

**TOWNSHIP OF HARDWICK
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2025**

OPENING ROLL CALL:

Mayor Jacksic called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Committeeman Lovell (via conference phone) and Deputy Mayor Meuse were present. DPW Supervisor Campbell, CFO Rolef, Township Attorney Igor Bykov, and Municipal Clerk Shipps were also present.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT:

"Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law. " Act, P.L. 1975, Ch. 231, setting forth the time, date, place, and purpose of this Public Meeting through a legal notice published in the New Jersey Herald and The Express Times, following the Township's Annual Reorganization Meeting, at which the 2025 meeting schedule was adopted.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tara Mezzanotte provided an update on a recent meeting with Congressman Kean's staff regarding the Delaware Water Gap and the Gateway Communities Program. Discussion followed on ensuring a Hardwick Township representative participates in quarterly meetings with the National Park Service. No further public comment was received.

DEPARTMENT REPORT:

Tom Campbell, DPW Supervisor, reported the following:

- Paving Evergreen Drive has been completed.
- Maintenance performed on Birch Ridge Road.

MINUTES:

August 20, 2025, Executive Session Meeting Minutes.

August 20, 2025, Public Session Meeting Minutes.

Motion made by Lovell, seconded by Meuse, and carried to approve with corrections the minutes mentioned above.

Consent Agenda:

1. 2025-61 Resolution Endorsing a Request for a Congressional Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic Study Bill.

WHEREAS, Hardwick Township continues to oppose the redesignation of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area as a national park, and nothing in this Resolution alters or diminishes that opposition; and

WHEREAS, the Township further affirms that requesting a study of the Paulins Kill to determine what, if any, segments and tributaries may be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System is not in conflict with such opposition; and

WHEREAS, the Township passed Resolution 2024-76 on December 18, 2024, supporting the Foodshed Alliance’s Paulins Kill National Wild and Scenic River Study Reconnaissance of approximately 4.5 miles of the main stem, 10 miles of tributaries, and White Lake; and

WHEREAS, the project team reported using NJDEP’s GeoWeb and Northeast Regional Habitat Conservation Priorities GIS mapping to review the Township’s Paulins Kill and associated tributaries, identifying numerous notable potential Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) at the national, regional, or state level, including:

- Extremely high ecological values associated with climate resilience, biodiversity, and habitats for multiple threatened and endangered plants and animals, some globally rare and state-threatened;
- Geologically unique features, including a large karst lake with remarkable marl deposits and adjacent forested limestone ridges with sinkhole ponds;
- Historically significant sites, including the National Register of Historic Places-listed Vass Homestead and several additional culturally important locations;
- Recreationally notable resources such as the Paulins Kill Valley Trail (co-aligned with the September 11th National Memorial Trail), as well as opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, and other outdoor activities; and

WHEREAS, Knowlton Township, Blairstown Township, and Frelinghuysen Township have passed similar support resolutions, demonstrating unanimous Warren County municipal support for such consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Foodshed Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has championed this project as part of its ongoing commitment to fostering a healthy, resilient foodshed that supports farmers, nourishes people, respects the land, and strengthens communities, and has expressed its readiness to serve as the National Park Service’s cooperating partner through a cooperative agreement to administer funding for the study; and

WHEREAS, it is understood, as explained by the project team, that this is a multi-year educational community partnership process, and:

- Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation does not allow federal land acquisition, does not alter local zoning ordinances or state laws, and does not extinguish existing landowner rights; and
- If the Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Study Bill is signed into law, it would appropriate federal funds to establish a Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Task Force/Management Council to develop a Paulins Kill Management Plan, review and finalize eligibility and suitability requirements, and prepare a formal National Park Service Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Study Report to be completed within three years; and
- The NPS Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Study Report is required for congressional representatives to seek an amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, establishing the Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designating the eligible and suitable segments of

the Paulins Kill and associated tributaries as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; and

- At any point prior to final designation, the Township may rescind its support. If rescinded, its segment and associated tributaries would be excluded from designation; and

WHEREAS, an effort is underway to potentially combine a Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic Study Bill with other New Jersey rivers seeking study designation, together with similar efforts in other states, so that one comprehensive package may be introduced in Congress with the support of Senators and Representatives from each state in the Fall or Winter of 2025–2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, to ensure readiness for inclusion in any Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Study Bill package, the Township Committee of Hardwick hereby endorses a request for a Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic Study Bill to be made by our United States Senators or Congressman.

2. 2025-62 Approving Payment of Vouchers.

WHEREAS all claims as reviewed and listed on the attached bill list are approved as reasonable and proper claims against the Township of Hardwick to be paid from its current fund; and

WHEREAS, the CFO has certified that funds are available to pay such claims.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, that the bills on the attached bill listed are authorized to be paid.

Motion made by Lovell, second by Meuse, and approved by roll call vote: Lovell—yes, Meuse—yes, Jacksic—yes, the September 17, 2025, Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Township Fee Schedule-Ongoing Review.

No update.

CFO Rolef reported on health insurance:

- Contacted an insurance carrier; response expected within 1-2 weeks.
- Rate increase reported at approximately 36.5% affecting all municipalities.
- All options being explored.

COAH Fees:

Township Attorney Bykov provided an update on affordable housing obligations and the non-residential development fee. Following consultation with the township assessor, as requested at the previous meeting, the Attorney Bykov reported that, due to the property's size and commercial nature, the assessment is not expected to fluctuate significantly from historical data. While final numbers are pending, the anticipated \$1 million assessment, resulting in a \$25,000 development fee, may vary slightly, but substantial changes are unlikely.

Regarding payment options, the Attorney clarified that state statute requires that all development fees be collected before issuing a final certificate of occupancy. The committee has the flexibility to establish a payment plan or accept payment in full. Still, the actual fee amount is determined by a statutory formula and the assessment value and cannot be reduced.

Township Attorney Bykov reported that the township received a soft challenge to its affordable housing Certificate of Occupancy Assessment (COA). Attorney Bykov, Mayor Jacksic, and Township Planner Hyer attended a virtual meeting to address the challenge.

Attorney Bykov clarified that this was not a challenge from a developer or Fair Share Housing Center, but rather a request for information that is classified as a challenge by definition. The township must submit required documentation before the March 15 deadline, including an updated development fee ordinance.

Attorney Bykov noted that the township is currently operating under outdated rules, and the new fourth round of affordable housing regulations may result in changes that could work in the township's favor. The township must address these requirements before obtaining its judgment of compliance and repose. Attorney Bykov and Township Planner Hyer will provide additional details on other meeting items and deadlines at a future meeting.

SWAEC Gea Program Auction 8/20/2025 Award:

Clerk Shipp reported that the IDT contract will end on November 30, 2025. The township will begin a new energy contract with Constellation New Energy, the successful bidder. Postcards will be sent to all current program participants regarding the transition.

Proposed Revision to Accessory Structure Setback Language:

No Material Change. The committee reviewed the proposed ordinance revision. Discussion confirmed that the chart, once incorporated into the ordinance, provides clarity.

Bear-Proof Garbage Cans:

The tentative delivery date is October 6, 2025. Cans will be delivered to the municipal building.

NEW BUSINESS:

Roadside Clean Up is scheduled for November 8 and November 15.

Calno Cemetery Association, located in DWGNRA (Pahaquarry), outreach from volunteer Kenneth DeLodzia to do upkeep to the cemetery. The Committee discussed coordination with the Historical Society before granting permission.

CORRESPONDENCE:

August 12, 2025, JCP&L.

Subject: Annual Compliance Filings for a Change in the Statewide Electric and Gas Permanent Universal Service Fund Program Factors within the Electric and Gas Societal Benefits Charges Rates Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 48:2-12 and N.J.S.A 48:2-21.1

August 19, 2025 JCP&L.

Subject: IN the Matter of the Provision of Basic Generation Service (“BGS”) for the Period Beginning June 1, 2026

August 21, 2025, Donna Zilberfarb, Frelinghuysen Township Clerk,

Subject: Notice of Revising Section LDO 901 of the Frelinghuysen Township Land Development Ordinance

August 26, 2025, Teresa Kaminsi, Warren County Department of Land Preservation.
Warren County Notification to Municipalities for Annual CPIG FY2027 Application
August 28, 2025, Sara Bennett, Office of Planning Advocacy.

Subject: Notice of State Planning Commission Public Hearings.

September 8, 2025, Tara Mezzanotte.

Subject: Ridge and Valley Conservancy Joins Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Project
Team

September 10, 2025, Sandra Myers, Upper Delaware Conservation District.

Subject: Board SESC Plan Approval

September 10, 2025, Michelle Zychowski, Field Representative for Tom Kean, Jr.

Subject: Seniors of Distinction 2025

TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY:

Attorney Bykov had a brief discussion in Executive Session regarding the cell tower lease.

TOWNSHIP CLERK:

Clerk Shipps reported that postcards for the reevaluation were mailed on Monday, and residents should receive them soon. Tax Assessor Motyka has approved the Reval letters, and they will be sent out by the end of the week or the beginning of next week. An additional postcard will be sent regarding the upcoming shredding event, Hardwick Day, and Rabies Clinic.

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Committeeman Lovell reported that the Warren County Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Trust Fund approved the Township's grant application for the Vass House for \$53,700. The funding will become available later this year, with projects to be undertaken in 2026. The grant will fund window restoration throughout the building, painting, and minor repairs.

On September 16th, a cleanup of the Vass House was conducted, and the fall meeting was held. The Vass House committee will coordinate with the Mayor regarding Hardwick Day.

Committeeman Lovell publicly thanked the Clerk and the Township Assessor for acting quickly on the revaluation contract. He noted that the Township has not conducted a revaluation in 25 years and records are lacking, making this effort critical for future tax assessment. He stated that the current stable economy is an ideal time for reevaluation.

Committeeman Lovell noted that a letter was received from the congressman regarding Seniors of Distinction nominations and suggested nominating a resident. He also expressed interest in joining the Scenic River Committee following Kendra Close's departure from town.

Deputy Mayor Meuse read the Fire Company's August reports.

Mayor Jacksic thanked DPW for their work on Slabtown Creek Road. They built up the road and set the berm, which has been oiled and chipped. The project looks great, and residents are pleased with the results.

The mayor reported that Hardwick Day is scheduled for October 12th, with four people already signed up. Efforts will be made to promote the town-wide yard sale and expand participation.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion made by Lovell, seconded by Meuse, and carried to go into Executive Session at 7:45 pm.

2025-63 Resolution Authorizing Executive Session.

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter 231, P. L. 1975 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting under certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Township Committee of the Township of Hardwick, in the County of Warren and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from that portion of this meeting.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
 - A. Contract Negotiation

As nearly as can be ascertained, the matter or matters to be discussed at this time will be disclosed to the public when such matters are resolved.

Motion made by Meuse, seconded by Lovell, and carried to come out of Executive Session at 8:05 pm.

Township Attorney Bykov stated the following:

The Township Committee emerged from Executive Session at 8:05 PM. Two matters were discussed: one regarding contract negotiations for property acquisition in the Township, and the other regarding contract negotiations affecting the Riverview cell tower municipal site. No official actions were taken. Copies of these minutes shall be made available at such time as the Committee determines there is no harm to the public interest.

ADJOURNMENT:

Lovell made a motion, seconded by Jacksic, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kristin Shipps, RMC