

Borough of Tenafly

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2012

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Rustin and Council members Barry Honig, Martha Kerge, Nadia LaMastra, Jon Warms, and Mark Zinna

ABSENT: Council member Anthony Barzelatto

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

At 7:08 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 News and posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center. The notice of this special budget meeting via the February 1, 2012 Sunshine Notice has been sent to the Record, Suburbanite, and Northern Valley News and posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Center."

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no public comments.

Fire Department

Chief Richard Philpott advised Council that the main issue in the operating budget involved incentives for the volunteer personnel. Mrs. Thompson-Chin noted that the Fire Department requested \$120,900 and in the budget packet, she and Mr. Vinci are recommending allocating \$95,000 for incentives. Chief Philpott described the level of response and the aging population of the 39 members on active list and how an incentive increase may spark more of a response. Currently, volunteers need to make 35% of calls to receive \$975 per quarter, which is requested to be increased to \$1650 per quarter. He advised that Tenafly is currently ranked last in incentives, but high in response calls, which include local and mutual aid responses.

C. Honig recommended giving the Fire Department the full requested amount since a paid fire department would be a \$5 million budget item. Mr. Vinci explained that the reduction in the recommendation is based on an evaluation of the actualized expenditures and that any item above the recommended figures will affect the tax levy as presented. C. Kerge stated that the Borough cannot afford to give incentives in comparison with other increases being given to other departments and that the amount listed as the recommendation is the highest allocation she would ever support. C. Warms suggested granting a bonus after training and bonus after a year of service as an alternative to the incentive increase. Chief Philpott noted that some of the 10 members who respond to less than 5% of calls have moved out of town, but not close to Tenafly. He advised that he plans to survey the DPW to determine who would want to be a volunteer member. Council approved the Fire Department's other expenses budget as recommended by the Borough Administrator and Chief Financial Officer.

Mr. Vinci noted that the Fire Department requested the purchase for a new fire truck in the amount of \$600,000 in the Capital Budget, but it was not recommended for this year. Chief Philpott informed Council that the rescue truck is 39 years old and does not have any seat belts. Mayor Rustin advised that he will reach out to congressional representatives for assistance with a grant. Chief Philpott described that other items requested include murphy beds and lockers for when personnel needs to remain at headquarters for standby response in the event of snow storms and power outages, as well as a request for an enclosed trailer for foam, absorbent, firefighting gear to deliver to the scene. C. Honig commented that there needs to be discussion of priorities and recommended that the \$40,000 for police vehicle be reallocated towards a proper rescue vehicle.

Planning Board

Ms. Wilmit, Planning Board chair advised Council that the major expenditures involve planning services and legal services. She advised that the Planning Board has been served on two legal matters based on denied applications. While the Board has a strong legal position, but still need to respond and incur legal fees Mrs. Thompson-Chin noted that the lawsuits are not covered by insurance. With regards to planning services, Ms. Wilmit

advised \$17,000 may be reallocated to the development fees trust, subject to the spending plan approval by state, but those funds can be used to a new master plan. Even though there was a re-examination last year, a new master plan has not been done for 20 years and the Municipal Land Use Liaison, who has 25 years of institutional knowledge, is retiring. The Planning Board is recommending spreading cost over 2 years. Council removed the \$17,000 for planning services that would be covered by development fees and committed to \$28,000 with \$14,000 allocated for 2012 and for 2013 for a new master plan.

Senior Center

Julie Villafuerte, Senior Center Director, requested flexibility with the expenditure of salaries for temporary instructors. Council advised her to review this matter with the Borough Administrator. Ms. Villafuerte reported that on average 97 people per day use the Senior Center, whereas 8 years ago, 45 people used the center per day and that the numbers will grow due to baby boomer population. Mayor Rustin commented that it was amazing that the center is operating at such a high level and keep costs down.

Summary Sheets

Mr. Vinci reviewed the budget revisions based on the discussions over the past few weeks, as well as recommendations from the auditor. At this point, the levy is increasing by \$94,503. Currently, there is a 0.9% levy cap, which amounts to an increase of \$41 per average assessed home. He advised that next Thursday, Council needs to discuss what the bottom line is in order to minimize any changes from introduction of the budget to its adoption in an effort to not warrant an extra hearing.

TVAC

Max Moehlen, TVAC Captain, advised that the main portion of the increase in their budget request involves the incentive program. He cited that TVAC responded to nearly 800 calls in 2011 and there is a waiting list of people seeking to join. TVAC is not seeking to raise the amount of the incentives, only just the number of people that are eligible has increased. TVAC is seeking direction on how to request an attachment to the building for a bunk room, shower, bunk beds, and washer/dryer for times of standby service. Council discussed allocating some space in new police building, which will be evaluated further at the March 6th work session. Captain Moehlen noted that the ambulance is 10 years old and that it may need to be replaced in a couple of years. Council determined to go with the appropriation recommendations for TVAC as presented by the Chief Financial Officer and Borough Administrator. Council also added \$3000 in the capital budget to install new radios in the ambulance and \$2000 in the TVAC operating budget due to the FCC's narrow banding requirement.

ADJOURNMENT:

As there was no further business to come before the Council, on a motion by C. Kerge, second by C. Warms, and unanimously carried, to adjourn this meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lissette Aportela-Hernandez, MPA, RMC
Borough Clerk