

**TOWNSHIP OF MAHWAH
BUDGET WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 2023**

The Meeting was called to order at 8:02 AM by Council President May who read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement as prescribed by law. In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this Meeting has been provided by sending notice to The Record and The Ridgewood News and posting notice on the bulletin board of the Honorable Richard J. Martel Municipal Center located at 475 Corporate Drive, Mahwah, New Jersey. Electronic notice of the Meeting has also been provided by posting the agenda on the Township Website.

Formal action may be taken. The minutes of this Meeting shall be available in the Office of the Township Clerk.

This Meeting is being videotaped.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR VETERANS AND THOSE SERVING IN THE MILITARY

Moment of Silence was observed for those who served and those who are serving in the Military both here and abroad.

Present: Councilmembers Ariemma, Bolan, Donigian, Ferguson, Paz, Wong, and May

Also present were Business Administrator Benjamin Kezmarsky, Acting Chief Financial Officer Corinne Hockman, Deputy Clerk Carolyn George and Senior Clerk Leslie Wen.

PUBLIC PORTION

On a motion by Wong, seconded by Bolan, the Meeting was opened to the public at 8:04 AM. All in favor. Motion carried.

On a motion by Paz, seconded by Bolan, the Meeting was closed to the public at 8:04 AM. All in favor. Motion carried.

2023 PROPOSED MUNICIPAL BUDGET

B1. Department of Public Works

Department of Public Works Director, Mr. Glenn Dowson, and Building/Grounds Foreman, Mr. Tony Iannaccone were in attendance to discuss the 2023 budget.

Mr. Dowson spoke about the DPW and gave a handout listing the number of calls the department has received during 2022. This list also detailed the hours of manpower, the employee cost, and supply costs. Mr. Dowson stated the operational line in the budget is very close to last year's amount, with little change. He also mentioned he is looking forward to the new Department of Public Works Facility.

Paz asked for clarification on the Miscellaneous Overtime line item of \$45,000. Mr. Dowson responded it is for Township planned events and stand-by calls.

Paz questioned why Company #4 and Company #5 were not listed in the Rental Maintenance Agreements for sprinklers. Mr. Dowson stated Company #4 and Company #5 do not have sprinklers.

Paz asked for an overview of the Norfolk Village 2023 Budget. Acting Chief Financial Officer, Corinne Hockman, gave an overall view and stated this budget is offset by market rents, not tax payer dollars.

Wong questioned why there was a request in the Capital Account for a plow, but not listed in the budget. Mr. Dowson stated this plow was used for snow removal in Norfolk Village. Business Administrator stated a past balance in a previous Capital Account was used for this purchase.

Ariemma would like to continue brush pick-up in the Spring. Mr. Dowson stated Spring is their busiest time of year, it is very timely and costly. She would like to continue to discuss this topic with Administration.

Ariemma questioned the \$100,000 Motor Pool Maintenance line item in the Budget. Council President May stated this line item is for repairs and maintenance for the Township fire trucks which is done under Shared Services in Paramus. It is only listed under the Department of Public Works as a line item.

Mr. Dowson stated he is requesting a new diesel mechanic position for in-house repairs and maintenance for the fire trucks. This salary would be approximately \$80,000 - \$90,000.

Ferguson asked why the Rental and Maintenance Agreement line item under Buildings and Grounds was budgeted for \$65,000 when only \$20,000 was used last year. Ms. Hockman stated things within that line item were incorrectly charged in last year's budget.

Ferguson questioned the increase in the Repair and Maintenance line item under Motor Pool. Mr. Dowson stated maintenance is very high because of the cost to repair things.

Ferguson asked if the turf field in Continental Soldiers Park is being maintained correctly. Business Administrator stated the maintenance contract for \$9,000 was canceled from the purchase order. He is working on trying to reinstate this portion on the old purchase order, or create a new one.

Ferguson questioned the large increase in the Miscellaneous Recycling Disposal line item under Recycling Sanitation. Mr. Dowson stated 2023 tonnage charges have increased from \$101/ton to \$128/ton. This increase started in mid-December 2022 and can be changed at any time.

Ferguson questioned the large increase in the Sanitation Disposal line item. Business Administrator stated the new contract will not go into effect until 2024. He also stated sanitation costs have increased from 50-75 percent. Administration will be continuing this discussion with the Council on how to proceed with this service in the future.

Ferguson questioned the decrease in the Streets and Roads line item. Mr. Dowson stated there were things in the budget that did not get completed.

Bolan asked Mr. Dowson if he was in agreement with decreasing the snow removal budgeted amount from \$100,000 to \$75,000. Mr. Dowson stated yes.

Bolan asked Mr. Dowson if the Parks and Playgrounds over-time budget amount of \$3,000 should be increased. Mr. Dowson stated no.

Bolan spoke about the Beautification Committee Budget and asked if the budget amount of \$5,000 was only to be used for materials. Mr. Dowson stated yes. Bolan asked if the Beautification Committee could maintain their own budget for flexibility in purchasing items. Business Administrator stated he is in acceptance of the Committee maintaining their own budget, but they will still have to follow the Township's purchasing process. Ms. Hockman stated the Township has opened up a charge account with Home Depot, but the Committee will still have to go through the DPW to use it.

May asked Bolan if the Irrigation Systems have been completed. Mr. Dowson stated no.

Wong asked for clarification on the garbage complaints. Mr. Dowson stated most of the garbage complaints are based on missed garbage pick-up due to improper items being put out on the curb. Weekly sanitation pick-up does not include construction materials or bulk items. Mr. Dowson mentioned he would like to have a further discussion regarding bulk pick-up. Bulk pick-up done once per month could have a cost savings for the Township.

Wong questioned the Capital Request for vehicles. Mr. Dowson spoke about the vehicles within his department and their life span. Wong asked Mr. Dowson if he has experienced supply chain issues. Mr. Dowson responded he has just received 2 trucks that were ordered back in 2021.

Wong asked what is a Trackless Roadside Machine. Mr. Dowson stated it cuts back roadside grass and brush. Ariemma asked if the Trackless Roadside Machine can be rented out to other towns. Mr. Dowson stated that would be a lot of wear and tear on this equipment.

Donigian asked about Township employees retiring from the DPW. Mr. Dowson stated there are approximately 6 employees retiring within 2-4 years within the department. Mr. Dowson is requesting a Superintendent position, and two additional employees with skillset. Donigian is in favor of hiring additional manpower for the DPW.

Ariemma is not in agreement with hiring a Superintendent.

Ms. Hockman stated a portion of the Trackless Roadside Machine can be charged to the Sidewalk Trust Fund. She will check the Ordinance to see what the funds can be used for. May would like to keep some reserves in this Trust Fund.

Business Administrator stated he will create a personnel analysis on hiring new employees for the DPW for the next 2-3 years to show the Council what the budget would look like.

May asked if mechanics would be restricted on what vehicles they work on. Mr. Dowson stated no.

May spoke about Dude Solutions being bought out by Brightly. He asked if Brightly offers an App to apply for workorders on-line that get sent to the DPW. Mr. Dowson stated he does not think Brightly offers this program. May asked Mr. Dowson to check into this. Business Administrator stated the Township's Website offers something similar.

May asked Business Administrator to create an analysis on hiring additional police officers, DPW workers, and one diesel mechanic to show the Council what the budget would look like. He would like to discuss this at the Council Meeting on March 6, 2023. Business Administrator stated he will have an analysis to include all new hires for the March 6, 2023 Council Meeting.

May asked Ms. Hockman to have more information on purchasing the Trackless Roadside Machine out of the Sidewalk Trust Fund Account for the Council Meeting on March 6, 2023 to discuss this further. Ariemma would like more information on a Shared Service Agreement on this piece of equipment.

B2. Administration

Business Administrator, Mr. Benjamin Kezmarsky, presented the 2023 Budget to the Council.

Mr. Kezmarsky gave an overall view of the Budget, stating the Administration Other Expenses under the Administration Tab has been decreased by \$22,500. He stated the largest increase is in legal expenses because there was great concern there was not enough money for Affordable Housing issues. He stated the Township is getting into position for the next round of Affordable Housing.

Wong asked for additional information on digitizing the Municipality. Mr. Kezmarsky explained the process and the expense of this project. He stated it requires a third-party to come in and process all the paperwork within the individual departments. Planning and Zoning will be the first department to participate in this program with a cost of \$225,000. Mr. Kezmarsky mentioned this is a 5-year project with other departments to follow. Wong asked if the documents will be saved in the Cloud. Mr. Kezmarsky stated yes.

Wong asked for clarification on Technology purchases. Mr. Kezmarsky explained there has been more software purchases than hardware.

Wong asked for plans for the next Holiday Parade. Mr. Kezmarsky responded he is putting together a committee for this event, and he would like to shut down Franklin Turnpike and expand the area to Veterans Park with vendors.

Bolan asked for a cost savings analysis for the Department of Land Use. Mr. Kezmarsky responded he will look into this.

Bolan asked for clarification for the Professional Services line item. Mr. Kezmarsky spoke about the different Professional Services with which the Township is currently contracted with.

Bolan spoke about the Township's Newsletter and stated she would like it to be brought back to paper instead of digital. Mr. Kezmarsky explained it was sent out as a digital copy this year due to the fact that paper costs have doubled in price.

May stated he would like to see the Newsletter stay digital. He also questioned if it could be combined with the Library's Newsletter. Ferguson stated no.

Ariemma questioned if advertisers could be included in the Newsletter to cover the cost. Mr. Kezmarsky will check into this with the Township Attorney.

Ferguson asked if the Newsletter can be charged under Professional Services. Mr. Kezmarsky stated yes.

Ferguson questioned the increase in Professional Services under Treasury. Ms. Corinne Hockman explained this increase is due to the different services the Township receives from Kearny Bank.

Ferguson questioned the increase for Professional Planning under Division of Planning. Mr. Kezmarsky stated this increase has been requested by Planning and Zoning with regards to Colliers Engineering for Land Use work relating to the Master Plan.

Ferguson asked if there was a need for more hiring within White Collar. Mr. Kezmarsky responded he believes the employee count is good.

Ferguson questioned the increase in employee benefits. Mr. Kezmarsky explained the increase, and mentioned he is trying to find creative ways for better benefits without using tax payer dollars.

Ferguson asked about the collection rate. Ms. Hockman stated the rate is good at 98%. She also mentioned there was a huge decrease in hotel revenue during COVID, but has seen a small increase.

Ariemma asked for a flow chart of employees for the Township. Mr. Kezmarsky stated he will look into this.

Ariemma questioned LOSAP under Administration Summary. Mr. Kezmarsky stated this is for the Emergency Services Volunteers regarding their length of service to the Township.

Paz questioned the Rental Maintenance Agreement increase. Mr. Kezmarsky stated this is due to elevator maintenance.

Paz asked for clarification on the Miscellaneous Contingency line item under Finance. Ms. Hockman stated this account is budgeted for emergencies.

Paz asked for clarification on the Municipal Services Act under Finance. Ms. Hockman explained this is for reimbursements for street lighting and snow removal to Condominium Associations within the Township.

May asked what is included in the Township Rental Owned Properties. Ms. Hockman stated the cell tower and market place rentals are included. He also asked if this amount includes future rents on the new cell tower. Mr. Kezmarsky stated no.

May questioned why there was a decrease in the rental income. Mr. Kezmarsky will look into this.

B3. Capital

Business Administrator, Mr. Ben Kezmarsky, and Acting Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Corinne Hockman were in attendance.

Mr. Kezmarsky gave an overall review of the Capital Budget and spoke about the costly increases of replacing equipment. He would like to start a Capital Reserve Fund with \$2 million this year, and add to it every year for savings to go towards trucks and vehicle replacements for future capital

Mr. Kezmarsky gave an overall review of the Capital Budget and spoke about the costly increases of replacing equipment. He would like to start a Capital Reserve Fund with \$2 million this year, and add to it every year for savings to go towards trucks and vehicle replacements for future capital expenses. He also mentioned he would like to have appraisals on Township vehicles for their life spans to plan for future replacements of those vehicles.

Bolan asked what impact will this fund have on the tax rate. Ms. Hockman stated this will balance the tax rate.

Ariemma asked for a breakdown of vehicles within the Township listed by Asset Class. Mr. Kezmarsky stated he will have the list for the March 6, 2023 Meeting.

Bolan asked if the Emergency Services Radios are included in the Capital Account. Mr. Kezmarsky stated yes.

Bolan questioned if the contribution to MEMS should be increased by \$10,000 to include uniform allowances or be kept as a separate line item. Business Administrator recommended to leave it as a separate line item.

May asked what the impact is to the budget with the changes that have been made. Ms. Hockman stated the tax rate has stayed the same at 2.8%. Ferguson asked if the tax rate can be lowered. Mr. Kezmarsky stated he will have a new presentation of the budget, along with the changes, for the Council Meeting on March 6, 2023.

On a motion by Ferguson, seconded by Bolan, the Meeting adjourned at 11:38AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn George, RMC
Municipal Deputy Clerk