

# Borough of Tenafly

## MAYOR AND COUNCIL

### BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2013**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Rustin and Council members Anthony Barzelatto, Barry Honig (arrived at 7:06 p.m.), Martha Kerge, Nadia LaMastra, Jon Warms, and Mark Zinna

**ABSENT:** Council member

**ALSO PRESENT:** Borough Administrator Jewel Thompson-Chin,  
Chief Financial Officer Gene Vinci

At 7:00 p.m. Mayor Rustin read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act P.L. 1975, chapter 231, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates for the year are listed in the Annual Agenda; copies are sent to the Record, Suburbanite, and Northern Valley Press and posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center. The notice of this special budget meeting Resolution #13-70 has been sent to the Record, Suburbanite, and Northern Valley News, has been posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center and Borough Website."

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No one came forward.

#### **RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Matthew Mercurio, Recreation Director, noted that under Salaries & Wages, the Site Supervisor position is now vacant and he plans to create two separate positions, each working 15 hours per week; a Site Supervisor and Field and Facility Maintenance. He explained the different responsibilities for each position and advised that if necessary, each employee can act as backup for the other. The salary figure for the current Site Supervisor will cover both positions.

Mr. Mercurio pointed out that the usage of Board of Education facilities has dropped due to basketball now falling totally under Tenafly Youth Basketball, decreasing the use of the school gyms on Saturdays which is very costly. He also advised that line item for rentals of port-a-johns has been reduced to \$0 as the Snack Shack has been completed and the Board of Education has requested that there not be a port-a-john placed at the elementary school.

Mr. Mercurio described some of the new programming that they are planning to offer this year including Broadway Bound which is a dance class for special needs children and adults as well as a hip hop dance class. He advised that fencing, one of the new programs offered this past year, has become very popular with two sessions being offered and 15 children placed in each. He explained that they are currently investigating offering a lacrosse program through Recreation for children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Vinci noted that there is a \$9,500 difference between the requested and recommended amounts. He explained that the request for a new computer should have been placed under the capital budget. Mr. Mercurio advised that the \$6,000 request that he has made for the software in the capital budget can actually be funded by the summer camp trust. He advised that the old computer will be placed at the front counter as a point-of-service computer.

C. Barzelatto suggested placing money in the junior football program to obtain new helmets. Mr. Mercurio responded that they were able to find funds in the budget last year to purchase 35 new helmets, but agreed that a program should be put into place to replace a certain number of helmets every year. Mr. Vinci noted that the purchase of helmets is covered by the trust account. Council agreed that the goal should be to replace an additional 35 helmets this year.

C. Warms questioned whether there is a line item for fingerprinting. Mr. Mercurio responded that there is no line item in this year's budget as there are still a sufficient number of forms from the Megan Kanka Foundation, but money will need to be allocated for

this program next year. He advised that Chief Chamberlain will be attending a Recreation Board meeting to provide his input on how to handle fingerprinting from this point forward as currently the ordinance requires that coaches be fingerprinted every year; Chief Chamberlain plans to allow more flexibility.

Mr. Mercurio commented that Summer Camp was a success last year and he is planning to bring even more structure to the program. He intends to keep the same number of supervisors but will be breaking down the children into more manageable groups of 10 to 12 children with 2 to 3 counselors assigned to each group. They will now be able to use both swim clubs, allowing for an additional 90 children to be able to attend the swim club each week.

In terms of the capital budget, Mr. Mercurio advised that the turf field can wait another two to three years before needing to be fully replaced; the high use areas need to be addressed sooner. He explained that a professional grade groomer can be brought in for \$6,500 which will alleviate the compression issues for approximately 3 to 5 weeks depending on usage. C. LaMastra questioned the \$188,000 amount in the capital budget for the turf field and Mr. Mercurio responded that that amount would be approximately half the cost of replacing the entire field. Mr. Vinci commented that the total cost to replace the field is \$377,660 and questioned why the cost is being split over two years as the plan is to fund the project out of the Open Space Trust Fund. Council decided to have the Borough Engineer look at Sunnyside to provide his recommendations on whether a complete study of the cost to place a turf field there is necessary. Council agreed that anything which poses a safety issue, such as repairing the fence at the municipal field, needs to be addressed immediately. Mayor Rustin suggested that part of the role of the Site Supervisor should be to discourage abuse of the Borough's facilities. Council suggested speaking with Chief Chamberlain about installing a video surveillance system to oversee the municipal field as well as motion-detector lighting. Mrs. Thompson-Chin advised that they are looking at a system to monitor the entire complex. Council also asked that Mrs. Thompson-Chin request that the Police Department continually patrol the field as it is an expensive asset.

Mr. Mercurio provided a status on the Snack Shack and advised that they are awaiting quotes on a sink and cabinets. Council asked that the goal be to have the sink and cabinets installed by Spring. Council also requested that the installation of a hood and exhaust system be investigated so that cooking may be done in the Snack Shack. Mayor Rustin advised the owner of a kitchen design store on the corner of Jay Street and Highwood Avenue would be willing to provide free advice. Mr. Vinci explained that Mr. Mercurio is currently reviewing his trust accounts to determine if there is a surplus so that additional funds can be allocated to this project.

Mr. Mercurio advised that the Independence Day Celebration will take place on July 4<sup>th</sup> and the Summer Camp staff will work this event. He further advised that although Borough Hall will be close on July 5<sup>th</sup>, they will still be holding camp on that day.

## **TVAC**

Mayor Rustin noted that one of the biggest differences in line items is in the maintenance of motor vehicles, with the requested amount being \$12,000 and the recommended amount being reduced to \$5,000. Max Moehlen, TVAC Captain, explained that there were circumstances at the end of last year that prevented him from having two of his vehicles repaired. He explained the necessary repairs are more than routine maintenance and requested that the budgeted amount be brought to \$8,000. Council agreed to this request.

Mr. Moehlen addressed the education line item and advised that he has 16 new members who are currently taking the course to become volunteers, 2 of which are children of Borough employees. He commented that the cost of the course is now \$1,300 and as the State no longer covers this cost, the volunteer needs to pay out-of-pocket and the Borough reimburses the volunteer if they pass the course. He also noted that the State no longer pays for the courses for the volunteers to keep up-to-date with their certifications. Council expressed concern that \$5,000 may not be enough to cover costs should the majority of the new volunteers pass this course. They agreed to increase this line item to \$15,000. Mayor Rustin suggested checking into whether the association can loan the money to those who want to take the course but cannot afford it with the understanding that the Borough would reimburse them if the volunteer passes the course.

C. Warms inquired whether the \$10,000 allocated for telecommunications was for equipment only. Mr. Moehlen explained that with the change in the Fire Department to low-band frequency, there was the need to purchase new radios and cost is between \$1,500 and \$2,500 for each radio. He advised that he also put in his budget for electronic dispatch

which will send the page to a cell phone and hopefully eliminate the need to purchase new pagers in the future.

C. Honig asked that a washer and dryer be placed into the capital budget. Mr. Moehlen responded that an industrial washer and dryer are approximately \$900 each. Council agreed to place \$2,500 into the capital budget for the purchase of the washer and dryer. Mr. Vinci advised that the cost for the pagers should also be placed into the capital budget which would reduce the regular budget by approximately \$6,000. Mrs. Thompson-Chin pointed out that the requested amount for incentives is \$70,000 and the actual amount expended last year was only \$57,000. She suggested reducing this line item and reallocating those funds and Council agreed to reduce this line item to \$63,000. Mr. Vinci noted that the reduction in the incentive line item and moving the \$6,000 for the pagers into capital will cover the increases in the maintenance of motor vehicles and education line items.

Mr. Moehlen advised that he is requesting a new first responder vehicle as well as a new ambulance. C. Barzelatto questioned if there is really a need for a second first responder vehicle as he has noticed that that vehicle tends to report to headquarters rather than directly to the scene. Mr. Moehlen provided an explanation as to why there is sometimes a need for the person driving the first responder to first report to headquarters. Mr. Vinci advised that they are recommending that the first responder be replaced this year for \$70,000, but they are not recommending that the ambulance be replaced. Mayor Rustin stated that he will check with Senator Weinberg and Congressman Pascrell to inquire about obtaining state or federal help in obtaining a new ambulance. C. Barzelatto suggested also researching grants that may be available.

## **ASSESSOR**

Carol Byrne, Tax Assessor, advised that they are currently awaiting tax court judgments for 12 cases from 2009, 12 from 2010, 74 from the 2011 revaluation, and 93 from 2012. Council questioned the increase in other professional fees and Mrs. Byrne responded that this increase is due to the amount of appraisals that need to be completed. She advised that they do try to avoid having an appraisal done if a small settlement can be reached.

Due to Hurricane Sandy, Mrs. Byrne advised that the printing of their books has been delayed and the deadline to file appeals may be extended. She advised that there were 22 homes in Tenafly that sustained damage from the storm and at the directive of Governor Christie, they mailed letters to each of these property owners; 11 responded and received a reduction in their value, 3 of which had homes that were condemned. She advised that their assessments will go back up once the damages have been repaired through an added assessment. She advised that Governor Christie directed that the assessment be reduced by percentage depending on the type of damage and there was no give or take. This reduction in assessments resulted in \$740,000 less in ratables. C. Barzelatto asked that Mrs. Byrne send him a breakdown of all of the homes and the damages that were sustained. He will report this information to FEMA and see if the Borough can be reimbursed for tax revenue losses.

Mrs. Byrne advised that the added assessment totals were excellent last year, with Tenafly having the highest total in added assessments in Bergen County. She reported that there are at least 28 new homes currently being built which will help to offset some of the reductions in ratables. She explained that a home is placed on the tax rolls when it is substantially completed, not necessarily when they obtain a Certificate of Occupancy. She also noted that the number of sales have started to increase.

## **MUNICIPAL COURT**

Allen Bell, Municipal Judge, advised that the only change in this year's budget is a request for an additional \$200 for education. He explained that this increase is due to the Deputy Court Administrator needing to attend courses to meet her continuing education requirements. He advised that every other line item remained exactly the same as the previous year. He has spoken to the Police Department and they are expecting an increase in summonses being issued once the new officers come out of the Academy. He advised that Tenafly currently has approximately four to five times as many summonses issued as Cresskill and he believes that his projection of 250 additional cases may be low. He commented that the Prosecutor is very efficient as he knows what he is willing to give and is not afraid to try a case if there is a need. The Public Defender is always available when needed and is very responsive to those who he is representing. Mr. Vinci pointed out that the Court budget is only \$110,000 while they brought in \$228,000 in fines. Mr. Bell reported that the Court is current on their cases as they strive to stay within the State

guidelines. He advised that he plans to sit down with Chief Chamberlain to discuss suggestions on scheduling in order to keep the Police overtime to a minimum.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

As there was no further business to come before the Council, on a motion by C. LaMastra, second by C. Honig, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lissette Aportela-Hernandez, MPA, RMC  
Borough Clerk