

**RE-ORGANIZATION MEETING**  
**MAYOR AND COUNCIL**  
**JANUARY 8, 2026**

Mayor Chegwidden called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting Statement as follows:

"This is the Annual Re-Organization Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Wharton which was advertised in the print media as required by law. A copy of the annual meeting schedule is posted in the Municipal Building."

**Swearing in Borough Clerk**

Mayor Chegwidden announced that Cheryl Muzzillo has been appointed Municipal Clerk for the Borough of Wharton.

Mayor Chegwidden called Ms. Muzzillo to the platform to be sworn in. Mayor Chegwidden administered the Oath of Office. Congratulations were offered by all in attendance.

**Swearing in Council Members**

Mayor Chegwidden announced that the Morris County Clerk's Office has determined that at the last General Election, Marisa Gonzalez and Jennifer Hobbs were duly elected to the positions of Council Members for the Borough of Wharton for a term of three years.

Mayor Chegwidden called both Council Members to the platform to be sworn in. Mayor Chegwidden administered the Oaths of Office. Congratulations were offered by all in attendance.

Mayor Chegwidden invited the Council Members to address the public.

**Councilwoman Hobbs:** She began by thanking the Democrats, her family, friends, and the Board of Education for their support. She also expressed her gratitude to everyone who voted for her and to the Council members who assisted with her onboarding. She concluded by stating her goal to leave Wharton better than she found it.

**Councilwoman Gonzalez:** She thanked her friends, family, and the Wharton Democrats for their support. She expressed her appreciation to the people of Wharton for their faith in her and noted that she looks forward to working with the Council to improve the town.

The Mayor acknowledged the attendance of Assemblywoman Aura Dunn and Sheriff James Gannon, thanking them for their year-round support, particularly during the recent sinkhole. Assemblywoman Melissa Sweeney was also in attendance.

**Roll Call**

Mayor Chegwidden requested Roll Call:

Councilman Vincent Binkoski - Present  
Councilwoman Marisa Gonzalez - Present  
Councilwoman Jennifer Hobbs - Present  
Councilwoman Ana Jones - Present  
Councilwoman Nicole Wickenheisser - Present  
Councilman Thomas Yeager - Present

**Flag Salute**

Mayor Chegwidden led those present in the Salute to the American Flag.

Election of Council President

A motion was made by Councilwoman Wickenheisser and seconded by Councilman Yeager to elect Councilman Binkoski as Council President for the year 2026.

|   |
|---|
| ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 5      NAY: 0      ABSENT: 0      ABSTAIN: 1 |
| MOTION CARRIED  |

Fire Department Appointments

Wharton Borough Fire Chief, Michael Marks, Jr., for the year 2026 - term to expire 12/31/26.

Wharton Borough Fire Department Deputy Chief, Christopher Elio, for the year 2026- term to expire 12/31/26.

Wharton Borough Fire Department Battalion Chief, Douglas Ploth, for the year 2026-term to expire 12/31/26.

Wharton Borough Fire Department Captains:

- Louis Ploth
- Cesar Rios

Wharton Borough Fire Department Lieutenant:

- Sean Edwards

All one-year terms to expire 12/31/26.

A motion to confirm to confirm all Fire Department appointments was made by Councilman Yeager and seconded by Councilwoman Wickenheisser.

|   |
|---|
| ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 6      NAY: 0      ABSENT: 0      ABSTAIN: 0 |
| MOTION CARRIED  |

Mayor Chegwidden and Councilman Yeager administered the Oaths of Office for the Fire Department. Congratulations were offered by all in attendance.

Ordinance

Councilwoman Wickenheisser introduced O-01-26, “An Ordinance Amending Chapter 231, Articles V and VI, of the Revised General Ordinances of the Borough of Wharton, County of Morris, State of New Jersey,” on first reading by title only. A motion was made by Councilwoman Wickenheisser and seconded by Councilman Binkoski to adopt O-01-26 on first reading.

|   |
|---|
| ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 6      NAY: 0      ABSENT: 0      ABSTAIN: 0 |
| MOTION CARRIED  |

Mayor Chegwidden set the date of January 26, 2026 for second and final reading.

Ordinance

Councilwoman Hobbs introduced O-02-26, “An Ordinance Amending Chapter 247, of the Revised General Ordinances of the Borough of Wharton, County of Morris, State of New Jersey,” on first reading by title only.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Hobbs and seconded by Councilman Binkoski to adopt O-02-26 on first reading.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 6      NAY: 0      ABSENT: 0      ABSTAIN: 0

MOTION CARRIED

Mayor Chegwidden set the date of January 26, 2026 for second and final reading.

Consent Agenda

The following items are considered to be routine and non-controversial by the Mayor and Council and will be approved by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council Member or citizen so requests, in which case, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in a normal sequence on the agenda.

- Resolutions:
- R-01-26: Meeting Schedule
  - R-02-26: Temporary Budget
  - R-03-26: Temporary Capital Budget
  - R-04-26: Cash Management Plan
  - R-05-26: Professionals Resolution- Competitive Contracting
  - R-06-26: Professionals Resolution- Discretionary
  - R-07-26: Authorizing Agreement for Risk Management Services
  - R-08-26: Approve Agreement Health Benefits Producer
  - R-09-26: Fixing Interest Rate on Delinquent Taxes for 2026
  - R-10-26: Authorizing the Tax Collector and Utility Collector to Cancel Balances under \$10.00
  - R-11-26: Authorizing Returned Check Fee
  - R-12-26: Designating Public Agency Compliance Officer
  - R-13-26: Authorizing Signatures and Approvals of Purchase Orders if Administrator/CFO is Not Available
  - R-14-26: Setting Hourly Fee for Independent Attorneys
  - R-15-26: Liability Search Officer for 2026
  - R-16-26: Tax Search Officer for 2026
  - R-17-26: Authorizing Certain Payments Outside of Scheduled Council Meetings
  - R-18-26: Authorizing Re-Establishment of Petty Cash Funds
  - R-19-26: Designating Official Newspapers for 2026
  - R-20-26: Authorizing Signatures on Borough Checks
  - R-21-26: Establish Bid Threshold
  - R-22-26: Authorizing Grant Applications if Due Date is Outside of Scheduled Council Meetings
  - R-23-26: Appointment of 2026 Local Emergency Planning Committee
  - R-24-26: Tort Claims Required Notice
  - R-25-26: Volunteer Appreciation Program for 2026
  - R-26-26: Authorizing Participation in the Morris County Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-27-26: Authorizing Participation in the State Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-28-26: Authorizing Participation in the Somerset County Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-29-26: Authorizing Participation in the Bergen County Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-30-26: Authorizing Participation in the Cranford Police Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-31-26: Authorize Participation in the Sourcewell Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-32-26: Authorizing Participation in the Educational Services Commission of NJ Co-Operative Purchasing Program
  - R-33-26: Authorize Participation in OMNIA Co-Operative Purchasing Program

- R-34-26: Authorize Participation in NJ Edge Co-Operative Purchasing Program
- R-35-26: Authorize Participation in Keystone Purchasing Network
- R-36-26: Authorize Participation in the TIPS Co-Operative Purchasing Program
- R-37-26: Recommending the Appointment of Judge, Public Defender and Prosecutor
- R-38-26: Appoint Records Custodians
- R-39-26: Appoint Borough Clerk
- R-40-26: Appoint Business Administrator
- R-41-26: Appoint CFO

Fire Fighter Application: Julian Matute

Mayor's Appointments that Require Council Consent

Alternate to Morris County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Representative-  
Ana Jones, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Alternate Police Chaplain- James Gottshall, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Alternate School Crossing Guards- Sue Adams, Gail Daly, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

Assistant Administrator- Cheryl Muzzillo, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Assistant Director of Public Works- Thomas Quillinan, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Assistant to Construction Official- Desinez Ruffo, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Board of Health Secretary- Desinez Ruffo, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Board of Health Secretary for Licensing- Sonia Roman, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Business Administrator- David Young, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Certifying Payroll Officers- Diana Spina and Jason Gabloff, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

CFO- Jason Gabloff, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Clean Communities Coordinator- Scott Hutchins, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Borough Clerk- Desinez Ruffo, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Emergency Management Coordinators- William Hamilton and Leon Stickle, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Fire Official- John Webber, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Housing and Zoning Official- Patrick Laverty, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Tax Collector- Sandi Critchlaw, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Deputy Water/Sewer Collector- Diana Spina, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Director of Public Works- Scott Hutchins, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Fire Official- Richard Cloughley, one-year term to expire, 12/31/26

**Matrons-** Jen O'Malley-Dorr, Melanie Hvid-Cole, Veronica Valandingham, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

**Municipal Alliance Coordinator-** Paola Vasquez, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Municipal Clerk-** Cheryl Muzzillo, 3-year term to expire 12/31/28

**Municipal Housing Liaison for COAH-** Patrick Lavery, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Personnel Administrator-** Gabrielle Evangelista, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Police Chaplain-** Father Lemmuel A. Camacho, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Recycling Coordinator-** Scott Hutchins, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**School Crossing Guards-** Alberto Calderon-Farfan, Kathleena Jackson, Jackie Kelly, Deborah Kline, Maureen Macalalag, James McCormick, Stephanie Mertz, Clifford Rollins, one-year terms to expire 12/31/26

**Water/Sewer Clerk-** Sandi Critchlaw, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Water/Sewer Operator-** Nicholas DeRosa, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Zoning/Housing Enforcement Official/Road Opening Official** – Leon Stickle, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

**Committee Appointments**

**Alternate Members to Finance Committee** - #1 - Councilwoman Jones and #2 –Councilwoman Gonzalez

**Community Relations-** (includes Recreation Committee, Celebration Public Events, Regionalization Committee- Shared Services, Senior Citizen Association) – Councilwoman Wickenheisser

**Environmental Commission-** Consists of Mayor and Council Members

**Finance-** (includes Insurance, Budget, Personnel, CFO, Street Lighting, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, Community Development) – Councilman Binkoski

**Finance Committee-** Councilman Binkoski (Chair), Councilwoman Wickenheisser, and Councilman Yeager

**Health/Welfare-** (includes Board of Health, Public Assistance, Library) – Councilwoman Jones

**Personnel Committee-** Councilman Binkoski (Chair), Councilwoman Wickenheisser and Councilman Yeager

**Public Affairs-** (includes Building Inspector, Housing Inspector, Planning Board, Licenses, Zoning Officer, School Sub-Committee) – Councilwoman Hobbs

**Public Safety-** (includes Police Department, Fire Department, First Aid Squad, Municipal Court, Emergency Management, Elections) - Councilman Yeager

**Public Works-** (includes Parks, Building/Grounds, Sanitation, Maintenance Shop, Engineering, Streets and Roads, Water and Sewer) – Councilwoman Gonzalez

**Mayor's Appointments**

**Alternate Members to the Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee-** Vince Binkoski/David Young, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Mayor Representative to the Morris County Community Development Revenue Sharing Committee– Councilwoman Jones, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

Planning Board Alternate Member- James Gottshall, 2-year term to expire 12/31/27

Planning Board Class 3 Member- Councilwoman Hobbs, one-year term to expire 12/31/26

RVRS Representative- Councilwoman Hobbs, remainder of term to expire 12/31/27

Trustee of Library- Nancy Greuter, five-year term to expire 12/31/30

A motion was made by Council President Binkoski and seconded by Councilman Wickenheisser to approve all items listed on the Consent Agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEA: 6      NAY: 0      ABSENT: 0      ABSTAIN: 0

MOTION CARRIED

*Council Remarks:*

Councilman Binkoski: He expressed his gratitude for being elected Council President and congratulated Councilwomen Hobbs and Gonzalez on being sworn in. He acknowledged the challenges of the past year due to staffing transitions but noted that most positions have been filled, with the remaining vacancy expected to be filled by month-end. He reported a successful meeting with the Police Union regarding a new contract, noted progress on the budget for a March rollout, and highlighted upcoming work on the Pine Street Parking Lot.

Councilwoman Gonzalez: She shared she is looking forward to working with everyone in the coming year.

Councilwoman Hobbs: No report.

Councilwoman Jones: She offered New Year greetings and thanked the staff for their hard work during a chaotic year. She also welcomed and congratulated Councilwomen Hobbs and Gonzalez.

Councilwoman Wickenheisser: She thanked the public for attending and congratulated the new council members. She emphasized the important role teamwork played in overcoming the challenges of the past year.

Councilman Yeager: He welcomed the new council members and congratulated the Fire Department officers, noting he looks forward to working with them.

*Mayor Chegwidde's Remarks*

The Mayor shared congratulations from Senator Bucco, who could not be in attendance, to the new Councilwomen.

He reflected on a challenging year, which included the passing of the Borough's Business Administrator, the disruptions caused by the Route 80 sinkholes, and the anonymous letters that were circulated attacking the late Administrator.

He noted that the matter regarding the anonymous letters was referred to the Prosecutor's office, as the content of the letters was threatening in nature.

He explained that efforts are underway to coordinate with the County and State for road and ramp repairs necessitated by sinkhole-related traffic.

The mayor thanked the residents for their patience during the duration of the sinkhole road closures that caused unbearable traffic throughout the town.

He noted that it was also a productive year with many projects completed.

2025 Completed Projects:

- Acquired 262 W. Dewey Avenue and established a picnic grove.
- Completed Phase I of the Fields of Orchard Mine.
- Demolished a garage at our DPW building.
- Created a fishing and viewing area behind the DPW.
- Continued Town Hall interior improvements.
- Constructed the Utility Clerk's office at Borough Hall.
- Updated the solid waste ordinance and distributed new garbage carts to residents.
- Completed Baker Avenue Improvements (Phases I–III) including traffic calming measures.
- Planted cherry and red maple trees along Chegwidden Way.
- Collaborated on an Eagle Scout project with Ryan LaBato to install 20 new picnic tables and grills.
- Added approximately 30 spots to the municipal permit parking lot.
- Reconstructed the crosswalks at Main, Central, and Fern Streets.
- Completed rehabilitation on the Irondale water tank, ensuring it will be good for another 70 years.
- Received a county award for exceeding a 50% recycling rate.
- Cleared over 100 hazardous trees along the canal that posed a fire hazard.
- Prepared a new access road for the Irondale tank through Morris Woods.
- Installed another emergency generator for municipal wells.
- Repaved multiple roads, including Gallagher Rd., Lane Way, Wilcox Ave., Lowe St., lower portion of Irondale Rd. and Kice Ave.
- Met our 4th round affordable housing obligation, securing compliance through 2035, with 37 more units than needed.

Looking Forward to 2026 Projects:

- Relocating and modernizing the recycling center.
- Complete plans and bids for the construction of the Pine Street Parking Lot with 67 spots and a pocket park.
- Completing Phases III and IV of the Baker Avenue water main and road upgrades.
- Paving the Irondale tank access road
- Bid and construct Phase II of Orchard Street Mine Park.
- Continuing the acquisition of the Santander Bank property for additional 35-37 parking spots.
- Reseed and plant trees and shrubs along the West Dewey Avenue park area and riverfront.
- Restoring the canal towpath using a \$1.3 million grant.
- Completing Town Hall interior improvements
- Harry Shupe Boulevard roadway upgrades.
- Washington Street sewage upgrades.
- Advancing the Harry Shupe Blvd PILOT project, expected to generate \$26-\$30 million dollars over 30 years.
- Pursuing grants for the Columbia Street park, lead pipe remediation, and Washington Pond dredging.

The Mayor concluded by noting that the Borough remains debt-free for the tenth consecutive year while maintaining a reasonable tax rate. He thanked all departments and staff for their dedication to the community.

Public Portion

Mayor Chegwidden opened the meeting to the public.

Carisa Baldwin, 39 Columbia Street: Ms. Baldwin, speaking as a resident and chair of the Wharton Democratic Committee, congratulated Councilmembers Hobbs and Gonzalez. In light of recent events in Minneapolis and Roxbury, she asked the Council to go on record stating it will not support a detention center in or near Wharton.

Paul Breda, 6 Potter Lane: Mr. Breda congratulated the new members of the Council and wished everyone a successful year. He noted that he was sworn in to complete a two-year term on the School Board and has been appointed the School Board liaison to the Council. He recognized two legislators in the audience and shared that in May 2024, the Board of Education adopted a resolution regarding PILOT agreements. He requested that PILOT revenue be shared equitably with remaining entities, particularly the schools. He asked that the Council collaborate with the BOE.

Barbara Tarchak, 26174 Westview: Ms. Tarchak asked how many of last year's projects were financed through PILOT agreements.

No one else wishing to be heard, Mayor Chegwidden closed the meeting to the public.

In response to Ms. Tarchak's question, it was noted that some of the projects funded by PILOT money included:

- Pine Street Parking: Engineering, Geo-investigation, Borings, and Design
- Work on the Library parking lot
- Phase I of Orchard Mine Park

In response to Mr. Breda, it was noted that while the school receives 100% of the funding they request, they are not required to share the burden of matters such as tax appeals. For example, the Borough is required by law to cover the entire \$25,000 tax appeal settlement for the Wharton Mall, and must put money in the reserve and keep it there for such matters. The Mayor pointed out for those who often question the PILOT programs, that while the school is not required by law to contribute to that settlement, if it was required to do so, it's share responsibility would have been \$17,500.

Furthermore, rather than prioritize its funds for education when 6 out of 10 of its students are failing State proficiency tests, the school chose to fund a turf field.

No one else wishing to be heard, Mayor Chegwidden closed the meeting to the public.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Binkoski and seconded by Councilwoman Jones.