STATE OF NEW JERSEY 1 2 DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS 3 ----x 4 IN RE: : 5 Local Finance Board : 6 ----x 7 8 9 10 Location: Department of Community Affairs 101 South Broad Street 11 12 Trenton, New Jersey 08625 Wednesday, May 14, 2025 13 Date: 14 Commencing At: 9:52 a.m. 15 16 17 18 19 20 RENZI LEGAL RESOURCES 21 Court Reporting, Videography & Legal Services 22 2277 STATE HIGHWAY #33, SUITE 410 23 HAMILTON SQUARE, NEW JERSEY 08690 24 TEL: (609) 989-9199 TOLL FREE: (800) 368-7652 25 www.RLResources.com No. 443412

HELD BEFORE: MICHAEL ROGERS, Chairman WILLIAM CLOSE ALAN AVERY ROBERT JACKSON IDIDA RODRIGUEZ DOMINICK DIROCCO ALSO PRESENT: NICK BENNETT, Executive Secretary ANNA MARIE CHIWANGA

I N D E X ITEM PAGE Ethics Plainsboro Township Branchburg Township Downe Township Union City Elizabeth City Vernon Township Board of Education Hudson County Improvement Authority Adjournment EXHIBITS ΙD DESCRIPTION PAGE (NO EXHIBITS WERE MARKED.) R E Q U E S T S (NO FORMAL REQUESTS WERE MADE.)

1	MR. BENNETT: Director, all members
2	are present.
3	MR. ROGERS: Just to let the public
4	know, we previously opened this meeting earlier
5	today around 9 o'clock, so we are just moved out
6	of closed session and we are going to start.
7	Do we have a motion to approve the
8	April 9th 2025 meeting minutes?
9	MR. CLOSE: So moved.
10	MR. DIROCCO: Second.
11	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close and Mr.
12	DiRocco. Mr. Rogers?
13	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
14	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
15	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
16	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
17	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
18	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
19	MR. AVERY: Yes.
20	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
21	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
22	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
23	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
24	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
25	MR. ROGERS: Great. Anna Marie, can

you handle the ethics complaints? 1 2 MS. CHIWANGA: Yes. Of course. 3 Thank you, Director. The first matter is 19028. 4 And here the board is being asked to approve a 5 motion to issue notices of determination to three 6 LGO's dismissing the complaints for having no reasonable factual basis. 7 MR. ROGERS: Any questions from the 8 9 board members? Anyone from the public? Hearing none, do we have a motion to --10 11 MR. JACKSON: So moved. 12 MR. ROGERS: Yes. Thank you. MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson moving. 13 14 Is there a second? MR. DIROCCO: I'll second. 15 16 MR. BENNETT: I did hear Mr. DiRocco 17 first. Mr. Rogers? 18 MR. ROGERS: Yes. 19 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 20 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 21 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 22 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 23 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 24 MR. AVERY: Yes. 25 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?

MS. RODRIGUEZ: 1 Yes. 2 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? MR. JACKSON: Yes. 3 4 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 5 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Second 6 complaint? 7 MS. CHIWANGA: All right. The next matter is 20006. And I believe Mr. Close 8 9 previously indicated that he will abstain from 10 voting on matters involving Parsippany-Troy. As 11 this matter does not involve a motion to issue a 12 notice of violation, that will not be necessary 13 here. 14 But here the board is being asked to 15 approve a motion to issue a notice of 16 determinations to two LGO's dismissing the 17 complaints for having no reasonable factual 18 basis. 19 MR. ROGERS: Do we have any 20 questions from the board members? Public? Do we 21 have a motion to dismiss this complaint? 22 MR. AVERY: So moved. 23 MR. ROGERS: Is there a second? 24 MR. JACKSON: Second. 25 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery and Mr.

Jackson. Mr. Rogers? 1 2 MR. ROGERS: Yes. 3 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 4 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 5 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close is 6 abstaining. Mr. Avery? 7 MR. AVERY: Yes. 8 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 9 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 10 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson? MR. JACKSON: Yes. 11 12 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 13 MR. ROGERS: Next complaint. 14 MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is 21023. 15 The board is being asked to approve a motion to issue notice of determination to one 16 17 LGO dismissing the complaint for having no 18 reasonable factual basis. 19 MR. ROGERS: Any comments? 20 Questions? Do we have a motion to dismiss this 21 complaint? 22 MR. JACKSON: I'll move it. 23 MR. AVERY: Second. 24 MR. BENNETT: I heard Mr. Jackson 25 and Mr. Avery. Mr. Rogers?

MR. ROGERS: Yes. 1 2 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 3 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 4 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 5 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 6 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 7 MR. AVERY: Yes. 8 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 9 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 10 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 11 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 12 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 13 MR. ROGERS: Next complaint. 14 MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is 15 22013. Here the board is being asked to approve a motion to issue notice of determinations to 16 17 three LGO's dismissing the complaints for having 18 no reasonable factual basis. 19 MR. ROGERS: Any questions? Motion 20 to dismiss this complaint? 21 MR. AVERY: So moved. 22 MR. ROGERS: Second anyone? 23 MR. DIROCCO: Second. 24 MR. BENNETT: I think I heard Mr. 25 DiRocco first. Mr. Rogers?

MR. ROGERS: Yes. 1 2 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 3 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 4 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 5 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 6 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 7 MR. AVERY: Yes. 8 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 9 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 10 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 11 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 12 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 13 MR. ROGERS: Anna Marie. 14 MR. ROGERS: The next matter is 23015. 15 The board is being asked to approve a motion to issue notice of determinations for two 16 17 LGO's dismissing the complaints for having no 18 reasonable factual basis. 19 MR. ROGERS: Questions? Do we have 20 a motion to dismiss this complaint? 21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: So moved. 22 MR. CLOSE: Second. 23 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez and Mr. 24 Mr. Rogers? Close. 25 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 1 2 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 3 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 4 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 5 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 6 MR. AVERY: Yes. 7 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 8 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 9 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 10 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 11 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 12 MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is 13 24003. The board is being asked to approve a 14 motion to issue notice of investigation to one 15 LGO and investigate the claim for potential violations of Subsection D. 16 17 MR. ROGERS: Questions? Do we have 18 a motion to issue notice of investigation to this 19 one LGO investigating the claim for a possible 20 violations of Subsection D? 21 MR. CLOSE: So moved. 22 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Second. 23 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close and Miss 24 Rodriguez. Mr. Rogers? 25 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 1 2 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 3 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 4 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 5 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 6 MR. AVERY: Yes. 7 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 8 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 9 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 10 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 11 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 12 MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is 13 19018. Mr. DiRocco previously indicated that he 14 will be abstaining. The board is being asked to 15 approve a motion to issue notices of violations 16 to two LGO's. 17 The first notice of violation is a 18 finding of violations of Subsection C and D and 19 assessing a total fine of 1,000. 20 The second notice of violation is a 21 finding of violation of Subsection C and 22 assessing a total fine of \$500 while also 23 determining to dismiss additional claims for lack 24 of a jurisdiction and a lack of reasonable 25 factual basis.

MR. ROGERS: Questions? Do we have
a motion to issue the NOB's to the two LGO's as
presented?
MR. JACKSON: So moved.
MR. AVERY: Second.
MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson and Mr.
Avery move and second. Mr. Rogers?
MR. ROGERS: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
MR. CLOSE: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
MR. AVERY: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
MR. JACKSON: Yes.
MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is
20019. The board is being asked to approve a
motion to issue a notice of violation to one LGO
finding violations of subsections D and E
assessing a total fine of \$100 for each violation
and waiving the assessed fine due to plausible

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reliance on the guidance of counsel while also 1 2 determining to dismiss additional claims for lack 3 of jurisdiction and dismissing a final claim 4 following an investigation. 5 MR. ROGERS: Ouestions? Do we have 6 a motion to issue an NOB to the one LGO as 7 presented? 8 MR. AVERY: So moved. 9 MR. CLOSE: Second. 10 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery and Mr. 11 Close. Mr. Rogers? 12 MR. ROGERS: Yes. 13 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 14 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 15 16 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 17 Mr. Avery? MR. BENNETT: 18 MR. AVERY: Yes. 19 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 20 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 21 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 22 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 23 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 24 MS. CHIWANGA: The next matter is 25 22016. To board is being asked approve a motion

to issue notices of violations to five LGO's 1 2 finding one violation of Subsection A and 3 assessing a fine of \$500 and finding five 4 violations of Subsection B2 and C and assessing a 5 total fine of \$2,350 consisting of 500 for the 6 initial violation of B2 and \$100 each for each of 7 the 16 separate violations of B2 and \$250 for one violation of Subsection C. 8 9 MR. ROGERS: Questions? Do we have a motion to issue the NOB's to the five LGO's as 10 11 presented? I'll move it. 12 MR. JACKSON: 13 MR. AVERY: Second? 14 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson and Mr. 15 Avery. Mr. Rogers? 16 MR. ROGERS: Yes. 17 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 18 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 19 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 20 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 21 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 22 MR. AVERY: Yes. 23 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 24 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 25 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?

1	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
1 2	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
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	MS. CHIWANGA: The final matter is
4	19031. The board is being asked whether to
5	approve a motion to transmit the matter to the
6	Office of Administrative Law as a contested case.
7	MR. ROGERS: Questions? Do we have
8	a motion to transmit the matter to OAL as a
9	contested case?
10	MR. AVERY: So moved.
11	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Second.
12	MR. BENNETT: I have Mr. Avery and
13	Miss Rodriguez. Mr. Rogers?
14	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
15	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
16	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
17	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
18	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
19	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
20	MR. AVERY: Yes.
21	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
22	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
23	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
24	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
25	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.

Great. Just I'll start 1 MR. ROGERS: 2 with a few reminders. If you are not presenting 3 in any way, please remain muted just to eliminate 4 background noise. 5 Secondly, if you're just on audio only, please press six to mute and unmute your 6 7 And then when your application is up and calls. you're intending to testify, please make sure 8 9 your camera is on. So the when your application 10 is being heard, please be visible. 11 And then just lastly, we are 12 concluding the financial disclosure statement 13 period which was -- the deadline, was April 30th. 14 And we are just encouraging 15 everyone, and for those who, in your respective 16 municipalities, or anybody on the call that has 17 not, please do immediately because we will be 18 finding any violations regarding the Local 19 Government Ethics Law at our June meeting. 20 So please, if you know anybody or 21 you're sitting there realizing you forgot, please 22 get that in as soon as possible. 23 I quess we're going to move on to 24 our first application which is the Township of 25 Plainsboro.

I believe we have Mr. 1 MR. BENNETT: 2 Cancro and Mr. Swisher. 3 MR. SWISHER: Good morning 4 everybody. Mr. Cancro, where are you? 5 MR. CANCRO: I'm here. Can you hear 6 me? MR. ROGERS: Yes. Can we see you? 7 8 MR. CANCRO: I'm on my end. I see 9 myself, I see you. 10 MR. MAYERS: Greq Mayers, CFO. I'm here as well. 11 12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Suplee Clooney. 13 MR. SWISHER: And John Swisher, 14 Suplee Clooney as well. 15 MR. ROGERS: If you're intending to 16 testify, please have your video on. Do you have 17 everybody from your team, Mr. Cancro? 18 MR. CANCRO: I think so. John, is 19 Steve on? 20 MR. SWISHER: Yes. 21 MR. CANCRO: And Greg is here. 22 We're all here, Director. 23 MR. ROGERS: Anybody just so we can 24 have Lauren swear you in. 25 (At which time those wishing to

testify were sworn in.) 1 2 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Cancro, the floor 3 is yours. 4 MR. CANCRO: Sure. Director, Local 5 Finance Board. Good to see you again. We came before the board on October 9th of last year 6 7 requesting the dissolution of the Plainsboro Fire District Number 1. 8 9 The board approved that request and 10 made it effective January 1st. So Friday will be 11 100 days into the process of now having the fire 12 district's former fire district be part of our 13 operations. 14 Our focus has been on consolidating 15 the existing fire staff into what we called the 16 Department of Public Safety within the township 17 making them, the fire staff, aware of the 18 procedures in the township structure and ensuring 19 a high level of accountability of fire operation 20 services. 21 The major focus of the township is 22 to create a path of success and environment, 23 which I don't think existed before when they were 24 a part of the district which is leadership 25 management and fiscal responsibility.

With regard to some efficiencies 1 2 that we've accounted over the last 90 plus days, 3 the insurance coverage is now with our joint 4 insurance fund and not separately as a district. 5 Gasoline and diesel is getting being obtained from our Public Works department through 6 7 a state contract. We're maintaining all the 8 property and landscaping under our existing 9 contract. 10 We're doing an analysis on the 11 existing LOSAP program which I think is long 12 overdue and full oversight on all purchasing done 13 by the department head and the CFO. We'll stop 14 there. 15 And as you know, we have a very good 16 fiscal team made up of Suplee and Clooney. We 17 had them prior to the dissolution. We renewed 18 our relationship again in post, and they worked 19 very closely with our CFO, DLGS very well. 20 So with that, I'll conclude any 21 remarks and if John, or anybody else, has any 22 comments or the board or the director has any 23 questions, we'll be glad to try to answer them. 24 I'll jump in real MR. SWISHER: 25 quickly, Anthony, just to say what we had,

Director was a problem with internal controls at 1 2 the former district particularly when it came to 3 confirming orders and also staffing of the 4 shifts. 5 And with the help of the division, Vince, I think is on this call, we were really 6 7 able to work as a team during the final months of the district's operation to kind of bring things 8 a little bit more under control. 9 10 But to echo what Anthony said, 11 you're now bringing those internal control issues 12 into an environment where the internal controls 13 are already established, the orders are clean in 14 Plainsboro. They've got a good team there. 15 And so those issues of internal 16 controls and spending when orders were coming in 17 and not being booked on the system, the way that 18 the shifts were being staffed, those things are 19 going to kind of go away now because they're in a 20 much better fiscal environment. And I think 21 that's going to be the case. 22 MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Swisher. 23 Anyone else from your team? Any comments? 24 MR. GALLAGHER: As far as the 25 request goes for the cap inclusion here, what

we're looking for is basically, we went and did 1 2 the -- what we did was we sat down, we created 3 the '25 budget for the fire district, worked with 4 Greq, as well as, Anthony and a little input from 5 John Swisher to create those numbers. They're based off of last year's 6 7 numbers with some adjustments for the rate increases in the utilities and the anticipation 8 9 of hiring four new firefighters as well. 10 We kept the number of part-time 11 firefighters the same as last year only because 12 there's going to be a transitional type of issue 13 while we wait to get the all the firefighters on 14 board and that's the basis of our request. 15 I guess I MR. ROGERS: Anyone else? 16 will start. I was not present for the 17 dissolution application, so I apologize there 18 might be some questions. 19 How many volunteer -- how many, I 20 quess, firehouses did you have in Plainsboro that 21 made up the district? 22 MR. CANCRO: One. 23 MR. ROGERS: You just had one. /-FT 24 okay. And how many volunteers? Is it a small 25 group that primarily provided those services?

1	MR. CANCRO: 15 and some volunteers.
2	MR. ROGERS: And you found the
3	transition has been, I'm not going to say it's
4	not difficult, but it seems like you've got
5	things under control. It's not an easy thing to
6	do, but it seems like you're in a place, in a
7	better place any way, with it and you need
8	you're here before just to absorb the assumption
9	of service calls. Okay. I don't have any
10	additional questions. I'll open it up to the
11	board and any members of the public.
12	MR. CLOSE: Director, maybe they
13	could just talk about the efforts they did in the
14	last quarter of '24. I know they had issues that
15	they were contending with and maybe they could
16	just identify the steps they took to kind of
17	right the ship so to speak, get things in line
18	and what they saw as a result of those efforts
19	because they identified the three things that
20	kind of led to this in terms of leadership and
21	management and fiscal responsibility with the
22	purchasing relative to internal controls, so I
23	wouldn't mind hearing some of the steps that they
24	took to bring that about.
25	MR. SWISHER: Sure. I can jump in

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on that. So again, we kind of came on the 1 2 beginning of October, for the last three months, 3 the former treasurer stepped down. He retired at 4 the end of September and our firm was brought in 5 to kind of bring things to a close. And again, I'll go back to the 6 7 couple, the main points, staffing of the jobs and the mix between the volunteers and the folks who 8 9 There's a lot of folks who were getting paid. 10 were getting paid. They were getting time 11 and-a-half. They probably could have been 12 handled with the specials. 13 Again, this, and the team at DLGS 14 kind of helped us with to make sure that the 15 proper services were being provided because at 16 the end of the day, that was the key to make sure the fire protection services were being provided 17 18 and staffing was a key to part of that. 19 And I'll let Steve jump on it in a 20 second because he's one who handled the day to 21 day. And that also, the purchasing. In a small 22 organization like that, they're working with 23 Quick Books, right. So there real accounting 24 system. 25 And so what was happening is bills

were just kind of showing up and it was kind of 1 2 interesting to watch because at the beginning of 3 the process, maybe mid way through October, stuff 4 was still showing up, but as Steve got in there 5 and was really communicating, and the fire district did a good job with it as well. 6 7 They were very open to the process, 8 and what you started to see was a real chain of 9 command in terms of approval of orders before 10 they were placed as opposed to after the fact. 11 And so at the beginning, and Steve 12 can put the numbers to you, that our projections 13 as to what we thought the deficit and the budget 14 was going to be, were not realized. It was less 15 than we thought it was going to be. 16 We had to do an amendment to the 17 district's budget in conformance with the law. 18 And we also did what was called a Chapter 159 19 that the township actually bore some of the cost, 20 that overage. And these are just mechanisms to 21 make sure they have appropriation power. 22 There is plenty of money left at the 23 district and we're in the process still of 24 winding down the accounts and making sure 25 everything is taken care of before the money is

finally turned over to the township. Steve, you 1 2 want to put some numbers to that? 3 MR. GALLAGHER: Yeah, sure. So just 4 to go back to what we inherited. The former CFO 5 left September 30. We were at September '24 6 meeting which was supposed to be about the 7 And they were throwing around of a budget. number of 300,000 of over expending --8 9 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Gallagher, just one 10 second. Somebody please just mute yourself, if 11 you're not speaking. I appreciate it, everyone. 12 Thank you. Mr. Gallagher, you can unmute 13 yourself since you're talking. 14 MR. GALLAGHER: Sorry. So anyway, 15 the thing is that this is what we inherited this 16 300,000 deficit. We had some plans on what we 17 needed to do to kind of address that, but first 18 we had to get our hands on the financial records 19 which were at the former CFO's house on two 20 different computers that he had. 21 We took that information. We put it 22 all on to one computer so we had payroll and the 23 general ledger and budget from Quick Books on the 24 new computer. And then we went in and basically 25 just tightened up on everything.

1 So my partner in crime, Gail, she 2 was processing payroll every two weeks. And 3 while we were doing the process, we found that 4 things like the Chapter 78 contributions that the 5 firefighters were paying were inaccurate. We adjusted those to the correct 6 7 As far as purchasing, we had the amounts. deadline set up for them. Basically, they were 8 9 working with us, but we were still getting some 10 surprise bills as things were going along. 11 And I got to tell you, the team from 12 the division was really, really helpful, Vince 13 Vince basically was saying things and Ryan. 14 about the repair bills that, you know, I could 15 only sit there and look at and say this is unreasonable and he was able to, you know, kind 16 17 of hammer them about those and get things for a 18 lot less than what was initially being proposed. 19 That, plus, you know, we were using, 20 or the fire department, they were talking about 21 the overtime. And what they did was they have a 22 provision in their contract which allowed them to 23 use regular firefighters as temporary 24 supervisors. 25 So that when a captain went out on

vacation, they were replaced for essentially 10 1 2 percent increase as a stipend for a regular fire 3 quy to step into that position. The township was 4 very helpful. We were working with them. 5 They provided us with 120,000 dollar grant as it were, plus the \$81,000 that we did as 6 7 an emergency authorization in October provided us 8 with enough funding to be able to make it to the 9 end of the year. 10 We had about \$100,000 left over in 11 \$50,000 of that would have been for our budget. 12 '24 bills that came in, in '25. Part of that 13 would have been some of the fees that we had 14 billed that, you know, didn't make it until 15 January. And so, the fire company ended up on a 16 very positive note considering the disaster that 17 it was in September. 18 MR. CLOSE: I appreciate the 19 information, gentlemen. Thank you. 20 MR. ROGERS: Any additional 21 questions board members? If there's nothing 22 else, I don't have any additional questions, so 23 do we have a motion to approve the assumption of 24 services for costs related to the absorption of 25 the recently dissolved fire district.

1	MR. CLOSE: So moved.
2	MR. BENNETT: I have Mr. Close
3	coming in with the move. Miss Rodriguez, would
4	you like to second?
5	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
6	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close and Miss
7	Rodriguez. Mr. Rogers?
8	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
9	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
10	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
11	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
12	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
13	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
14	MR. AVERY: Yes.
15	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
16	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
17	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
18	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
19	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
20	MR. CANCRO: Thank you very much.
21	MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Cancro
22	and everyone. Second application. Branchburg
23	Township. It looks like, I see the familiar
24	faces there. Okay. Good morning, Mr. Bonin.
25	Mayor, how are you. Good morning. Is that all

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you have from your team right there in the room? 1 2 MR. YOUNG: Yes. Just the five of 3 Richard Braslow was requested to be on here us. 4 as well. I think he may be on the call. 5 Anyone who is going to MR. ROGERS: 6 contribute in any way, make sure your video is 7 We're going to have Lauren swear you in. on. 8 (At which time those wishing to 9 testify were sworn in.) 10 MR. ROGERS: Mayor Young, would you 11 like to start or Mr. Bonin? 12 MR. YOUNG: I just have a quick 13 opening statement just to give some context for 14 the commissioners. I want to thank everybody for 15 giving us this opportunity this morning. 16 My name is Tom Young. I'm the mayor of Branchburg Township here in Somerset County. 17 18 And you know, on behalf of the governing body and 19 the four volunteer fire services we have in town, 20 we're here to seek and request approval for the 21 establishment of a fire district. 22 We have been discussing this for a 23 long time. This is a decision we have not come 24 to lightly. We spent months in collaboration 25 with our fire companies and leadership examining

all the issues, the fiscal measures, some of the 1 2 demographic realities we have in our town, some 3 of the operational challenges that con front our 4 volunteer fire services. 5 And we've concluded unanimously as a governing body, this current structure that we 6 7 have with volunteerism, it can't sustain the 8 service that we require in Branchburg going 9 forward. 10 Just to give some background, for 11 the last 20 years, going back to the late '90's, 12 our population stayed pretty steady around 13 15,000. Like our census in 2000 was 15,000 and 14 the census in 2020 was 15,000. So we had a 15 pretty flat population. 16 But during that time, we saw school 17 age children drop and the population essentially 18 So today we're sitting in our town with 25 aged. 19 percent of our adult population as the 65 and 20 over. 21 So this has changed dramatically, 22 the volunteer recruitment and the demographics of 23 And it's made it very difficult for us the town. 24 to continue to support the old model of 25 volunteerism.

So while this is happening, we're 1 2 also dealing with, and I'm sure you guys are 3 familiar with this, the expectations of the 4 volunteers have grown significantly over the same 5 time frame. Today, a firefighter is expected to 6 7 put in something in the order of maybe 400 hours, sometimes as much as a thousand hours. We've 8 actually seen some of the fire people put in even 9 10 substantially more than that. 11 Between everything from calls to 12 drills to training certification education. And 13 so anyway, this is all driving this diminishing 14 or a change in the volunteerism. 15 So the issue of raising money with 16 pancake breakfast and shake a Boot, that's kind 17 of a visage of the past, if you will, because of 18 the amount of time that's required. So anyway, 19 so we're working now with the Affordable Housing. 20 So we're about to adopt our round 21 four and we're in the build out right now of our 22 round three. We're going to see our population, 23 that's been fairly stable at 15,000, we projected 24 to go to about 20,000 by the year 2030. 25 And you know, so when we look at

that and we say, okay, we got a two percent 1 2 appropriation cap, a two percent levy cap, we 3 can't keep up with the growth of the town and the 4 increased inflation for the services that get 5 required. So I'll give some examples. 6 These 7 are specific examples of the cost that's driving 8 up because some of the cost is going up at 10 to 9 15, 20 percent well above inflation. So as an 10 example. 11 The cost to outfit a single 12 firefighter about doubled in the last few years. 13 It was 15,000 probably before COVID. Now, it's 14 approaching \$30,000 for a helmet, boots, jacket, 15 Scott pack, et cetera. 16 A fire engine, again, this is 17 You know, pick a fire engine that apparatus. 18 could have cost 600,000 a few years ago, now is 19 over a million dollars. If you go on the high 20 end, the ladder trucks, it's up 50, 60, 70 21 percent. 22 Safety equipment, we have to redo 23 all of our radios in town to move to higher band. 24 Just the cost of replacing the radios for our 25 district, where our fire services would be over a

million dollars. I think our estimate is 1.2 1 2 million dollars. 3 And so, the department, the 4 volunteer departments, again, they have a lot of 5 issues about maintaining their firehouses, and just even maintaining the cost of maintaining a 6 7 building and a facility for them to operate out is going up as well. 8 9 They're deferring maintenance 10 because it's just difficult to keep things going. 11 The donations aren't there. And what we don't 12 want to have happen is I find myself, as the mayor of the town, I've spent a lot of time with 13 14 the leadership. Too much of the conversation is 15 16 about financial issues versus the public safety 17 issues, and we want to -- we want to change that. 18 We want to take the financial pressures off. 19 That's going to preserve our volunteerism. 20 So that's why we think creating a 21 fire district is the right move for us. It's 22 going to allow our residents to directly vote on 23 the budget and have a direct say in how much fire 24 services that they want and the level of 25 equipment and things like that.

1	So anyway, the second thing, as a
2	governing body, we want to preserve the
3	volunteerism as long as we can. Because if we
4	don't, we're going to end up just like many other
5	towns is shifting to a paid service.
6	Now, we have estimated that a paid
7	service could cost as much as 10 million dollars
8	a year to go after that. We'd probably have to
9	have two companies, use a Pitman schedule.
10	We would have to have seven by 24 by
11	365, and 10 million is our rough estimate.
12	Further, we'd have to capitalize with new
13	equipment. We'd have to buy the fire apparatus
14	from their volunteer companies who are private
15	501C3's.
16	So when we look at the cost of the
17	district, the gross cost of the district,
18	depending on what budget gets approved for the
19	inauguration, will be just slightly over \$200 a
20	household. That's an average household.
21	The cost of a paid service is
22	probably closer to a thousand dollars. So we're
23	trying to defer that, what I would consider, a
24	big tax increase significantly. Now, the \$200
25	that we see with the formation of a district,

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that's a gross level. 1 2 We think the net level is probably 3 something closer to \$120 which, in the scheme of 4 things, as long as nothing else changes on the 5 property tax scheme from school board, county, municipal, 120, it feels like it's not a heavy 6 7 lift, in my opinion, from a political 8 perspective. 9 So all four of our -- again, we've been in lots of conversations. All four of our 10 11 independent fire companies support this request. 12 We have two in town, North Branch and Neshanic. 13 And we have two fire companies in adjacent towns 14 who support our town, Readington Volunteer Fire 15 Company and Country Hills out of Bridgewater. 16 So our goal is simple. We want to 17 preserve our volunteer services for as long as 18 We think this does that. This buys us possible. 19 some time. Commissioner Rogers, we talked at the 20 last meeting. 21 If we throw in our rescue squad 22 services, they have a similar issue. They're not 23 part of this, but we think we could probably lose 24 our rescue squad volunteerism probably in the 25 next five years because of the aging out of the

group when we go to a paid service. 1 2 And then for fire, we think we maybe 3 have 10 years left. And now, what this does is 4 it buys some time for us. And if we have take 5 the financial burden off of the fire companies, they're more likely to be able to sustain that 6 7 volunteer model. So that's what we're here for. 8 We 9 appreciate you accepting and working with us. 10 We've been working with you guys for a while, 11 trying to make sure we get all our documents and 12 we follow the procedures to do this. 13 So we respectively ask you request 14 our application to put commissioners on the 15 ballot for the November election and for us to 16 begin the process of a fire district for 2026. 17 MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mayor. 18 Anyone else from your team? I guess I will, I 19 know that Mr. Granese, from our division, is 20 present on the call. Maybe I'll just wait. I do 21 have some questions that I'm just going to start 22 with. 23 Mayor, you mentioned in the 24 beginning in your remarks that you have spent a 25 lot of time, which I can only imagine that it's

been probably a topic that you've been dealing 1 2 with for some time and conversations. 3 What, I guess, what other options 4 did you consider? Aside from just the fire 5 district concept, what other concepts did you explore in these discussions? 6 7 MR. YOUNG: For the most part, our 8 conversations have been how to properly fund the 9 fire districts, I mean the fire companies. So we 10 seek quite a bit of pressure in that and we're 11 trying to get that within our current budget. 12 I guess our other option would be 13 simply go to DCA and Local Finance Board and ask 14 for some CAP waivers for the general budget and 15 have us do that as a town. 16 I would say, politically, I would 17 prefer to have, since it's going to be for the 18 fire districts that we would be doing that, to 19 have that as a stand alone basis. So we have to 20 fund these issues. We have to replace old 21 equipment. 22 We were just dealing with something 23 this past week where we have a brush truck. This 24 is for a truck that goes into fields and stuff 25 like that. It's a 1997 truck. We have to

replace the engine and the skid and that's 1 2 probably going to be close to \$30,000 to do all 3 the installation and fix that. 4 We don't want our volunteers worried 5 about the equipment that they're using to do So our other alternatives would be to do 6 this. 7 it through the general budget, but then it gets 8 commingled with other issues, and I would rather separate that and have a very clean view. 9 10 At the end of the day, as long as 11 we're consistent in our approach to what we would 12 fund, this becomes an accounting issue in terms 13 of separation. 14 I would say, as a chief executive, I 15 would prefer to have it separated and give the 16 voters the maximum visibility and say in the 17 matter as to how much they're going to. 18 MR. ROGERS: Okay. The reason why I 19 ask is that I know that two of the four volunteer 20 squads are outside your municipal boundary. 21 And I was wondering if you had any 22 discussions with those municipalities on some 23 other fire service arrangement with those 24 municipalities. 25 MR. YOUNG: Yeah. So Bridgewater

has a fire district. Hillsborough has a fire 1 2 district. So Hillsboro fire district and 3 Neshanic Volunteer is a contract agent for 4 Hillsboro. And North Branch, as an example, is a 5 contract agent for Bridgewater. So we have a fire need with in the 6 7 municipality of Branchburg and we choose to use, 8 and we've always had, four companies satisfy that 9 as sort of contract agents supporting our 10 obligation to provide fire services. Two of them 11 are in town. 12 And as you mentioned, two are out of 13 So the one that's not in the fire district town. 14 is Readington. So when we work with them, we 15 will do joint purchases for equipment when that 16 makes sense. 17 Like, we did a ladder truck with 18 Readington and we split the cost of that. So we 19 do some coordinated efforts. But at the end of 20 the day, we have to provide fire services within 21 the boundaries. 22 Now, over the years we've done 23 We've had studies come in and look at studies. 24 is four companies the right mix. What's the 25 right coverage ratios. We've looked at things

like LOSAP and all kind of stuff like that. 1 2 I would expect the commissioners to 3 pick that up and figure out what's the best way 4 to cover Branchburg. As I mentioned, when we 5 look at the build out for the affordable housing, I see all the plans. 6 7 I see where the development is 8 coming. I see where it's planned. I see where 9 commercial development is coming as well. North 10 Branch Fire Company, in the north part of our 11 town, is going to really get stressed out here. 12 So their coverage footprint may 13 change depending on the call volumes that happen. 14 So when I look at call volumes for the north side of town, it's much higher than it is in the south 15 16 part of town which is rural. 17 So I expect the fire commissioners, 18 if this is approved, to go look at that. Aqain, 19 we're in constant communication with our adjacent 20 communities about making sure we have mutual aid 21 and services. But I don't think -- I think 22 that's probably the extent of the answer. 23 I don't think I could say we looked 24 at ways where we could do a shared service across 25 the region. We have not done that.

1 MR. ROGERS: Do any of your 2 adjoining communities have any paid fire 3 services? I mean, it seems like, when you say 4 fire district, is there any aspects of those that 5 are paid and the other community, is one of your houses in Readington? Because I know there's 6 some equipment that I read was in there. 7 MR. YOUNG: Yeah. So we have --8 9 MR. ROGERS: Because you mentioned 10 Hillsborough. I was a little confused. 11 MR. YOUNG: So Hillsborough is a 12 hybrid situation. They have one company in 13 Hillsborough that's paid and the rest of them are 14 volunteers. You know, that's in a fire district. 15 That's hard to -- you can do that for a while. 16 That's hard to do when you have guys rolling and guys on one side is being paid, the 17 18 other guys are being volunteers. I think that's 19 hard to sustain that for a long time, so 20 Hillsborough is a hybrid solution. 21 I don't think Bridgewater has any 22 pay. They're all volunteer as is Readington. 23 Now, Readington, their fire company is right on 24 the border of our town and as is Country Hills. 25 That's why we've always had this coverage.

1	They cover the center part of our
2	town. In fact, Country Hills has an auxiliary
3	facility storage right across the street from our
4	town hall. But the paid service, I think
5	look, we see it.
6	It's coming. And it has just
7	everything to do with the changing demographics,
8	the social changes. You know, one thing that's
9	really interesting is I'm going to say, we
10	haven't done a hard pull on this, but I'm going
11	to give you a rough idea, and I have Tom
12	McCartney here who is the president of North
13	Branch Fire Company.
14	He can give you some examples. But
15	I would say half the people in our town don't
16	know that the fire services are volunteer in our
17	town. Is that fair, Tom?
18	MR. MCCARTNEY: Yeah, it's pretty
19	common to go on a call, and kind of catches the
20	resident by surprise. We kind of get the comment
21	that, oh, sorry to trouble you guys to come out,
22	you're hanging out at the firehouse anyway.
23	We kind of got to sit back and say,
24	no, we just left dinner with our families or we
25	got an event for this and they're shocked to hear

that time and time again. I would say that also 1 reflects in our current fund drive as well. 2 3 We solicit every resident in town 4 for funds. And the amount of donations that we 5 come back comes in at like a nine percent clip. Only nine percent of current residents are 6 7 donating because we are volunteer. 8 So could I extrapolate that and say 9 maybe only nine percent know that we are 10 volunteer? Maybe. I would venture to say it's a 11 little bit more than that, but it is staggering 12 to hear that. 13 MR. YOUNG: Another thing I'll share 14 I spent some time in preparation for with you. 15 this, just talking to, I was down with Neshanic. 16 I spent some time with some of their leadership, 17 mostly old timers, right. 18 And we were just talking about all 19 the things that got us to this point. And 20 anyway, I was talking to one of the guys and I 21 said, hey, you know, there is still this social 22 component where you go down the firehouse and 23 hang out. 24 The guys admittedly corrected me, 25 said you know that's sort of like the Norman

Rockwell view of volunteer fire services. Where 1 2 they go down, they hang out, watch the game, 3 maybe have a beer and hang out with the guys. 4 He goes, we don't have time to do 5 that anymore. There is so much training and the call volumes and the requirements to do things, 6 7 that that is a rare event where people are doing that. 8 9 And that was a little shocking to me 10 because I had this view of you can go down to the 11 firehouse and hang out like it's Cheers. It's 12 not that anymore. And it may have been that 20, 13 25 years ago. And so it was just a reminder to 14 me, that, hey, and I'm not trying to fight this. 15 We're trying to react and plan for 16 it proactively. The world is changing, our 17 community is changing. And what we're trying to 18 do is proactively get in front of it and preserve 19 this aspect of volunteerism which we think is so 20 important to our community. 21 When we have states of emergency, 22 I've been on the committee for a long time, like 23 27 years. I've been around a long time. I would 24 say we've had five or six states of emergency. 25 Sometimes it's gotten so bad, we've had to call

out the National Guard once to cover things in 1 2 town. It was so bad with some of the flooding. 3 When we have an emergency, we tap 4 these guys and we could have 125, 150 volunteer 5 fire personnel come out and help us with managing an emergency in town and they're committed 6 7 because this is their town. 8 We could never do that with paid 9 service. We wouldn't have as many people doing 10 it, right, because that's not the way it works. 11 So I would hate to lose that as a town because we 12 will have another emergency in the future, and 13 again, this is such a huge integral part. 14 I've been around for a long time. Ι 15 would hate to lose. A paid service is coming, 16 but I really don't want to lose the volunteers 17 and any time sooner than we have to. And my 18 judgment is that making sure that we take 19 financial pressures off of the volunteers will 20 extend that somewhat. 21 Now, will the spending go up? 22 Absolutely. That's really the point of this whole exercise. We want them to make sure that 23 24 they're getting -- they're not sweating assets. 25 They're getting what they need and

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1	doing all these things and we're focused on
2	training issues, fire safety and recruitment for
3	a new volunteers so we can keep this going for
4	the next 10 years.
5	MR. ROGERS: So Mayor, what kind of
6	community outreach have you done as far as just
7	that the municipality understands what this fire
8	district is? I mean, it's creating another tax
9	entity in your community.
10	Have you done you know, what have
11	you done is really my question to get a sense of
12	the petition provided you enough of what you
13	needed to do to put it on as a referendum, but
14	what has the community done to be aware of what
15	this is?
16	MR. YOUNG: So we talk about it in
17	public meetings. We've had a few public meetings
18	where we've mentioned this. And I would say
19	we've done more informal reach outs where when we
20	have focus groups and town meetings and I do
21	monthly meetings, Coffee with the Mayor, we'll
22	bring up these kind of issues and talk about it
23	with people who are engaged. What we haven't
24	done, and I don't want to mislead the
25	commissioners and Finance Board. We haven't done

an advertising campaign where we say, hey, we're 1 2 gonna go do this. But we have been forthright 3 that we need to do this, and I would tell you, 4 for example, we had one meeting. We call it a 5 public meeting and we had it at the local firehouse to talk specifically. 6 It was a one 7 agenda item for the meeting. It was a public 8 meeting at the firehouse to discuss this. We had 9 some members of the public show up and we 10 addressed the concerns. You know, people have a 11 lot of questions about what does this mean. And 12 when I explain it to people, I would say any 13 initial -- so I think an initial reaction is, oh, 14 I don't want that because it's a new tax. And 15 then I explain to them what it is and why it's 16 being done. And I got to say, maybe people are 17 just being polite to me, but people, for the most 18 part, don't object after I explain it. And the 19 big thing is that I say to residents all the 20 time, these guys live in our town, they live in 21 the nearby area. They're volunteering hundreds 22 of hours. And the answer should be, not I don't 23 want a tax. The answer should be thank you to 24 these guys. And because if we lose it, it's 25 going to 10 million dollars a year because we

have an obligation to provide services and we 1 2 know how much paid service costs. It's not a 3 cheap endeavor. So to me, this is going to 4 increase the cost slightly. We've calculated 5 about what that's going to be, but I think it's an investment in preserving our volunteerism and 6 7 avoiding this 10 million dollar bill that's only 8 going to go up in time with the paid service. 9 With the volunteer MR. ROGERS: 10 squads outside the municipality, does the 11 municipality -- like, do you have shared service 12 agreement in place with them? 13 Because now you would be creating a 14 fire district taxing your residents and these are 15 firehouses outside of your municipality, which 16 isn't typical, but I'm sure there's some examples out there that exist. How are you handling that? 17 18 MR. YOUNG: So I would separate the 19 four companies with a fire district. The fire 20 district would be an entity that would be 21 responsible for covering fire services from the 22 north to the south to the east to the west, the 23 entire town. 24 Now, how they do that, they would 25 contract with, right, today the way we do it as a

1 municipality, we contract with the four companies 2 and there's coverage maps and there's ratios 3 about who's going to do what. There is mutual 4 aid. 5 There is who is going to roll for 6 certain types of calls and we support our 7 surrounding communities with mutual aid 8 agreements. The same would be true here. Ιt 9 just now would be managed by a fire district. 10 Now, they can say, we only need 11 three companies or they could change the coverage 12 maps. They could reduce North Branch's coverage 13 area because of the density of calls. 14 They could change the relationship 15 with Hillsboro with the south and, say, we want 16 more from Hillsborough to come in to support 17 Neshanic. 18 If Neshanic volunteers dropped off 19 and we couldn't cover it, we may contract with 20 Hillsborough from our fire district, and say, 21 Hillsborough, we want you to come in and support 22 the south end of town, so all of that would be 23 determined by the commissioners. 24 MR. ROGERS: That's fine. I just 25 wanted to -- I know we spoke about the shared

service. I wasn't sure if the municipality had 1 2 shared service agreements with currently with the 3 other municipalities. 4 MR. YOUNG: So Commissioner Rogers, 5 let me say this because we talked about in our last prep call. It's our plan, as a 6 7 municipality, to enter into shared services with the fire district. 8 9 So our view, and again, we'd have to 10 discuss this with them, but the working plan is, 11 we would provide administrative services to them 12 and we would do things like, we have a fuel depot 13 where we would provide a shared service for the 14 fuel depot. 15 So we would try to maximize as much 16 as we could do to keep the cost down and keep 17 their operation efficient to do that. And it's 18 our plan to do the maximum amount of shared 19 services for that. 20 MR. ROGERS: So the administration 21 would still be in house. You would be handling 22 that internally and for the fire district. That would be the shared service agreement. 23 24 MR. MAYER: Commissioner, that's 25 fair. I mean, think about insurance. As a

municipality, we cover a lot of the insurance. 1 2 We'll probably continue to do that for the fire 3 district and just create a shared service for 4 that. 5 MR. ROGERS: Okay. MR. YOUNG: Their insurance needs 6 7 may change a little bit because of the separate 8 legal entity, but that's the kind of stuff we 9 would go do. This is mostly, at least I want to 10 think of it this way, this is almost an 11 accounting difference when they separate out from 12 us. 13 They follow the DCA and Local 14 Finance rules around a fire district, if they go 15 over their two percent, they got to go the 16 Any capital, they got to go to the voters. 17 voters. 18 That's kind of exactly what we want 19 to do, but we want them to do that and 20 rationalize that. I think the fire commissioners 21 will probably do a better job than we can do as a 22 governing body around the rationalization of 23 equipment and things like that. 24 Now, they got to be accountable to 25 the voters. In fact, we just saw Bridgewater put

out a couple capital items to the voters and they 1 2 didn't do a good job of communicating the need and they failed. Didn't it fail? 3 District 3? 4 MR. MCCARTNEY: Correct. There was mention it failed because of the way they went to 5 the voters. 6 7 MR. YOUNG: So it's not a rubber stamp around here, and I don't think it would be 8 here either. The town will vote down things 9 10 where you don't make a case. And again, we're 11 going to see lots of pressures in Branchburg. 12 And as a mayor, I'm sitting there 13 and I'm saying, we're going to see pressures 14 outside of the Board of Education, not from us, 15 but it's going to be a result of the build out. 16 When we go from 15 to 20,000 people 17 after a 20 year population, put a lot of pressure 18 on the board, Board of Education for the school, 19 so they're going to be going to the voters. 20 So the voters are going to be 21 starting to pay attention a lot when the fire 22 district comes for something, the Board of Ed 23 comes for something. And if we have to do 24 something as a municipality, maybe expand our 25 police department.

Like, I'm sitting here and I just 1 2 had a conversation with our chief of police, this 3 is a related matter, I quess, and we're at 28 4 police officers today. By 2030, we need to get 5 to 40. If our population is going to go to 20,000, we have to go to 40. 6 7 Why 40? It's about two per 8 thousand. We're running slightly under that. But the nature of our call volumes, what's 9 10 happening with the population and the population 11 growth is going to force us to get to 40. 12 Well, there's a lot of challenges to 13 go to 40. First of all, it's expensive. You got 14 to go recruit probably three cops per year. 15 That's hard for us to do because you got to take 16 three cops out of service and train them for a 17 few months. 18 The second thing is our police 19 headquarters doesn't have the capacity to go to 20 40. It's not DOJ compliant, it's not OSHA 21 compliant. So we have a lot of upward pressures 22 outside of the fire district. 23 Now, what happens when we keep the 24 fire services with the general budget. It gets commingled with all these other things and 25

they're fighting in the budget process just like 1 2 the police would, the fire guys and things we 3 have like DPW and other things like that, so we 4 kind of want to carve it out, let it be its own 5 thing. There's an established protocol 6 7 within the state for fire district. We think 8 that's the best way for us as a community. 9 That's why we've petitioned permission from Local 10 Finance Board and DCA to move forward to go do 11 that. 12 MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mayor. Just 13 in the interest of time, I want to open this up 14 to any board members for any questions. MR. JACKSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. 15 16 Mr. Mayor, I want to commend you for your obvious 17 engagement of this issue and command of the 18 subject. 19 My question is if I'm just looking 20 at your numbers, 5,000 people, probably looking 21 somewhere in the thousand to 2,000 units of 22 housing. And my question is what onus are you 23 putting on the developers to pick up some of this 24 cost of the new public safety requirements? 25 It sounds like this extra 5,000

people are probably driving 75 percent, at least, 1 2 of this change that's being forced upon you. 3 What are the developers, what are they being 4 asked to do because they have an inordinate 5 amount of driving costs. And I haven't heard any discussion 6 7 about what those, what that group is doing, is 8 being made to do to pick up some of this cost. 9 It seems to me if the existing residents that 10 this is being foisted upon the existing residents 11 doesn't seem to be equitable to me. 12 And I would think that this would be 13 an opportunity, particularly if you look at 14 capital costs, just ongoing budgetary cost, where 15 are they picking up? 16 MR. YOUNG: So we're building out an affordable housing, probably 2500 residential 17 18 units, thereabouts. My understanding is you 19 can't charge developer impact fees for these 20 kinds of things. 21 Now, we're also seeing some 22 development from non commercial. We have, what 23 I'll call, a soft conversation. Meaning, it's 24 not a requirement, but we encourage our non 25 residential requirements.

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1	For example, we have ROSH across the
2	street and we have Eli Lilly who has a big
3	facility here. Both have donated, made special
4	donations at our request to help support the fire
5	services but it's typically, typically a one off.
6	They may donate a half a million
7	dollars or 400,000 or buy some equipment, but we
8	do, do that. But you can't charge developer
9	impact fees for projects other than it comes into
10	the ratable base and it helps us spread out the
11	tax burden, but I hope that answers the question.
12	Did I say that right?
13	MR. JACKSON: Well, I think there
14	are other some of your urban neighbors do
15	PILOTs and other kind of things that allow you to
16	get more creative. But it would seem to me that
17	there is a nexus between these costs and what's
18	going on developmentally, and I think that would
19	be something to just entertain. You can just
20	have them absorb more of this burden.
21	MR. YOUNG: In round four, we are
22	doing the PILOT for one of our projects to meet
23	the round four obligation, so we hope to have
24	that codified that money would go into the
25	municipal budget.

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We haven't inked that deal yet, and 1 2 it's not public, but that's where we're working 3 But in terms of a direct charge, we would be at. 4 open to hear about that. But my understanding is 5 that we can't force developers to pay that impact fee. 6 7 What we try to do is we try to negotiate as best we can when it makes sense. 8 9 Like the Lilly is a great example and ROSH. 10 Because when they come in and do a development, 11 it does put a burden on the emergency services 12 and we communicate that to them, so we let them 13 know that. 14 One thing that we've been 15 experimenting with, or at least having 16 discussions with, is requiring our industrial 17 facilities in town to go through fire safety 18 inspections a couple times a year which would 19 help with a few things. 20 One is we could charge for it and we 21 can't be eqregious. We'd have to make sure the 22 fees make sense, but it also helps our firemen in 23 the inspection process to be familiar with the 24 sites and the locations of the firefighting 25 apparatus, the hose connects and things like that

and do a quick inspection of what's happening on 1 2 site. 3 Like, I just did a tour with Jim 4 Schworn who is here with me on our committee. We 5 did a half day tour of Lilly, a hard hat tour. We went through all their facilities. 6 It's a 7 fantastic facility. It's great. But there's a lot of fire issues 8 there and that's the kind of thing where we would 9 10 want our firemen to go through that once or twice 11 a year to be familiar if there's ever a problem 12 there. 13 MR. JACKSON: I understand. I just 14 wanted to -- I think some of your -- some of the 15 financial agreements that are associated 16 particularly with PILOTs get very creative about 17 what is incorporated in an agreement in order to 18 have the PILOT. Just bear that in mind going 19 forward. 20 The PILOTs like we UNKNOWN SPEAKER: 21 have them make sense, they have to make financial 22 sense, so almost all of our residential explosion 23 in housing has been caused by the need for low 24 and moderate income. 25 It wasn't because we have developers

coming here and just coming with a plan and we 1 2 don't make an agreement. It's because it's all 3 being driven by the low and moderate housing and 4 you don't have a lot of flexibility there to ask 5 for more. MR. YOUNG: The thing on the PILOT 6 7 programs, PILOT programs for residential 8 development are fairly controversial politically 9 because it's taking -- there's going to be an 10 impact to the schools and you're taking the taxes 11 away from the schools. 12 We get a lot of -- we have a good 13 relationship with our Board of Ed members. Thev 14 would give us a hard time when we talk about 15 PILOT for non residential is exactly PILOTS. 16 where we target our PILOT programs. 17 For example, if someone wanted to 18 put their headquarters here and create a lot of 19 great jobs, we could absolutely cut a PILOT for 20 them. The PILOT that we're doing for round four 21 has some unique characteristics. 22 And it has to do with we're giving a 23 developer a PILOT for the renewal of expiring 24 affordable housing from 30 years ago. So the way 25 the math works ask if we renew those and you

can't renew them for free. 1 2 If we renew those, we get a big 3 credit against our obligation which helps us 4 avoid building, in this case, the PILOT program 5 will help us avoid build 550 extra units in town. We're already building 2500 against 6 7 5500, so it's a huge expansion, so we don't want to build anymore than we have to which is why we 8 9 cut that PILOT. But we would cut PILOT's if 10 somebody --11 MR. ROGERS: Mayor, I thank you. Ι 12 just want to move on because there's some other 13 questions and we're way behind right now on our 14 agenda, so I want to move to some other members 15 that might have questions. Mr. Avery or Mr. 16 Close. 17 MR. CLOSE: Mayor, first, thank you 18 for all your comments today. I concur with Mr. 19 Jackson, my colleague. Nice to see you so 20 engaged in it and really appreciate your 21 participation today on behalf of the community. 22 You talked about, in looking at the 23 initial projected budget for the fire district, 24 it's significantly higher than the amount 25 included in the municipality's budget.

1	Is there any are you
2	contemplating a reduction in your budget in 2026
3	to correspond with the increase if this district
4	were formed so as to minimize the impact on the
5	taxpayer?
6	You talked about that as part of
7	your presentation. I was curious, are you
8	looking at that as a corresponding action by the
9	municipality.
10	MR. YOUNG: Yeah. So we are going
11	to reduce our budget. I'm looking at the
12	numbers, I think it's 220. So the property tax
13	impact is on the gross for the projected budget
14	for the district.
15	We projected at around \$210 per
16	household. We're going to take out probably
17	around a hundred and change. So the net effect
18	would be \$100, \$120, something along those lines.
19	But I would say qualitatively, our
20	answer is, the money that we have in our budget,
21	that we're using for fire services, we're going
22	to take out, right.
23	And so it's not like now all of a
24	sudden we can go spend the money on whatever the
25	hell we want. We're going to take it out and

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it's going to go to offset that. There will be 1 2 an increase. 3 Again, that is the whole point of us 4 doing that. With the increase, we think is going 5 to be several hundred thousand dollars. I think the increase is 600,000; 700,000, something like 6 7 that, maybe as high as a million dollars. 8 But as we spread out against the base, it's roughly \$120 a household. 9 10 MR. CLOSE: It's significantly 11 I'm not sure -- in the financials that I higher. 12 saw, the justification for the total amount of the increase that's projected for that wasn't 13 14 clear in my estimation completely. 15 So you're saying that you would reduce the entire amount of all fire monies 16 17 allocated with the presentation? 18 MR. YOUNG: I would say, 19 Commissioner Close, we would say we're going to 20 take out what we spend. Now, when the fire 21 district puts their inaugural budget together, 22 they'll have to sit with DCA and Local Finance Board and review that. 23 24 It will be a different amount than 25 what we spend. And it will be higher. The issue

is how much higher and will have to go through 1 2 that. Then it will go to the voters for approval 3 with full clarity of how much it's higher than 4 what it was. 5 And again, let's just say that they go overboard and say, hey, we want all this extra 6 7 money, the voters say, no, we're not doing that. That would be a disaster for the fire district. 8 9 So we would discourage that 10 profligacy in an inaugural budget because we're 11 trying to create some energy around this 12 district. We would not want them to go out and 13 be, I'll call it, piggish on the budget from an 14 inaugural perspective. 15 That said, there are lots of 16 expenses that have been sort of, we've been 17 snowplowing out, so this inaugural budget kind of 18 takes care of all of that stuff. So to answer 19 your question, we're going to take out what they 20 spend and they're going to replace that with our 21 budget and then some. 22 And that's where I think the issue 23 is what the commissioners might be concerned 24 about is how much of an increase is legitimate 25 and what is the role of the voters in voting for

that inaugural budget. 1 2 DCA, Local Finance board have to 3 make sure that procedurally it is correct and it 4 has validity before it goes to the voters. 5 MR. CLOSE: Thank you, mayor. Ι appreciate your comments and your time. 6 Thank 7 you. 8 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Avery? 9 MR. AVERY: Thank you, Chairman. 10 And thank you, Mayor, and your folks for the 11 information that you've provided. I'm a little 12 confused as to how this works with the two 13 surrounding towns. What role do they play? 14 Do they make contributions to those 15 districts that are outside of your municipal 16 boundaries. Are they going to continue to make 17 financial contributions to those fire companies? 18 MR. YOUNG: Yes. So separate out 19 the fire operations for our town versus the four 20 companies. Each of the companies has contract 21 services with Branchburg. 22 All four of them have contract 23 relationships with other municipalities. North 24 Branch gets some of their money from Bridgewater. 25 North Branch is in Branchburg. The other company

that is in Branchburg is Neshanic. 1 2 It gets money from Hillsborough, 3 from Hillsborough district. Country Hills in 4 Bridgewater, sits right on the border of 5 Branchburg, covers the central part. They get money from Bridgewater and they get money from 6 7 us. 8 And Readington gets money from us to 9 cover the central part of town and they get money 10 from Readington. So a way to think of it as each 11 town has their obligation and there are various 12 volunteer fire companies that act as contract 13 agents to support fire emergency services within 14 those districts and they have, a, let's call it, 15 commercial relationship to do that. 16 All of them are 501C3, but they're 17 private entities, and they have a charter that is 18 towards fire services. Now, if the fire district 19 determines that they need to change the topology 20 of that contract relationship, instead of four, 21 maybe go to three. 22 If they want to change the financial 23 arrangement between the four by changing coverage 24 areas or what services are required moving 25 forward, the types of equipment, all that kind of

stuff, that would be the purview of the governing 1 2 body in this case, hopefully the fire district 3 would do that. 4 But it's important to think it 5 through that these are private entities that two 6 of them happen to sit in town and two sit on our 7 border. 8 MR. AVERY: But as I understand it, 9 if the district is created, then the 10 commissioners will then send tax bills, if you 11 will, fire tax bills, to the residents that are 12 within that company's defined jurisdiction, 13 correct? 14 MR. YOUNG: No, no, no. This is 15 only for Branchburg. And it really has nothing 16 to do with the four companies. There would be a 17 tax bill that go to the Branchburg residents. 18 And that money would be pooled into a single 19 place. 20 And then the commissioners, who 21 manage that pool of funds, would then contract 22 with the four companies that are currently 23 serving Branchburg. 24 As I mentioned, they could change 25 that relationship over time based on the needs of

the community. 1 2 MR. AVERY: But you haven't got to 3 that point yet where you can have a budget that's 4 based on, I'm going to use the word reality, but 5 the reality of what the needs are when this change is made. 6 7 It's kind of difficult to make an assessment of what's financially best in this 8 9 case, which is what our role is with the 10 information that we have now. I mean, I 11 understand your strategies. I'm familiar with fire districts and 12 13 how they work in other places and how they 14 struggle to maintain volunteer services while 15 using some paid level of firefighters to meet gaps in that volunteer coverage. 16 17 And it's like -- based on what I 18 understand from the submission, that's all to 19 come should this district be approved. The 20 commissioners will all work that out next year. 21 MR. YOUNG: So we have worked with 22 the fire companies to propose, what we think, is the inaugural budget for that fire district. 23 Ιt 24 is subject to review. 25 Once the commissioners are put in

place, they would review that, adjust it, tweak 1 2 They would then work with DCA and Local it. 3 Finance Board or an inaugural budget submission 4 to the voters to go do that. 5 It would look similar in terms of its topology to what was currently being spent in 6 7 Branchburg today with the exception of, and I'll 8 say this forthrightly, it will be higher. That 9 is again, the reason we're doing this is to spend 10 more money. 11 I don't want to sugar coat it at 12 all. The goal here is to spend more money. We 13 want to be reasonable in how much more we spend, 14 and we want the voters to have that final say just like they do in Bridgewater and Hillsborough 15 16 where they have fire districts. They don't green light everything. 17 18 If they don't make a good case for it, it goes 19 down. So what we've been saying, Commissioner 20 Avery, is that nothing is going to change other 21 than we're going to carve out the taxation 22 component that is coming from the municipality, 23 making it a fire district and allowing them, I'll 24 use this phrase, sing for their own supper, is to 25 go through the process and work with DCA, Local

Finance Board and the voters to make sure that 1 2 they get what they need, but they're going to 3 have to make the case and it doesn't get 4 commingled with the budget of the municipality. 5 MR. AVERY: I understand your Thank you. 6 concept. 7 MR. ROGERS: Any other board member 8 questions? Anybody else? Anyone from the 9 public? Mr. Granese, do you have anything to add 10 while you're here? Mr. Granese? 11 MR. GRANESE: Yes, yes. I have 12 concerns on a few things. One's the LOSAP. 13 You're asking for \$100,000 --14 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Granese, we have 15 to get you sworn in. 16 (At which time those wishing to 17 testify were sworn in.) 18 MR. ROGERS: Go ahead, Mr. Granese. 19 MR. GRANESE: One of the concerns is 20 the LOSAP. Right now, it's being provided by the 21 other four companies, Readington, and provides it 22 for Readington. Hillsborough provides it for 23 Neshanic which is in their community. 24 Bridgewater and provides it -- their fire 25 district provides it for North Branch and Country

Hills. 1 2 So that's being provided that LOSAP 3 is in place, why would there be a line item of 4 \$100,000 for that particular item. 5 MR. YOUNG: So I believer I quess I mentioned the four fire companies, all sever 6 7 other towns. And the relationship with those 8 other towns, there is a LOSAP component. Is that 9 right, Tom? But we don't have it in Branchburg, not at this time. 10 11 MR. BONIN: This is Greg Bonin, the 12 administrator. The township provides a clothing 13 allowance, in lieu of a LOSAP, which is a line 14 item in our budget which comes out to somewhere 15 around 60 to \$80,000. 16 It's difficult for us to install a 17 LOSAP program because my recollection is that the 18 LOSAP that we provided would have to be the same 19 as our adjoining communities, and it's not right 20 now. A district could negotiate and figure out a 21 LOSAP program. So we'd be transferring that 22 clothing allowance to a LOSAP program within the 23 district. 24 MR. GRANESE: So you already have 25 the clothing that's proposed in there and you

have LOSAP above and beyond that. 1 2 And LOSAP is a fund that's put aside 3 every year, so it's already in place by these 4 other municipalities or districts and that's been 5 done for years. So I have concerns with that. That's one of the things. 6 7 MR. BONIN: The budget we submitted 8 has a clothing allowance of zero. If you look at 9 the budget we submitted --10 MR. GRANESE: Yeah. I have it right 11 in front of me. I see that. 12 MR. BONIN: We kept that there 13 because there's a clothing allowance in the 14 Branchburg account. We wanted you to see that 15 and the LOSAP is at \$100,000 in lieu of the 16 clothing allowance. 17 MR. YOUNG: Vince, let me say it 18 this way. Each of the four companies serve two 19 towns. Branchburg does not have LOSAP. We deal 20 with clothing allowance. The other towns do 21 LOSAP. 22 Our clothing allowance, let's call 23 it, \$75,000, goes away and likely the district 24 would put in a LOSAP to have consistency across 25 the region and that number is \$100,000. So 75

goes away, 100,000 comes back, so we go -- we 1 2 lose the clothing allowance, we pick up LOSAP. 3 But again, this detail is something 4 we would expect the commissioners to go work out. 5 We haven't done that as a municipality. The clothing allowance conversation, I remember the 6 7 LOSAP conversations were 20 years ago. We haven't really revisited that, 8 9 but we would expect there to be some 10 normalization once the fire district gets, if you 11 guys approve it, the commissioners would then 12 normalize that across the region. 13 I would also add that MR. BONIN: 14 there is differences in LOSAP depending on the 15 There's different levels to it, right. town. So 16 how much each person participating in it can get, 17 so it might look different from Hillsborough from 18 where it does to Bridgewater. 19 With the idea being we want to 20 preserve volunteerism and encourage volunteerism. 21 And if Branchburg can come up with a structure 22 that is more competitive from a LOSAP 23 perspective, then the firefighters responding in 24 either town may opt to participate Branchburg 25 LOSAP program or drop out of a Bridgewater

program or drop out of a Hillsborough program. 1 2 The idea here is to preserve and 3 encourage volunteerism. And LOSAP, quite 4 honestly, is a great tool to be able to do that. 5 MR. ROGERS: Anything else to add, Mr. Granese for the benefit of the board? 6 7 MR. GRANESE: Another one was insurances. They have \$150,000 out for district 8 9 insurance. Right now, the insurance is by the 10 companies. 11 And the only thing that I was told 12 that it was paid to, that Branchburg is actually 13 paying for, is the insurance is the insurance on 14 their motor vehicles. UNKNOWN SPEAKER: And workers comp. 15 16 MR. BONIN: And workers comp and the 17 vehicles, yes, that we own. We cover that. The 18 workers comp --19 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: The workers comp 20 is a lot on that many volunteers. That's why 21 it's in there. Again, it's a guess. The budget, 22 if you guys -- and that looked wonky in the 23 budget, you tell them, no, that's too much, but 24 we are trying to figure out. The workers comp 25 rate on volunteer firemen is high. Obviously,

it's a dangerous thing. 1 2 MR. GRANESE: They were my main 3 concerns. 4 MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Okay. 5 Granese. Anyone else from the board? Public? Before we get a vote, I just want to say thank 6 7 you for all the time and effort. I know the division has been working with you for some time. 8 9 I know it's not an easy thing to do 10 to consider this and go through this process. Ι 11 think you can appreciate at least the board 12 historically has, over the last 10 years or so, 13 seen more dissolutions of fire districts for a 14 lot of the reasons you've previously heard in the 15 first application. 16 There's a lot of concerns around fire districts and I hear that you have a pretty 17 18 sound volunteer group. I understand the concerns 19 that you have about volunteerism because that's 20 not just a unique thing to Branchburg, it's 21 certainly around the state and even the country. 22 And then trying to make this all 23 work with all of the demands that are happening 24 in your community, particularly demographic 25 changes as well as population, a projected

1 population increases which is one of the things 2 that you had mentioned that concerns me a great 3 deal. 4 Understanding that there's only so 5 much volunteers, even if they stay the same, can 6 manage a big growth of your community. And I 7 think you've recognized that you're going to have

8 to go to a paid service. It's just a question of 9 how you do that.

Personally, I think it gets a little more complicated with starting a fire district and then going to that. I think I've seen other communities coexist with volunteer squads and paid as you're kind of moving in that direction.

15 There's just concerns that I 16 personally have, and we'll certainly get to the 17 vote. But those are the things that I think 18 there's just realities there that you've 19 expressed as well as what I know is happening in 20 other communities about this. It's not easy. Ι 21 understand. I've been on that side of it and 22 we're trying to make it work and the demand for 23 resources.

24 So I'll just leave it at that. If 25 I'm not hearing anyone else from this, I think I

am probably just given the time, I guess I'm just 1 2 going to -- do we have a motion to approve the creation of a fire district for Branchburg. 3 4 Anyone? 5 MR. DIROCCO: I'll make a motion. 6 MR. ROGERS: Second? Anyone have a I will second it so we can get to a vote 7 second? 8 and we can move on. 9 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Rogers? 10 MR. ROGERS: No. 11 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 12 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. 13 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 14 MR. CLOSE: No. 15 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 16 MR. AVERY: No. 17 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 18 MS. RODRIGUEZ: No. 19 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 20 MR. JACKSON: No. 21 The motion was MR. BENNETT: 22 defeated. 23 MR. ROGERS: All right, gentlemen. 24 We're going to move on to Downe Township 25 application. Who's here for Downe Township?

MS. SBROLLA: Nancy Sbrolla. 1 I'm 2 the auditor from Ford, Scott and Associates. Ι 3 believe the mayor and the CFO are on as well. 4 MR. ROTHMAN: Mike Rothman, the 5 mayor of Downe Township. MR. ROGERS: Okay. If you're 6 7 testifying or speaking, please put your video on so we can get you sworn in. 8 Lauren? 9 (At which time those wishing to 10 testify were sworn in.) 11 MS. SBROLLA: T will start. We're 12 asking for an appropriation CAP waiver of 13 26,028 is an operating loss that we \$115,028. 14 have to raise this year. Our revenues were a lot 15 lower than expected this year, especially our 16 taxes. 17 Our tax collection rate decreased as 18 well as our delinguent taxes did not come in as 19 we expected. We also have \$89,000 in sewer debt 20 that we have to pay. 21 As the board is aware, we have 22 started a sewer project that was delayed several 23 years and we had to take out a Bond Anticipation 24 Note in order to pay our professionals for there 25 services before that.

So we now have interest and 1 2 principal due on the note. As soon as the sewer 3 plant is up and running, we expect it to be 4 self-liquidating so this will not be an issue and 5 we do expect it to be self-liquidating hopefully by the end of this year. 6 7 Anyone else from your MR. ROGERS: team? 8 9 MS. SBROLLA: I would like to add, 10 this will have no additional impact on the 11 taxpayers for this years budget. 12 MR. ROGERS: Okay. It will have an 13 impact on next years as a deferred charge? 14 MS. SBROLLA: If we raise it this 15 year. 16 MR. ROGERS: Or do you have it on the 2025? 17 18 MS. SBROLLA: Yes. 19 MR. ROGERS: Did you take the hit 20 this year in the 2025? 21 MS. SBROLLA: Yes. 22 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I quess you sort 23 of indicated that the project you're projecting 24 the project to be completed by the end of the year? 25 Is that correct?

1 MS. SBROLLA: Mayor, do you want to 2 answer that? 3 MR. ROTHMAN: Yes, it's under 4 construction now. It's projected to be done at 5 the end of the year. Again, as Nancy had said, it's self-liquidating and this shouldn't be a 6 7 problem in the future, but it's under 8 construction as we speak right now. 9 MR. ROGERS: Okay. What would you 10 say as far as the completion of the project? Are 11 you out 50 percent, 60 percent? I'm just 12 curious. I know this has been an ongoing 13 project? 14 MR. ROTHMAN: Probably somewhere in 15 the area of 50 percent. The part of it in the 16 plant, right now we are in the one to four 17 restriction of the (inaudible), so we have the 18 plant on hold for a little bit, but it is being 19 manufactured once it gets here. 20 It's kind of a plug in play plant. 21 We can take it any time to get it done and we're 22 looking for the whole system to be completed 23 going into next year. 24 MR. ROGERS: Okay. 25 MR. ROTHMAN: We're not anticipating

anything this year. 1 2 MR. ROGERS: You have an agreement 3 with the county and the IBank. Who oversees that 4 agreement? 5 MR. ROTHMAN: On Downe Township side, the county and our CFO. 6 7 Yeah, on your side of MR. ROGERS: it. 8 9 MR. ROTHMAN: It will be our CFO. Judd Moore, our CFO. 10 11 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Great. Any 12 things just as far as change orders, how are 13 things going there? 14 MR. ROTHMAN: Do you want to know the truth about things? The way that the IBank, 15 the USDA and the funded sources are working 16 17 together with the county and ourselves, the truth 18 of the whole thing is I'm very surprised on how 19 smooth it is working. 20 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's good. 21 MR. ROTHMAN: It is going incredibly 22 smooth the way that this is progressing forward 23 with the draw downs against the different funding 24 sources and everything has been on time and 25 there's been no delays.

1 MR. ROGERS: Great. And just on the 2 municipal side, you had some tax collection 3 Anything unusual happen there, or was it issues. 4 just one of those years and are you taking any 5 steps to perhaps avoid that next year? MR. ROTHMAN: I don't think it's a 6 7 unique problem that's just to Downe. I think 8 it's all over the county in different counties 9 included. I don't think it's just to our area. 10 But what we are doing is we're aggressively 11 sending out notices for delinguent taxes and tax 12 liens, and we've been doing this since the 13 beginning of the year. 14 We're having a sale on the 27th of 15 next month I was just notified. So we are 16 aggressively trying to up that number as far as 17 the collection and rate. 18 MR. ROGERS: That's good. That's 19 what you need. Did you build a little bit more 20 in your reserve fund collected taxes this year, 21 maybe a little bit low than what you had 22 collected? 23 MS. SBROLLA: Nancy. Yes, we did. 24 MR. ROGERS: Just to make it build 25 up some surplus in there?

MS. SBROLLA: Yes. 1 2 MR. ROGERS: Because I know your 3 surplus took a hit. I will open it up to other 4 board members for questions at this time. 5 MR. JACKSON: I have one question. 6 What specific number did you use for tax 7 collections this year? MS. SBROLLA: We used the three year 8 9 average because we were so low that that was our 10 only option was to use a three year average. Ι believe it was --11 12 MR. ROGERS: And what was that? 13 What's the number? 14 MS. SBROLLA: Hold on one second. 15 Let me see if I can plug in. I apologize. I am 16 not in my office today. 17 MR. JACKSON: So that fabulous 18 picture behind you isn't where you are? 19 MS. SBROLLA: Unfortunately, no. 20 I'm in Michigan. My son is moving today, so I am 21 here to help him move. 22 MR. ROGERS: Michigan looks like a 23 beautiful state. 24 MS. SBROLLA: It is lovely. Just 25 give me one minute. I just want to bring up the

budget real quick. I apologize. 1 2 MR. ROGERS: While you're trying to 3 pull that up, I will open it up to anyone else? 4 Questions for the mayor? 5 MR. AVERY: While she's looking, I'd figure I was just curious if the mayor knows how 6 7 close your construction estimates were to the 8 actual construction? Has it been higher or 9 lower, about the same? I know construction is expensive now. 10 11 MR. ROTHMAN: It's been consistent. 12 We're working through a couple proposed change 13 orders that we're really not seeing with our 14 engineer. Our engineer is not seeing it inside 15 the design. 16 So there's a few things, but as far as the proposals themselves, it's been on point. 17 18 Again, with any project that you're going forward 19 with, especially one of this size, you're gonna 20 have hiccups that come and you work your way 21 through it. But there's nothing significant as 22 of right now that we have to deal with. 23 MR. AVERY: That's good to hear. 24 Good luck finishing it out. 25 MR. ROTHMAN: It's been interesting.

As you guys know, we've been before you on a 1 2 number of things and we appreciate everything you 3 do for Downe Township and seeing how we're doing. 4 We are trying to complete this. It will help the 5 economic area that we're in. And it's already being seen as far 6 7 as sale of properties, people coming and going in 8 the area, so it's definitely already started to 9 have some sort of an impact on the Downe Township 10 area. 11 MR. AVERY: Big project for your 12 Good luck. town. 13 MR. ROTHMAN: Thank you, sir. 14 MS. SBROLLA: The township rate we 15 used was 92.8 percent. 16 MR. JACKSON: Thank you very much. 17 MR. ROGERS: That's the three year 18 average? 19 MS. SBROLLA: That's the three year 20 average, yes. 21 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Great. Anyone 22 else? Any comments? Questions? Hearing none, 23 do we have a motion to approve the CAP waiver? 24 MR. CLOSE: So moved. 25 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

1	MR. ROGERS: I heard Mr. Close move
2	and Miss Rodriguez second. Mr. Rogers?
3	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
4	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
5	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
6	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
7	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
8	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
9	MR. AVERY: Yes.
10	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
11	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
12	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
13	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
14	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
15	MR. SBROLLA: Thank you very much
16	for your time. Thank you.
17	MR. ROGERS: We're on to Union City.
18	Who is leading us? Mr. Eismeier?
19	MR. WINITSKY: No, it's Jeff
20	Winitsky from Parker McCay for the City of Union
21	City. No problem at all. Didn't mean to step on
22	you there, Tim. Yeah, so with us today is Tim
23	Eismeier from NW Financial who's the financial
24	advisor. Tammy Zucca who is the CFO of the city.
25	And Tammy, I don't know if anybody

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else is with you on your side. And if they are, 1 2 they can go ahead and identify themselves. 3 MS. ZUCCA: No, it's just me. 4 MR. WINITSKY: So I'll let everybody 5 get sworn in. MR. ROGERS: Let's get everybody 6 7 sworn in. Thank you. 8 (At which time those wishing to 9 testify were sworn in.) 10 MR. WINITSKY: Excellent. Thank 11 So we are here on behalf of the city of you. 12 Union City seeking approval pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13 40A:3-1 et seq to issue not to exceed \$6.747.000 14 of qualified general obligation bonds which bonds 15 will be entitled to the benefits of the Municipal 16 Oualified Bond Act. 17 The proceeds of these bonds will be 18 used to permanently finance the maturing 19 principal of the city's outstanding Bond 20 Anticipation Notes that have been previously 21 issued as part of the city's participation in the 22 Hudson County Improvement Authority pooled note 23 program which they've been a participant for a 24 number of years. 25 You know, the expectation of both,

the Improvement authority and the city, is that 1 2 they are included in that program for a temporary 3 amount of time and then when the economic 4 conditions exist and the city's debt profile 5 supports, we go to long term financing. That's precisely what we're doing. 6 7 We're taking a portion of those out of the short 8 term program and moving them into the long term 9 program. 10 So the city appeared before the 11 Local Finance board for approval to adopt each of 12 the ordinances that are involved in this 13 particular financing because those were obviously 14 subject to the Qualified Bond Act. 15 We're back today because we're 16 looking for approval for the amortization 17 Maturity Schedule for the bonds to be issued. 18 Specifically what we're looking to do here is to 19 issue bonds with a 17 year amortization schedule 20 with level debt service throughout. Roughly 21 around \$600,000 a year. 22 Obviously, market conditions will 23 dictate the exact numbers, but it's, 24 approximately, \$600,000 a year. That 25 amortization schedule mirrors the average useful

life of the improvements and equipments that are 1 2 being permanently financed. 3 In case you're interested, there's a 4 full list in the application, but I'll just give 5 you the highlights. It's a number of things. Т think there's four or five ordinances involved in 6 7 this particular financing. 8 It's property acquisition, 9 acquisition of equipment for a number of 10 departments within the city. Road improvements, 11 street scape improvements, building and grounds, 12 park improvements, et cetera. So it's their 13 general capital program over the years which is 14 now being permanently financed. 15 In terms of impact to the city and 16 taxes, et cetera, it's a small amount. It's less 17 than a percent. I think it's .71 percent net tax 18 increase which equates to about \$23 on an average 19 tax bill where the average assessed is around 20 \$115,000 throughout the city. 21 So pretty straight forward 22 application. Really it's just an extension of 23 what we've been doing by way of short term to 24 But if the board has any questions, long term. 25 we're here to answer them.

1	MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr.
2	Winitsky. I don't have any questions. I'll open
3	it up to the board at this time. Anyone from the
4	public? Let's make a motion. Do we have a
5	motion rather to approve the issuance of bonds
6	pursuant to the Municipal Qualified Bond Act as
7	presented?
8	MS. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion.
9	MR. AVERY: Second.
10	MR. BENNETT: I have Miss Rodriguez
11	and Mr. Avery. Mr. Rogers?
12	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
13	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
14	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
15	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
16	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
17	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
18	MR. AVERY: Yes.
19	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
20	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
21	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
22	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
23	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
24	MR. WINITSKY: Thank you very much.
25	MS. ZUCCA: Appreciate it. Thank

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1 you. 2 MR. ROGERS: You're welcome. Thank 3 you. City of Elizabeth. 4 MR. MAYER: Good morning, Director. 5 Bill Mayer with DeCotiis. MR. ROGERS: Good morning, Mr. 6 7 Mayer. How are you? I'm good. I'm hoping 8 MR. MAYER: 9 this application is relatively easy compared to 10 one or two back. The City of Elizabeth is 11 seeking approval of an 11,100,000 dollar 12 refunding bond ordinance to settle for litigation 13 settlement. 14 I have here Tony Zengaro, Jennifer 15 Edwards. Tony's the CFO. Jennifer Edwards is 16 the municipal advisor. And we also have Bob 17 Varady who is the litigation counsel on the 18 settlement. Tony and Jenn should get sworn in. 19 (At which time those wishing to 20 testify were sworn in.) 21 MR. MAYER: I would just ask that 22 Jenn do a short presentation on the application 23 and then Tony and Bob are available for any 24 questions. So Jenn, if you would. 25 MS. EDWARDS: Sure. As Bill

mentioned -- first of all, good morning. 1 As Bill 2 mentioned, the City of Elizabeth is seeking 3 approval for adoption of a refunding bond 4 ordnance not to exceed 11.1 million for the 5 purpose of paying a settlement for which the city was a defendant in connection with the wrongful 6 7 incarceration of two individuals who spent 22 and 8 24 years in prison for a shooting that occurred 9 in 1994. 10 The parties attended mediation. And 11 after negotiations, the parties agreed to 5.5 12 million to each plaintiff. The city adopted an 13 emergency appropriation and introduced a 14 refunding bond ordinance on April 22nd. 15 The city's application is seeking 16 approval for a Maturity Schedule that matures 17 over an eight year schedule with an impact to the 18 average home of just under \$50 on the average 19 home assessment. 20 However, we do understand that staff 21 and some members had some hesitation to allow an 22 eight year schedule so we did revisit this with 23 the city. And the city is okay with doing a 24 seven year Maturity Schedule which results in an 25 impact of \$55 on the average home assessment if

that would be agreeable to the members and staff. 1 2 And we're available to take any questions. 3 MR. MAYER: Thank you, Jenn. 4 MS. EDWARDS: You're welcome. 5 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Anyone else from 6 your team? I guess the only question. So the 7 two settlements, those are complete? All parties 8 executed? Court approved? They're all set? 9 MS. EDWARDS: Mayor. 10 MR. MAYER: Yes. And Nick, I don't 11 know if you've had a chance to get back in your 12 email. But this morning, the settlements came in 13 to me and I forwarded them to you signed by both 14 the plaintiffs and plaintiffs attorney. Mr. 15 Varady can speak to that if you feel that's 16 necessary, Director. 17 MR. ROGERS: No. I just wanted -- I 18 wasn't certain there was maybe something in my 19 notes that I read that one of them might not have 20 been complete, but I just wanted to follow up 21 with that question. 22 MR. MAYER: I've been asking that 23 question. 24 MR. ROGERS: Yeah. I wanted to make 25 sure everything was sort of tied up in a bow and

1 ready to go.

2	MR. MAYER: I think the remaining
3	staff is satisfied the settlement agreements
4	which is what we're working on right now.
5	MR. ROGERS: Yes, exactly. I don't
6	have any additional questions. I appreciate the
7	willingness to go to a seven year instead of an
8	eight, so I would refer that.
9	I don't have any I mean, the only
10	thing I guess, and I understand where it goes.
11	But my understanding is that this has sort of
12	been out there for a lot of years and I'm not
13	sure at what point the city realized they were
14	going to be liable for anything.
15	I think there was probably some
16	understanding. I guess the question is, in terms
17	of just budgeting out for that, setting aside
18	funds, my understanding that there were no funds
19	set aside.
20	Is there any reason why just some
21	explanation as to why that wasn't the case? I
22	think I probably know the answer, but I'm going
23	to ask the question anyway.
24	MR. ZENGARO: I set aside some huge
25	reserves for tax appeals, close to 20 million.

We've had some pension retro payments set aside, 1 2 about four million. Accumulated absence, we're 3 about 20 million. 4 And I also have some franchise 5 assessments close to 10 million that I've set aside that are pretty well known. 6 Not to mention 7 that we're going to have to make and they were somewhat estimated. 8 9 This lawsuit was -- could have been 10 anything. We just don't know. And I just didn't 11 have the funds to start reserving for it. And as 12 to the timing and the amount, it was difficult to 13 ascertain. 14 MR. ROGERS: I understand. And 15 that's an honest answer and I appreciate that and 16 I get it and all of what you have a record and 17 you just laid it out as far as you do reserve for 18 unanticipated costs. 19 This one, given the size of this, 20 and sort of the uncertainty around how large that 21 was going to be, I get it. You're making 22 decisions about it in your annual budgets, so I 23 just wanted to ask the question. That's all. 24 I don't have any additional 25 questions. I'll open it up to the board at this

Not hearing any from the public. 1 time. Do we 2 have a motion to approve the adoption of the 3 refunding bond ordinance and the issuance of 4 refunding bonds on the seven year schedule? 5 MR. JACKSON: I'll move it. MR. DIROCCO: Second. 6 7 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson and Mr. 8 DiRocco. Mr. Rogers? 9 MR. ROGERS: Yes. MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 10 11 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 12 13 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 14 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 15 MR. AVERY: Yes. 16 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 17 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. 18 MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 19 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 20 MR. BENNETT: Motion approved. 21 MR. MAYER: Thank you very much. 22 MR. ROGERS: Good to see everyone. 23 On to Vernon Township Board of Education. 24 MR. SOLIMINE: Good morning, 25 It's Tony Solimine from Wilentz, Director.

Goldman and Spitzer. We also have Raymond Slamb 1 2 who is the business administrator; Brian Morris 3 who's the board's financial advisor and John 4 Bonavist with Honeywell, the board's ESCO. 5 MR. ROGERS: For anyone who is testifying or may testify, please turn on your 6 7 video so we can get you sworn in. 8 (At which time those wishing to 9 testify were sworn in.) 10 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Solimine? 11 MR. SOLIMINE: Again, Tony Solimine 12 from Wilentz, Goldman and Spitzer appearing on 13 behalf of the Board of Education with the 14 Township of Vernon in connection with the 15 authorization of not to exceed 5.6 million 16 dollars of energy savings obligation refunding 17 bonds in order to implement the board's proposed 18 Energy Savings Improvement Plan, both pursuant to 19 N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-4.6 and authorization of the 20 issuance of refunding bonds in accordance with 21 N.J.S.A. 18A:24-6.1. 22 In accordance with the law, the 23 board has performed energy audits to all of its 24 facilities. The board then took the subject 25 action of appointing Honeywell to act as its ESCO

in connection with its proposed Energy Savings 1 2 Improvement Plan. 3 The board, in connection with its 4 newly appointed ESCO then developed an Energy 5 Savings Improvement Plan. That plan was verified by Whitman Engineering and submitted to the BPU 6 for review and approval. 7 8 The proposed Energy Savings Plan 9 consist of a solar power purchase agreement, LED 10 lighting upgrades throughout the school 11 facilities, building envelope improvements, HVAC 12 upgrades and improvements and installation of a 13 cogeneration component. 14 These improvement will be completed 15 at all six building throughout the school 16 district. The savings from the energy conservation measures, along with any applicable 17 18 rebates and the savings generated from the 19 proposed power purchase agreement, will be 20 sufficient to pay the debt service on the bonds. 21 The board's financial advisor has 22 advised the board, as a result of current market 23 conditions, to attempt to sell these bonds 24 through a competitive sale. The proposed amount 25 of the sale is, approximately, 5.4 million

dollars. 1 2 The bonds will be sold via a 3 competitive sale for 20 years. We are happy to 4 answer any questions you may have at this time 5 regarding the application. MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. 6 7 Solimine. Perhaps I missed this. You have BPU 8 approval? 9 MR. SOLIMINE: Yes. 10 MR. ROGERS: Just wanted to verify 11 I don't have any questions on this. I'11 that. 12 open it up to the board if there are any 13 questions. I'm not hearing any. Anyone from the 14 public? Pretty straight forward. Appreciate the 15 effort. 16 I guess do we have a motion to for the issuance of school refunding bonds and to 17 18 approve the proposed ESIP? Motion. 19 MR. AVERY: Second. 20 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Rogers, that was 21 you moving it? 22 MR. ROGERS: I was just asking 23 anyone had a motion. I will take Avery as the 24 first motion. Do we have a second motion? 25 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I'll second.

1 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery and Miss 2 Rodriguez. Mr. Rogers? 3 MR. ROGERS: Yes. 4 MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco? 5 MR. DIROCCO: Yes. MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close? 6 7 MR. CLOSE: Yes. 8 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery? 9 MR. AVERY: Yes. 10 MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez? 11 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes. MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson? 12 13 MR. JACKSON: Yes. 14 MR. BENNETT: All those in favor, 15 motion is approved. 16 MR. SOLIMINE: Thank you, everyone. 17 MR. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. 18 Solimine. On to our last application. Hudson 19 County Improvement Authority. 20 MR. LEE: Good morning, Director and 21 commissioners. This is Bakari Lee from 22 McManimon, Scotland and Baumann on behalf of the 23 Hudson County Improvement Authority in connection 24 with the issuance of \$94,396,017 of count 25 guarantee pooled note series 2025B.

We should have us NW Financial, 1 2 municipal advisor to the authority; Charles 3 Kairu, CFO to the Hudson County Improvement 4 Authority and Jonathan DeJoseph, West New York 5 CFO and Donna Mauer, CFO from Bayonne along with their respective bond counsels. So perhaps we 6 7 can start with getting those folks sworn in. 8 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Great. Let's 9 make sure everybody is on screen. 10 (At which time those wishing to 11 testify were sworn in.) 12 MR. ROGERS: Mr. Lee, the floor is 13 yours. 14 MR. LEE: Sure. Thanks. So I'll 15 just walk through a little bit of a threshold information and then each of the bond holders. 16 17 To the extent we have questions, the bond holders 18 are on hand to answer those. 19 So the program was initiated in 20 2009. To date, has issued, approximately, 2.8 21 billion dollars in notes and saved local units in 22 excess of 37 million dollars. The program enables local units to access the short term debt 23 24 market at much lower rates through the county's 25 credit.

1 That is not necessary for the long 2 term market as local units utilize the Municipal 3 Qualified Bond Act for that purpose. I think we 4 heard from Union City earlier to that extent and 5 we were taking one of their streams of notes out 6 of the program and going long. 7 In the event of a default by a local 8 unit, the county guaranty is triggered only to 9 the extent of that borrower, not the entire 300 10 million dollar allocation entity. There have 11 been no events of default or draws against the 12 county guaranty. 13 So I will start with Bayonne and 14 kind of take through the issuance they have and 15 then pivot to West New York. And to the extent 16 you have any questions, we can hear from the 17 principals. 18 So Bayonne will be issuing 19 16,109,000 dollar Bond Anticipation Note tax 20 exempt to currently refund the same amount of its 21 maturing 16,279,000 dollar Bond Anticipation Note 22 with 170,000 dollar statutory required pay down. 23 That is to finance various capital improvements.

25 tune of \$3,200,000 special emergency taxable note

24

Bayonne also has new money to the

1 to finance the payment of contractually required 2 severance liabilities resulting from the lay off 3 and retirement of certain employees. So that's 4 Bayonne.

5 West New York is a little bit more West New York has a 30,430,000 dollar 6 involved. 7 general Bond Anticipation Note tax exempt, and a 8 13,022,000 dollar parking utility Bond 9 Anticipation Note, tax exempt also, along with an 10 885,000 dollar statutory required pay down to 11 currently refund \$43,452,000 of BANs of its 12 maturing \$44,337,000 of BANs originally issued to 13 finance repairs to the DPW, various park and 14 capital and parking improvements. 15 West New York will also have

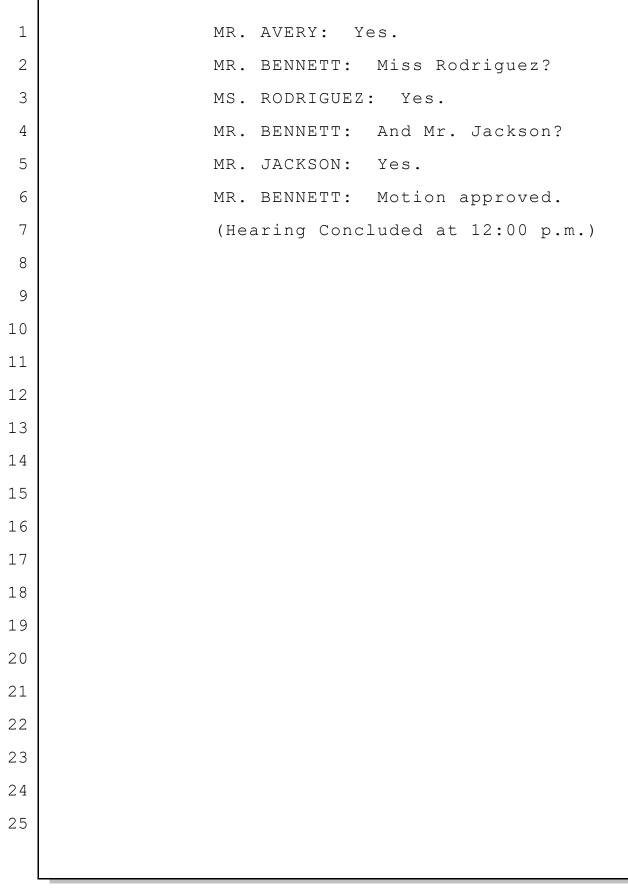
9,425,000 dollar parking utility BAN on a taxable basis along with a 125,000 dollar statutory required pay down to currently refund the same amount of its 9,555,000 dollar parking utility BAN originally issued to finance the town's share of a parking deck.

West New York also has a 3,235,000 dollar refunding Bond Anticipation Note, taxable, along with a statutorily pay down of \$525,000 to currently refund a 3,235,000 dollar portion of

its maturing 3,760,000 dollar Bond Anticipation 1 2 Note originally issued to finance an emergency 3 appropriation of the town. 4 And lastly, West New York has a new 5 money portion. 18,975,017 dollar Bond anticipation Note, tax exempt, to finance various 6 7 capital improvements including construction of a library, acquisition of property and preliminary 8 9 expenses for recreation. 10 So that summarizes the different 11 components of the various local unit issuances as 12 part of the program. Again, we have principals 13 from the borrowers who are here that can respond 14 to any questions. 15 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. 16 I appreciate it. I just had a question on Lee. 17 the West New York parking utility bonds, why 18 they're taxable. Just didn't see --19 MR. DEJOSEPH: Good morning, 20 Director. John DeJoseph, CFO from the Town of 21 West New York. 22 MR. ROGERS: Good morning. 23 MR. DEJOSEPH: That was part of our 24 redevelopment project where there's a developer 25 contribution towards the parking garage.

MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's certainly 1 2 what I thought might be the case. If there was 3 some other entity involved. Thank you for that. 4 Are there any plans, in the near 5 future, permanent financing of these notes next year? Market always determines that? 6 7 MR. DEJOSEPH: Especially last month 8 with the volatility in the market as well, it 9 hasn't been helpful. It's being reviewed. At 10 this point, there's no hard direction on one 11 year, two years or three years or go the whole 10 12 years potentially. 13 MR. ROGERS: I understand. T have 14 no additional questions. I'll open it up to the board for anything. Not hearing any. From the 15 16 public. Okay. 17 Nothing else to add, do we have a 18 motion to render positive findings on the 19 proposed project findings and proposed county 20 quaranty? 21 MR. JACKSON: So moved. 22 MR. CLOSE: Second. 23 MR. BENNETT: Mr. Jackson and Mr. 24 Close voting and seconding. Mr. Rogers? 25 MR. ROGERS: Yes.

1	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
2	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
3	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
4	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
5	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
6	MR. AVERY: Yes.
7	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez?
8	MS. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.
9	MR. BENNETT: And Mr. Jackson?
10	MR. JACKSON: Yes.
11	MR. BENNETT: Motion approved.
12	MR. LEE: Thank you, Director.
13	Thank you board members. Thank you everyone.
14	MR. ROGERS: Thank you. All right.
15	Do we have a motion to adjourn?
16	MS. RODRIGUEZ: So moved.
17	MR. AVERY: Second.
18	MR. BENNETT: Miss Rodriguez and Mr.
19	Avery. Mr. Rogers?
20	MR. ROGERS: Yes.
21	MR. BENNETT: Mr. DiRocco?
22	MR. DIROCCO: Yes.
23	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Close?
24	MR. CLOSE: Yes.
25	MR. BENNETT: Mr. Avery?
20	THE DIMETER HE HELLY.



CERTIFICATE 1 2 3 I, LAUREN ETIER, a Certified Court 4 Reporter, License No. XI 02211, and Notary Public 5 of the State of New Jersey, that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the testimony 6 7 as taken stenographically by and before me at the time, place and on the date hereinbefore set 8 9 forth. 10 I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither a 11 relative nor employee nor attorney nor council of 12 any of the parties to this action, and that I am 13 neither a relative nor employee of such attorney 14 or council, and that I am not financially interested in the action. 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 auren M. Etier 22 Notary Public of the State of New 23 Jersey 24 My Commission Expires June 30, 2026 25 Dated: May 22, 2025

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