

Borough of Tenafly

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Rustin and Council members Barry Honig, Martha Kerge, Nadia LaMastra, Jon Warms, and Mark Zinna (arrived at 8:12 p.m.)

ABSENT: Council member Anthony Barzelatto

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

At 7:06 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:

None.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Mrs. Thompson-Chin explained that the process for preparing the budget begins in October. Once a budget is adopted, the budget is reviewed with the departments throughout the year to keep the budget at a steady level. The budget management system is approved at 3 levels: at the department level, then by the Borough Administrator and finally the Chief Financial Officer.

Mr. Vinci advised that it is important to note that the budget presented to Council is a preliminary budget. There are certain costs that may need to be added. For example, in the Police Department, there are no promotions built in the figures. Over the past 2 years, there have been 6 retirements in the supervisory level and 7 new officers were hired, which yields a savings of \$370,000. He explained that he mentions the Police Department because it accounts for approximately 20% of the budget. Mr. Vinci highlighted that the total assessed valuation increased by \$12 million, the expected average tax increase per home is 0.4%, and the anticipated revenue is flat from last year. He advised that there is a new line item regarding salary adjustments for the Police where increments and longevity are being set on reserve until their contract. He advised that the auditors are preparing the annual financial statement and the amount of surplus may be adjusted.

Mr. Vinci informed Council of staffing amendments in Administration, the Clerk's Office, Finance Department and Building Department. The department heads will review those requests in greater detail. With regards to the group insurance plan, even though employees are moving to the next phase in contributions, it will not fully offset increase imposed by the state of 9%. He explained that the BCUA sewer charge traditionally increases between 5% to 8% annually, but he was advised verbally that the premium will be decreased. He is waiting for a confirmation in writing. Mr. Vinci noted that the terminal leave reserve was reduced by \$30,000 since planning over the past several years has been adequate.

ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Thompson-Chin noted that while the final total of the budget has remained steady, within the line items she has added funds for maintenance of the message board and website, as well as a new line item identified as internet expenses for the cabling and labor for installation of Wi-Fi in Borough Hall. She proposed within existing budget to replace laptop for smart board. The current laptop is obsolete which impacts the functionality of the smart board. One of the goals for this department is to evaluate the impact of the federal health care reform which takes effect on January 1, 2014.

Mrs. Thompson-Chin explained that she is seeking salary line changes for her staff. The current Assistant to the Administrator is retiring and had a greater role with land use issues. Therefore, her successor will serve in the capacity of Land Use and Housing Assistant at a salary savings of \$19,000. This position would not be eligible for longevity. Also, this position would receive a per meeting stipend instead of overtime. 20 applications were received for that position and 3 candidates have been interviewed. As a result, she is seeking to promote the current Secretary to the Borough Administrator to Assistant to the Administrator with a salary increase of \$3,000.

Under the capital budget request, the Downtown Circulation Plan was listed for Council's consideration when the capital budget is reviewed on February 28th. The study was slightly altered. After review by the police and fire chiefs, the proposal was changed to 2 phases instead of 3 due to the need to maneuver fire engines. If Council were to proceed, \$200,000 is to be allocated in the capital budget for the preparation of the plan.

BOROUGH CLERK

Mrs. Aportela-Hernandez advised that the operating budget requests have remained flat. There was a decrease in the Elections budget. Although ballots are required to be printed in three languages, the County Clerk went out to bid and obtained quotes much lower than anticipated. The second phase in the filing system upgrade is included in the capital budget request. Mrs. Aportela-Hernandez informed Council that the filing system in the attic where long term and permanent records of various offices are stored needs to be addressed in the 2014 capital budget. With regards to staffing, Mrs. Aportela-Hernandez requested that Ms. Dodd be promoted to Deputy Borough Clerk. She explained that Ms. Dodd will have completed 80% of the courses this year required to take the exam for the RMC license and recommended that with the promotion there be a salary of \$48,000 and be increased to \$50,000 once Ms. Dodd obtains her RMC license. Council concurred with the proposal and directed the Borough Clerk to prepare a resolution authorizing the promotion for the February 12th meeting.

Council inquired about the resources required to produce meeting agendas. Mrs. Aportela-Hernandez responded that she has recommended paperless agendas for the past couple of years, but has not conducted any research without authorization. She explained that the agenda documents can be accessed through the intranet. Council requested that she obtain quotes for the use of tablets. She advised that she will reach out to the Technology department to coordinate quotes for consideration in the capital budget.

FINANCE

Mr. Vinci explained that the main issue in the budget for the Finance Department involves the salary and wages for personnel. He requested an adjustment of \$5,000 for the Deputy Treasurer due to additional supervisory responsibility. There is a clause in the bargaining unit contract that allows for adjustments for increased responsibilities. He also requested increasing the hours of the part-time Payroll Clerk from 20 hours to 25 hours per week and a rate increase for the Accounts Payable Clerk to \$22 an hour. He noted that the new Tax Collector will be earning \$12,000 less than Ms. Tom, who retires on March 1st. Furthermore, this position will not be eligible for longevity and will be eligible for Phase 4 contributions towards health insurance. Council concurred with Mr. Vinci's recommendations for staff salaries.

ADJOURNMENT:

As there was no further business to come before the Council, on a motion by C. Zinna, second by C. Warms, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lissette Aportela-Hernandez, MPA, RMC
Borough Clerk