancy Erlston

Ms. Erlston stated that the Clerk's office Budget shows a requested increase for Elections. In 2025 we budgeted \$9,000 for Elections and went over budget. This year we are asking for \$11,000. The increase is due to Burlington County making improvements to the voting machines and voting process. They then send a bill to all the municipalities for the improvements. We have no control over this.

Ms. Erlston stated that there may be a decrease in the advertising budget in the future as the state has recently passed a new law removing the requirement that public notices be placed in the newspapers. Effective March 1, 2026 public notices are to be posted on the township's website and a special state website. This should cut down the cost of advertising significantly.

Recreation and Public Events – Marty Eckert

Mr. Eckert said that his budget over the past three years has been decreased by \$35,000. Despite this the programs have grown, outreach has grown, grant opportunities have grown and we are still able to have good projects.

The Clean Communities Grant pays for the summer help. We received grants that will allow improvements to two playgrounds this year. This allows us to support the community but not negatively affect the budget.

Mr. Eckert said that individual leagues all have their own Tax ID numbers, and order their own uniforms. He stated that if he managed the uniform purchases, we would definitely save money but he doesn't have time to do that. Councilwoman Loftin asked if standards for uniforms could be set up. Mr. Eckert said he would bring this up at the Recreation Committee meeting.

Council President Frappolli asked how Mr. Eckert was able to manage the \$35,000 reduction. Mr. Eckert said the leagues had to take over the field work, except for grass cutting.

Council President Frappolli asked about Recycling and Community Clean up and asked for recommendations about what to do for community outreach. Mr. Eckert said Burlington County Recycling has vendors that do educational outreach to schools. Council President Frappolli said the biggest challenge is identifying people who need help as well as those who want to volunteer.

Councilwoman Loftin stated that she would like to establish standards for recreation leagues to reduce costs.

#### Police – Chief Brian Boldizar and Captain Nick Czepiel

Chief Boldizar said his department's budget shows a decrease in six line items – advertising, postage, stream lights, computers, incident forms and miscellaneous. The requested increases include the county fee for Central Communications, career development (college incentive for officers), the new township wide camera system and costs with communication between camera and internet. Chief Boldizar stated that the department is looking to hire 5 new officers to cover retirements from last year and this year.

Councilwoman Sullivan questioned the jumps in the salary lines. Chief Boldizar explained that it could be promotions in rank as well as steps that makes the jumps look so large. Council President Frappolli asked how many officers we currently have. Chief Boldizar answered that we have a total of 32 this includes 3 special officers. The three schools have SRO's and we have the proactive officer and the K-9 officers. Right now, we are being forced to use overtime to fill the holes in the schedule caused by retirements and the officers out on workers compensation.

#### Public Works Department – Dave Wright and Ted Lovenduski

Administrator Sahol explained that one of the salary lines went from zero in 2025 to \$66,228 in 2026. This is because an employee transferred back to Public Works.

David Wright, Director of Public Works, stated that most of the increases are for capital items which is equipment. He said there are currently 12 employees in the department and they are looking to hire 2 more to replace a retirement in 2025 and one person leaving February of this year.

Councilwoman Loftin asked about the lines item for Outside Snow Plowing. Mr. Wright answered that this was outsourcing for sidewalk shoveling. Council discussed the amount of sidewalks that would have

to be cleared and the cost of clearing those sidewalks if there were to be a new snow shoveling ordinance put in place town-wide.

Ted Lovenduski, Administrative Assistant stated that the Shade Tree had an increase of \$5,000. The biggest cost that we run into is tree removal. We have some large-scale removals that have to be done in 2026. We don't do any large trees or high trees in house. We have to get quotes from tree companies. Shade Tree is also responsible for tree replacement and beautification of several areas around town, including the municipal building, library, Centennial Park as well as other areas.

Councilwoman Loftin asked if anyone in the Public Works Department was planning on retiring soon. Mr. Wright stated that there are 3 employees close to retirement within the next few years.

Mr. Wright stated that the increase in vehicles is mostly for repairs. Also, we will have to replace the heads on the stormwater inlets in the community. About 400 of them need to be repaired or replaced. Administrator Sahol advised that the sanitation collection budget is based upon a contractual agreement and since we have a contract with the trash company and we can't deviate with this number.

Administrator Sahol explained that there are condominiums in the township that do not get our maintenance services but the state says they are entitled to the service. The township reimburses the HOA's for a percentage of their bills related to things such as snow clearing, lighting and similar services. Councilwoman Sullivan asked if we could get a better rate for all the condos/HOA's if we hired the contractor.

Administrator Sahol stated that under the Parks section there is a reduction in salary and wage due to one employee leaving. The playground equipment line is reduced because we have an ordinance that is covering some of the cost.

Administration – Administrator Sahol

Administrator Sahol explained that there are more people under the Administration budget than just the administrator. The salary and wage line has been modified by \$10,000. Council President Frappolli asked how salaries were determined. Administrator Sahol answered that salary increases were based on a percentage agreed upon in the CWA contract.

Administrator Sahol stated that the Operating Expense was increased by roughly \$1,000. This is comprised of increases like \$660 for copy paper, \$200 for rent of the postage meter and \$200 for rent of the copy machine.

Administrator Sahol advised Council that the increase in taxes for 2026 is 1 ½ pennies. That means an average home with an assessed value of \$225,000 will see an increase of \$35 for the year or \$8.75 per quarter.

Council President Frappolli commented that most of the money goes to salaries and wages and suggested that maybe we shouldn't replace both people in Public Works. Councilwoman Sullivan suggested making small changes to save money; for example, replacing the plastic packet folders with manilla envelopes.

Councilwoman Sullivan stated that she has heard concerns about there being no bathroom facilities at the Roebling Park. She will be foregoing her Council salary and would like a portion of that money to put a portable ADA compliant restroom near the basketball parking lot. The balance of her salary could be used for community events at the community center.

Administrator Sahol commented that the Professional Services budget line is increased by \$20,000 in 2026. This is due to the extra work involved in the property acquisitions and potential litigation.

Master Plan and Special Projects, there have been some changes under affordable housing and we started last year with changes in bulk standards.

#### Planning and Zoning

This is Planning Board. Planning Board selects their own solicitor. Zoning Board shows a reduction in the League of Municipality budget line.

#### Construction

The first budget line is 3 part time people serving in the Construction Office - Construction Official, Building Inspector, Housing Inspector. Next are the Sub-codes - fire, plumbing, building, electrical, mechanical, all part timers.

Postage went from \$4000 to \$6000 because we have to do lead certifications this year. New software will be on line in 2026 so will need a maintenance contract. The state is requiring that we provide E-permits for contractors. Scanning – the goal is to scan the balance of the Construction documents.

Board of Health – This line is for the registrars.

Environmental Commission is a volunteer board with a very small operating budget. There is no change from last year.

We hired a third-party contractor for Animal Control. If there were any pest issues, this is the budget line that they would be charged to.

Every year the township budgets for contributions to the Florence Seniors and Roebing Seniors. \$4,200 each.

Library – There is a Director, a Head Clerk and 9 part time employees.

#### Electric and Natural Gas

We are part of the SEM (Sustainable Energy Management); we are part of a huge group of towns that pools together to bid electric and natural gas to get a better price.

Streetlighting - We pay PSE&G for every street light in town.

Technology Communications, we just got notices of increases from Verizon. We are going to try to move away from Verizon and transition to radio and cellular in the future.

Sanitation – fees and taxes to the landfill. These are fixed costs.

Pension, Social Security and Police and Fire Retirement-this comes from the state.

#### Court

The cost of maintaining the court far exceeds the revenues that are currently generated. This is an area that we will be looking at entering into a Shared Service with another municipality.

Administrator Sahol spoke about the Capital Improvement Fund, Debt Service and the Reserve for Uncollected Taxes. There is an increase in the Auditor as they will be helping with the financing through I-bank loan program for the PFAS building.

Council President Frappolli said that he was looking for a 1 cent increase maximum. He said that we need to do all we can to show the people of Florence that we are trying our best to save money.

Administrator Sahol stated that on Wednesday, March 11, 2025 beginning at 6PM we will reconvene before the 7PM Work Session meeting so that Kent Jones and Jeff Smith will be present to answer any questions about the Water & Sewer Departments Budget for 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further questions, motion of Sullivan, seconded by Gabriele to adjourn at 1:47 p.m. Voice vote, all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC  
Township Clerk