

**MINUTES CITY COUNCIL**  
**CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP**  
**NEW JERSEY**

**THIS IS A SPECIAL MEETING TO HOLD A BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP HELD VIA AUDIO-VIDEO CONFERENCING ON TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2025, 7:0PM.**

**Roll Call:**

**Present:** Councilmember Kerry J. Coley, East Ward (*Arrived at 7:04pm*)  
Council Vice President Tency A. Eason, North Ward  
Councilmember Quantavia L. Hilbert, West Ward  
Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III, At-Large  
Councilmember Clifford R. Ross, At-Large  
Councilmember Jamie B. Summers-Johnson, South Ward  
Councilmember Adrienne K. Wooten, At-Large (*Arrived at 7:02pm*)

**Also Present:** Laquana Best, Planning Director  
Nile Clements, Chief Financial Officer  
Aaron Mizrahi, Deputy City Attorney (*Arrived at 7:04pm*)  
Marlin G. Townes, Legislative Research Officer  
Blair Landolfi, Budget Consultant  
Tamara Robinson, Deputy City Clerk  
Margaret Homere, City Clerk's Office  
Trisha Scipio, City Clerk's Office  
Laquana Best, Planning & Economic Development Director  
Wendy Sykes, Director of Community Service  
Andrea Crouch Stewart, Deputy Director of Recreation  
Chris Bailey, 2025 CBAC Member  
Marsha Escalliere, 2025 CBAC Member  
Carl Fields, Jr., 2025 CBAC Member  
Janicea Jones-Vance, 2025 CBAC Member  
Shara Morrow, 2025 CBAC Member  
Carol Perkins, 2025 CBAC Member  
Charles H. Pryor, II, 2025 CBAC Member  
Coram Rimes, 2025 CBAC Member  
Tonia M. Womack, 2025 CBAC Member  
Jeffery L. Wingfield, 2025 CBAC Member  
Dennis Motley  
Veronica Scott

**Absent:** Joyce Lanier, City Clerk  
Chris M. Hartwyk, Business Administrator  
Gracia R. Montilus, Esq., City Attorney

The City Clerk announced a Moment of Silence. Council Vice President dedicated this moment to the former Mayor Mims Hackett and his family on the loss of his son.

The requirements of N.J.S.A. 10:4-9 et. seq., "Sunshine Law" has been met. A notice of this meeting was sent to the Record Transcript, published in The Star Ledger on April 25, 2025, posted on the City's Website ([www.orangetwpnjcc.org](http://www.orangetwpnjcc.org)) and the Council's Website ([www.orangenj.gov](http://www.orangenj.gov)) and filed in the Office of the City Clerk

**MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

Calendar Year Budget 2025 - Budget Workshop

Administration and the Mayor was scheduled but will present at the Monday Workshop.

Chief Financial Officer Nile Clements opened the floor to the Departments for presentations

The meeting focused on the city's budget for The Planning Department and Community Service Department. The Councilmembers discussed the efficiency of the departments, the roles and responsibilities of officials, and the allocation of funds for different programs. Technical difficulties and the need for better advertising for programs were also addressed, with the council expressing concerns about transparency and the need for more community engagement.

The budget workshop focused on adjustments for the City of Orange Township's 2025 budget, with significant discussions around personnel roles and expenses. CFO Nile Clements presented a budget request consistent with the previous year, while addressing increases attributed to new positions and stipends. Councilmember Weldon M. Montague III sought clarification on these increases, and Laquana Best, Planning Director, explained the rationale for reallocating certain roles to ensure accurate payroll representation. Concerns were raised by Council Vice President Tency A. Eason regarding the necessity of specific allocations, such as the \$15,550 for code enforcement supervision and the \$10,000 for overtime, with Director Best justifying the latter as essential for addressing urgent complaints outside regular hours.

Further discussions included the operations of the Rent Leveling Board, with Director Best noting that most disputes are resolved before reaching board meetings. Council President Adrienne K. Wooten requested a report on the board's activities to assess its impact. CFO Clements also outlined a reduced salary request for the uniform construction code, while addressing staffing arrangements aimed at efficiency through role consolidation.

CBAC representative Charles Pryor, II raised concerns about unanswered questions, leading to a discussion on the status of a zoning board attorney resolution. Director Wendy Sykes proceeded with her budget presentation for the Department of Community Services, demonstrating the council's commitment to addressing all budgetary matters.

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

Laquana Best Director of Planning gave an opening statement thanking the Councilmembers for the opportunity to appear before them. She stated the Department of Planning & Economic Development strives to promote sustainable communities, strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and comprehensive consensus-based urban planning throughout the City of Orange Township by: establishing and maintaining meaningful and productive relationships between the City and other governmental agencies, as well as area real estate developers, businesses, community organizations and other interested parties that are focused on intelligent and purposeful development; and, recommending and enforcing development regulations and policies that ensure orderly, coordinated and maintainable growth throughout the City.

Director Best went on to state that the Department's functions are delegated among 5 divisions: Building & Construction Division, Code Enforcement Division, Licensing Division, Planning Division, and Zoning Enforcement Division.

Director Best listed the Leadership and Staff

Laquana T. Best, MPA, Director of Planning & Economic Development

Christopher Mobley, Deputy Director of Planning

**Buildings & Construction Division**

Ibin Raheem, Supervisor/Construction Official, Towana Pierce, Technical Assistant to Construction Official, Lloyd Raheem, Building Subcode Official, Robert Piotrowski, Electrical Subcode Official, Robert O'Connor, Building Subcode Official/Plumbing Subcode Official, Thomas Atkins, Fire Protection Subcode Official

**Code Enforcement Division**

Khalfani Alleyne, Supervisor/Field Representative, Property Improvement, Elroy Corbitt, Field Representative/Building Inspector, Ruth Pomales, Field Representative/Code Enforcement Inspector, Omar Croom, Field Representative Trainee, Linda Drummond, Keyboarding Clerk II

**Licensing Division**

Towana Pierce

**Planning Division**

Laquana Best, Director of Planning & Economic Development, Christopher Mobley, Assistant Director of Planning, Alexandra Gisell Reyes, Administrative Assistant to the Director, Haneefah Norman, Keyboarding Clerk, Alexandra Gisell Reyes, Planning Board Secretary, Trisha Scipio, Zoning Board of Adjustment Secretary/Historic Preservation Commission Secretary, Haneefah Norman, Rent Leveling Board Secretary

**Zoning Enforcement Division**

Khalfani Alleyne, *Zoning Officer*

Director Best gave a summary of current redevelopment projects.

**Orange Crossing | Pinnacle 72 South Essex Avenue (Phase 3/3) PEEK Properties**

Location: Reock Street Redevelopment Area

Estimated Construction Cost: \$20,800,000

Estimated Completion: Late Spring/Early Summer 2025

Mid-rise residential building with 99 rental units (studio, 1-bedroom, and 2- bedroom) and 102 on-site garage parking spaces; ideally situated along Freeway Drive West, 1 block from the Orange Train Station (NJ Transit), and Main Street shopping areas.

**The Lincoln | 407 Highland Avenue (Phase 2/2) | PEEK Properties**

Location: Lincoln-Highland Avenue Redevelopment Area

Estimated Construction Cost: \$32,000,000

Estimated Completion Fall 2025

Mid-rise residential building with 102 rental units (studio, 1-bedroom, and 2- bedroom) and 97 on-site garage parking spaces, just 1 block from the Highland Avenue Train Station (NJ Transit); amenities include a lounge, gym and courtyard deck.

**The Elks | 475 Main Street | Vanta Developers**

Location: Upper Main Street Redevelopment Area

Estimated Construction Cost: \$37,500,000

Estimated Completion: Late Summer/Early Fall 2025

Mid-rise mixed-use development with 126 rental units (studio, 1-bedroom, 2- bedroom and 3-bedroom), 1,300 sq. ft. of ground floor retail space, and 146 on- site garage parking spaces; ideally located on Main Street, in the heart of downtown Orange.

**LIA by Vermella | 51 Lincoln Avenue (Phase 2/2)| Russo Development/Dinello Constr.**

Location: Central Orange Redevelopment Area

Estimated Construction Cost: \$67,000,000

Estimated Completion: Late Spring/Early Summer 2025

Mid-rise, residential building with 200 rental units (studio, 1-bedroom and 2- bedroom) and 347 on-site garage parking spaces; located only 1 block from the Orange Train Station (NJ Transit), and shopping areas along Main Street, easily-accessed from major roads.

**Scotland Road Development | 448 Scotland Road | Scotland Holdings RSBRM**

Location: Central Valley Redevelopment Area

Estimated Construction Cost: \$20,000,000

Estimated Completion: Late Fall/Early Winter 2025

Mid-rise, residential building with 87 rental units (1-bedroom and 2-bedroom), 85 on-site garage parking spaces and indoor/outdoor amenity spaces; ideally situated a short walk from the Highland Avenue Train Station (NJ Transit), and easily-accessed from all major roads.

Director Best gave a list of the notable achievements and grants

- Significantly reduced the size of the City's vacant and abandoned properties list, bringing more properties back onto the "paying" tax rolls.
- Achieved Silver Certification status for 2025 under the Sustainable Jersey Partnership Program, making the City 1 of only 5 Essex County municipalities to earn this distinction.
- Received the 2024 Outstanding Implementation Award from the NJ Chapter of the American Planning Association for the Reock Street Redevelopment Plan (and PEEK Properties' 3-phase Orange Crossing Development).
- Continued to work under the PSE&G/Sustainable Jersey Partnership Program Grant, focusing on commercial and residential energy efficiency outreach.
- Continued to work under a grant from the NJ Department of Community Affairs, totaling approximately \$150,000 to update the City's 5-year strategic plan for its Urban Enterprise Zone.
- Continued to work with the City of East Orange under a grant of \$130,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to fund the municipalities' collaborative efforts to improve safety along both sides of Freeway Drive.
- Awarded \$250,000 in Community Energy Plan Implementation (CEPI) grants through the Sustainable Jersey Partnership Program for public electric vehicle charging stations and energy-efficient upgrades to municipal buildings.

Nile Clements, CFO, explained the budget adjustments concerning copier expenses and personnel roles, noting that some positions were moved to reflect their payroll accurately. Councilmember Weldon Montague III raised questions about the budget increase, which was linked to the addition of a stipend for the assistant business administrator and the inclusion of new roles. Laquana Best, Planning Director, clarified that some positions were moved due to changes in responsibilities.

Councilmember Clifford R. Ross questioned the allocation for law books, noting a discrepancy in the budgeted amounts between departments. Council Vice President Tency A. Eason expressed concerns about the need for increased supervision in code enforcement, emphasizing the importance of job preservation.

Councilmember Clifford R. Ross raised questions regarding the necessity of the \$10,000 overtime budget for code enforcement personnel. Director Laquana Best clarified that the overtime is essential for responding to heat hotline calls during the winter months when complaints arise outside regular working hours. The discussion also touched on the general hotline for other issues and the tracking of calls related to heat complaints.

Director Laquana Best explained that the Rent Leveling Board is intended to meet monthly or as necessary, primarily addressing unresolved issues between renters and landlords. Council President Adrienne K. Wooten inquired about the feasibility of receiving a report on the board's activities over the last few months to gain insight into its functioning. Best emphasized that the administrative work related to rent leveling is ongoing, even if the board does not meet frequently.

The budget request for the uniform construction code was discussed. Council Vice President Tency A. Eason inquired about a potential retirement, prompting Director Laquana Best, to clarify that the employee in question had not yet left. The discussion also covered the roles of construction officials and subcode officials, highlighting differences in their responsibilities.

Nile Clements, CFO, discussed the staffing structure, noting that while there are currently two people in two roles, the goal is to combine these into one role to enhance efficiency and reduce costs.

#### 2025 CBAC

Charles Pryor, II asked for clarification on the terminology used, emphasizing the distinction between functions and roles, and confirmed that the intention is to merge the two functions into a single role. The discussion included concerns raised by Charles Pryor regarding unanswered questions from the council. Council Vice President Tency Eason clarified the status of the zoning board attorney's appointment and funding.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Wendy Sykes, Director of Community Services stated the Community Services Department is made up of the following divisions: Health, Recreation, Older Adults, Cultural Affairs, and Emergency Food Pantry

#### HEALTH SERVICES

**Environmental:** Restaurant, Day Care, Retail Food Inspections, Hair & Nail Salon License Program, Administer City Wide Rodent Bait Program, Swim Pool /Spray Park Weekly Inspection, Summer camp Site Inspections, and Summer Food Service Site Inspections

**Nursing:** Blood pressure screenings, Educational workshops, Breast Cancer Screening/Mammogram (Rutgers University/UMDNJ) S.A.V.E. Program, Influenza, RSV Respiratory Syncytio Virus, Covid-19 Vaccines, School Immunization Audits, Screening for local health fairs, Communicable Disease Surveillance, Health Care Enrollment and Education referrals, Senior home care nursing visits, and Health fairs, community baby showers.

**Animal Control:** City wide animal canvass patrol, Enforcement state mandated rabies vaccinations, Investigates animal bites/attacks/fights/cruelty complaints, Capture and remove stray, uncontrolled, or abused animals from undesirable conditions, Educate the public about animal welfare, and animal control laws and regulations, Examine animals for injuries or malnutrition, and arrange for any necessary medical treatment.

**Vital Statistics:** Serves the public by issuing marriage applications, marriage licenses and certified copies of marriages, births and death certificates. Maintain records of births, marriages and deaths that have occurred in the City of Orange.

#### CULTURAL AFFAIRS SERVICES

Provides a yearly array of cultural events for residents of all ages. Celebrating nationalities, patriotism, religion, etc. providing a space for expression through performances, exhibitions and competitions, such as: Gospel Concerts, Cultural Flag Raising Ceremonies, MLK Celebration, Latino /Italian Festivals, Farmer's Markets, Memorial Day Celebrations, Veteran's Day Parades, Holiday Tree Lightings Ceremonies, and more

#### OLDER ADULT SERVICES

The Office of Older Adults Services provides Orange resident ages 60 and over with various interactive activities and services throughout the year. Services include but are not limited to: Medical transportation, exercise & education classes, wellness checks, assistance completing forms and applications & shopping transportation. Other activities include community events such as: Atlantic City Bus Rides, Bowling Bingo Night, Mother's Day Fashion Show, Mayor's Christmas Ball, Mayor's Senior Picnic, Yoga, Swim Aerobics, Arts & Crafts, Senior Talk Forms, Karaoke, and more. The goal is to develop programs and find funding that will make it easier for older adults to live in the community as long as possible with independence, dignity and choice.

**RECREATION SERVICES**

Provides diversified recreational and educational experiences; foster human development; promote health and wellness; strengthen community image and develop and cultivate community partnerships. We provide the following year round sports programs, camps and clinics. Football, T-ball, Baseball, Soccer, Cheerleading, Tennis, Basketball, Swim Aerobics, Swim Lessons, Arts & Crafts, Volleyball, Kickball, Track, Leagues, Tournaments, Games, 6 to 9 & After School Programs, Safe Havens and more.

**EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY**

In 2021 The City of Orange Township partnered with Interfaith Food Pantry and the Hillside Community Food Bank in order to provide nutritional food bags for residence in need due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Because of the great need and food insecurity in some households the program continues to this day.

The Hillside Community Food Bank provides weekly deliveries of groceries, produces and now protein boxes to the city of Orange for distribution to residents at no charge. In addition to weekly visitor to the food bank, the City delivers bags to those in need of food and are home-bound in order to ensure that everyone can have access.

**INTER-LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

City of Belleville/City of Orange Township Nutrition Educator and Health Officer Essex Regional Health Commission/Joint agreement with member municipalities for air pollution control, noise, waste, pesticides, underground storage tanks. City of East Orange /City of Orange Township Lead Inspections (households – children under 6)

**NEW INITIATIVES**

- Recreation- Adult Rugby
- Older Adults- Implemented additional educational workshops
- Soccer development programs starting at age 2.

**TEAM WORK**

The Community Services staff is dedicated to providing innovative health and wellness, educational and recreational events for the Orange community and its stakeholders. Our staff members work across division lines to assists each other in completing tasks and engaging the community. Our goal is to provide meaningful service and learning experiences to our vast orange community. We hope the 2025 year continues to be full of new positive experiences for all of our residents, partners and visitors

**CBAC 2025**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember Jamie B. Summers-Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III.

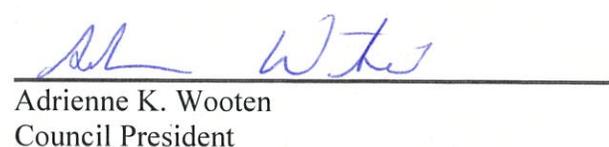
**Motion Adopted**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01pm.

Approved: May 20, 2025



Joyce L. Lanier  
City Clerk



Adrienne K. Wooten  
Council President