
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Governing Body Budget Hearing
Date of Meeting: February 21, 2024
Time of Meeting: 6:30 pm
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The Budget Meeting of the Governing Body was called to order by Mayor Michele Dale.

Adequate Notice Statement

Mayor Dale read the following statement:

Pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-8) adequate notice of this Budget Hearing was advertised in the Herald News and The Record in its issues of January 9, 2024 and posted on the bulletin board in the main corridor of the Town Hall and on file in the Office of the Township Clerk.

Please also make note of all fire and emergency exits - located to the left, right, front and rear of this room - for use in case of an emergency. Thank you.

Agenda No. I

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Dale led all in attendance in a salute to the flag.

Agenda No. II

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Ada Erik, Michael Chazukow, Kevin Goodsir, Matthew Conlon, David Marsden

Absent: Councilwoman Marilyn Lichtenberg, Township Attorney Ed Pasternak

Also Present: Mayor Michele Dale, Township Administrator William Senande

Agenda No. III

Purpose

2024 Municipal Budget

Agenda No. IV

Review of 2024 Municipal Budget

Review of Certain Budget Activities – the following Departments/Division Heads were in attendance:

Court
Department of Planning and Building
Health Department
Department of Public Safety

Court - Michele Walker indicated that the only change to the budget was in the equipment line, a change of 4.48%. They are having a hard time finding the type of chairs that connect together for the courtroom. The violations clerk resigned and they are looking for a new one. They are in the process of hiring a part-time person.

Department of Planning and Building - Timothy Ligus indicated that there was no change on the Planning side other than an increase in advertising. On the Building side the CFO recommended that we go to a dedication by rider, so that will be a little different coming into this year. Administrator Senande and CFO Ellen Mageean are still working on that. Administrator Senande indicated that the Building Department is the only department that should be self-sufficient. The dedication by rider was created last year and this way we can see that their expenses match their revenue. Mayor Dale asked how the new software was working. Mr. Ligus indicated that they were still working on it, and that there were minor glitches. The idea is to make the applicant more responsible for transitions from zoning to building. The increase in advertising for Planning was due to the Board applications. Mayor Dale noticed a large decrease in the 22-195 account, the \$49,700.00 amount being a change of -42.03%. Administrator Senande indicated that was due to the maintenance contracts for software.

Health Department – Araceli Pintle indicated that the total remains the same and the only real change was due to the septic tank reminders, so extra supplies, post cards and printing are needed to insure compliance with the septic tank pumping. There were changes made under environmental and public health. Mayor Dale indicated that with 10,000 homes done, we are caught up and it is a matter of maintenance at this point.

Councilman Conlon left the meeting at this time.

Department of Public Safety – Chief Sommerville is requesting an increase for the purchase of Police Department furniture and office equipment. The dispatch chairs are running about \$2000 a piece and they are needed immediately. Patrol equipment is also needed. Captain Sommerville indicated that there is a need for software updates and that has to be done in order for the computers to function. Also, under Capital Expenses, is a dual purpose radar speed box, that functions as a traffic sign and also on side roads in the Township where there are radar complaints. The second capital request is for the

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replacement of the kitchenette located downstairs. He has pictures. Twelve hour shifts are required so it is used for lunches and dinner. Captain Sommerville is looking to move away from the leasing program the police are involved in and going back to purchasing the vehicles instead. He is requesting 5 vehicles now due to one being recently totaled. There was some insurance money recovered from that vehicle as well. Community policing is scheduled to increase from \$3000 to \$5000 this year, to make it as affordable to residents as possible. Finally, there is a \$500 increase for schooling for detectives, so that goes from \$2000 to \$2500. There are a lot of classes that are required. Other than the changes stated the budget would stay about the same. Councilman Marsden asked about repurposing police vehicles. The intention is for vehicles to be repurposed at around 100,000 miles, some would go to other departments. The reason for no longer leasing is that the vehicles often go over the mileage limit. Councilman Marsden made the point that mileage is one thing but police vehicles idle a lot as well and that factors into equipment wear. Chief Sommerville indicated that the vehicles run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Chief Sommerville indicated that for the Office of Emergency Management Budget most lines would stay the same but there was a line added for an emergency communications repair, they are requesting \$30,000 and that covers radios, communication repairs for Fire, OEM, First Aid and they are also in the process of doing the radios for the town. Administrator Senande indicated that he believes that cost carries a deduction with it because the item is being moved from another line item. So it would not be an increase it would be a matter of changing it to OEM, one division to another.

Councilman Conlon returned to the meeting.

Fire Commissioner Tim Struble indicated that there would be an increase for NFP ladder and hose testing, \$40,000 not \$30,000. There is a need for the mandated training for the firefighters. The cost of PPE gear item has increased from \$40,000 to \$60,000. The cost of gear per firefighter from helmet to boots is \$5,000 and there are currently 28 firefighters. It is a NFPA mandate. Physicals for the firefighters have also gone up \$5000. Councilman Chazukow indicated that his numbers did not match up and Administrator Senande agreed and asked for the revised numbers. Commissioner Struble said he would submit updated numbers.

For the First Aid Budget Rob Jiroushek indicated that the only real increase would be in the line item for individual stipends. The number is based on a proposal submitted last year for an increase of 4% over 5 years as a thank you or incentive for members. Because the increase didn't happen the verbal agreement was to pursue 8%. There was also supposed to be a 10% bonus given to those who exceed a certain number of hours on call. There are 65 members on the roster. As of August of 2022 the West Milford and Upper Greenwood Lake squads merged. He went into some of the past budget history. There are repairs and upkeep necessary for Township vehicles and the numbers came in lower for 2023. It is a difficult number to predict because the rigs do take a lot of wear and tear. As part of the capital budget, he has included funding for the refurbishment of a fourth chassis in the fleet. Mr. Jiroushek was told by the vendor that if he ordered the chassis today, and this was back in January, that it would not be available until the fourth quarter of 2025. The expected cost at the time was around \$230,000 so he factored in a potential increase of 10%. The other capital item is the Town Hall parking lot that was poured in 1993. According to the engineers, it was meant to serve a residential purpose. It does not have the proper sub-base required. The actual anticipated cost for the work would be \$103,000 and with materials and labor cost going up he is asking for that line item number to be increase to \$65,000.

Mayor Dale thanked Mr. Jiroushek for getting this in place for the EMS workers and pointed out that the terminology on the budget should not say clothing allowance. It should read as the stipend that it is because the Township gets audited. There was some discussion regarding the parking lot. Originally vendors were basing their estimate numbers on resurfacing and not for the scope of work that needs to be done. There was some discussion about how rigs are repurposed and rotated to distribute the mileage and wear and tear they incur.

Mayor Dale opened the meeting to the public.

Agenda No. V

Public Comments

Bob Nolan wanted to discuss the ordinance that was introduced at the last Council meeting that would make the Mayor's position a full-time paid position with a salary of up to \$135,000 a year. He also has looked at the Financial Disclosure Forms that were filed for the 2023 year and there is a Councilwoman who listed no source of income and a Councilman who did not list his Township salary on his Financial Disclosure Form. Mr. Nolan questioned the accuracy of the documents. He indicated that according to the documents Mayor Dale was employed by TD Bank and he is assuming that she is no longer going to work there because she would not be able to work two full-time jobs. There aren't any other Towns in this area that have a full-time Mayor unless you were to consider Paterson or Passaic. Paterson pays their Mayor \$118,000 and the population is 149,000 people; Passaic pays their Mayor \$115,000 and the population is 71,000; Jersey City pays \$115,000 and the population is about 270,000, so he is wondering where the salary range came from.

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Tim Dalton, regarding the full-time Mayor position, would like the Council to direct the Attorney to prepare a report listing any applicable ordinances or regulations to such a change and also to outline the duties and qualifications of the Deputy Administrator position.

James Foody with regard to vehicles, indicated that one hour of idle time equals 30 miles. He would like to know how much the Township pays a year for someone to be a member of the Wanaque Valley Sewer Authority. He questioned why we would even be a member since we will never be putting sewerage down to that plant. It does not make any sense to him. He indicated that he thought it was a bad decision by the Council to make the position of Mayor a full-time one. With regard to the Council's decision to pass the ordinance to allow marijuana shops in Town, he feels that two should have been allowed and only on the highway, not in Town. Now the Council wants to go from allowing ten, the Council only wants to allow five and that tells him that the Council didn't think it through to begin with. Mr. Foody indicated it was that decision and other decisions, hiring practices the Administrator holding two positions acting as Clerk his mind is boggled and a lot of other people feel the same way. He indicated that he has spoken to Councilwoman Erik about the legacy projects and none of them require a full-time Mayor. Mr. Foody indicated that Council should be focusing on rateables, keep the Health Department in tact, put the Johner Building up for sale. Pilot programs do not make sense to him, they end up hurting the residents.

There being no one else who wished to be heard, Councilman Conlon moved to close the public portion of the meeting. Seconded by Councilman Chazukow.

Moved: Conlon Seconded: Chazukow
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote
Voted Nay: None
Motion carried.

Agenda No. VI

Council Comments

None

Agenda No. VII

Adjournment

Moved: Erik Seconded: Conlon
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote
Voted Nay: None
Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Approved: March 6, 2024

Respectfully submitted:

Deidre Ellis, Keyboarding Clerk II

MICHELE DALE, MAYOR

WILLIAM SENANDE, TOWNSHIP CLERK