

**TOWNSHIP OF BYRAM
TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2022
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING 6:30 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Mayor Alex Rubenstein called the meeting to order.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. Both adequate and electronic notice of the meeting has been provided, specifying the time, place. In addition, a copy of this notice is available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk, posted on the main door, the bulletin board of the Municipal Building, on the Township website at: https://www.byramtwp.org/index.php/town_hall/township_council, and has been forwarded to those persons requesting notice.

ROLL CALL OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL – Councilman Bonker here; Councilwoman Franco, here; Councilman Gallagher, here; Councilman Roseff, here; Mayor Rubenstein here. Also present was Township Manager Joe Sabatini, Municipal Clerk Cynthia Church and CFO Ashleigh Frueholz.

FLAG SALUTE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Motion by Councilman Bonker, second by Councilwoman Franco, to approve the agenda Motion carried.

BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION - The Mayor stated that Council has reviewed the budget that was presented by the Township Manager. The purpose of the Budget workshop is to review the budget, ask questions and recommend adjustments. The budget workbook and capital budget workbook have been posted on the Township website.

<https://www.byramtwp.org/useruploads/files/01072022%202022%20Budget%20Workbook.pdf>

<https://www.byramtwp.org/useruploads/files/11202021%20DRAFT%20Capital%20Budget%20with%20Bkup.pdf>

Mayor Rubenstein asked Mr. Sabatini to go over the changes to the budget.

Mr. Sabatini explained that the 2022 budget challenges are a combination of increased expenditures and a reduction in anticipated revenues. The budget workbook includes 2021 actual charges and revenues received through postings as of today.

Mr. Sabatini said that he has received notice of a second police officer (after the budget was sent out) that will be retiring and has worked with Chief Burke to adjust the staffing plan. As of February 1, the Police Department staffing will drop to thirteen officers which includes the Chief. The budget plan now anticipates bringing on two new officers in July of this year.

Both Mr. Sabatini and the CMFO Ashleigh Frueholz reviewed the police salaries and the revised anticipated staffing plan which has resulted in an \$82,000 reduction of police salaries.

Additional Changes:

- Garden State Preservation Trust Revenue Increase by \$22,635. This may be a one-time allocation.
- Received assessments for Workers Compensation and all lines (General Liability) of \$70,053 and \$195,253 which is an increase of \$18,968
- Planned for a \$10,000 and \$15,000 reduction of revenues of court and interest & cost on taxes, if they do not rebound in 2022 will need to be dealt with in 2023.
- Anticipating an increased dependency of \$54,500 to support operations and a \$30,00 one-time use to offset cost of managing abandoned properties.
- Guidance received is to use the same amount of state aid that was received in the previous year.
- Anticipated for a basic Master Plan for a total of \$13,000. A full master plan revision would be a much large impact on the budget (between \$30k-\$50k)
- Increase of \$12,000 for garbage
- Increase of \$37,246 for PFRS & PERS
- Group Health Insurance was updated for changes of census and State Health Benefit increase – Active employees 2.3%, Early Retirees 31.8%, and Medicare Eligible Retirees 5.7%

After making the above adjustments, the amount to be raised by taxes is presented as an increase of 1.35% or \$117,289. It is about a \$32.00 increase to the average home.

Mayor Rubenstein opened up to the council for questions or comments.

Councilman Gallagher asked about the money set aside for uniforms for the Police Department with the hiring of two new employees.

Mayor Rubenstein asked about the uniform construction fees. He wanted to make sure that \$195,00 in revenue is a routine number. Mr. Sabatini said it is not routine, however it is what they are comfortable with recommending at the time. They have seen a consistent volume of permits over the last two years. Mr. Sabatini said that if this continues over the next two years, he will not be able to keep up the volume with the lack of staffing. Councilman Roseff asked about

Mr. Sabatini's thoughts on keeping the shared service agreement. Mr. Sabatini said this has been a question for a while whether it is worth keeping or not. The amount of work that it takes to manage the large projects with the staff they have creates major issues, and a backlog in inspections. The revenue is nice but comes with a major burden to try and support it.

Councilman Bonker said there are aspects of the budget that he likes and dislikes. Unfortunately, PERS is something that the Township has no control over. Councilman Bonker likes the Hopatcong shared service deal as well as the \$30k for the abandoned homes in Frenches Grove. Councilman Bonker asked about the increase in the Elections line item, that went up. The Township Clerk explained the increase is due to Sussex County passing along their expenses for the cost of the mail in ballots. Councilman Bonker reiterated that that line item does not presuppose any extra elections in 2022. Councilman Bonker said that 1.35% increase is below the rate of inflation, and is also below the 2% cap. Councilman Bonker asked when you are doing budgeting, you want to go through the tough construct and asked the question of if you had to cut "x" amount, what would be cut? Mr. Sabatini suggested if there is a need to get the budget to a certain level, we would recommend taking more out of the fund balance. Mr. Sabatini said that the Fund balance is 13.5% of the revenue stream. Currently they are at \$6.2 million dollars without touching the fund balance. Mr. Sabatini and the CFO are both comfortable with the 1.6%. Mr. Sabatini said that this is a sound budget. Councilman Bonker asked Chief Burke about court revenue and if they can anticipate it to become more normal, as it is currently low. Chief Burke said that it is a reasonable assumption that the court revenue line item will go up over the years.

Councilman Roseff asked Chief Burke if the changes with the marijuana law pushed for more ticket writing. Chief Burke said there has been no changes with the implementation of that law.

Councilman Bonker asked if COVID-19 changed the frequency of ticket writing.

Councilwoman Franco asked about the receiving of guidance on the ARC funds and what that can be used for. Mr. Sabatini said that the ruling did come out and was sent to the council for review. Mr. Sabatini thinks there should be a plan in the future to have a special meeting as to how to use the money. Mr. Sabatini said it will not have any affect on the operational budget. It is simply the mechanism as to how they bring the money in. ARP funds can not be used to reduce the levy or supplement debt service.

Mr. Sabatini said they have a very aggressive capital program that will be significantly scaled back unless they are willing to incur more debt. They have estimates on what the cost of the streets and road repairs will be. Right now, they are bringing in \$225,500 through the operating budget, and \$100,000 is coming from the health insurance line item to supplement the capital program. Mr. Sabatini said that the Capital Program is fluid and can be amended by resolution at any time.

Councilman Roseff asked about COVID funds. Mr. Sabatini said that his understanding is that they may be a program that can be entered into to help supplement businesses. Councilman Roseff asked about updating HVAC systems. Mr. Sabatini said that would be done through ARP not Covid funds.

Councilman Roseff asked about professional costs to the Open Space Design and Forestry and if that comes out of Open Space funds. Mayor Rubenstein said yes, it does. He also asked about the playground equipment at Riverside for \$98,000. Mr. Sabatini said that they put in for a grant for this for \$153,000 for improvements at Riverside Park and received \$75,000. Mr. Sabatini is waiting to get more guidance on the grant. Councilman Roseff asked about tax appeals (Adam Todd) and the breakage in the police retirement, and if that breakage is accounted for in the budget. Mr. Sabatini said that the Adam Todd is not a tax appeal situation rather than a reassessment. The breakage in the police is being pulled into the accounting for this year.

Councilman Gallagher asked about the subcode fire official. Joe said that he interviewed someone for the position and that he anticipates hiring the person. Councilman Gallagher asked Chief Burk about the police hiring with alternate route. Mayor Rubenstein asked if this is something that the Chief would want to pursue. Chief Burke said yes, it is something that he would consider pursuing. Mr. Sabatini said that they should look at the current hiring practices, because they could be attracting more candidates with this alternative route.

Councilman Gallagher asked about the following:

- page 45 – asked about fire prevention budget number of \$9,000 when the Township uses only \$8,000. Mr. Sabatini said that it is paid to Sparta (flat fee) but the reminder is for the fire prevention classes. Mr. Sabatini said about \$2500 of that goes towards fire prevention.
- Page 48 - asked about the Road Department Seasonal Salary. Why did they do away with seasonal help. Mr. Sabatini said that it was addressed in his December 3rd memo, including the elimination of the animal attendant.
- Page 49 – asked about Misc. \$30,000 and what it is for. Mr Sabatini said that it is for the abandoned properties.
- Page 61 - asked about the \$40,000 for parks and grounds, Mr. Sabatini said that is the new part-time recreation person.
- Page 74 & 75 – asked about the DOT Grant and Capital Improvement fund. The CFO said that they are revenues. The NJDOT grant is net \$0. Capital Improvement fund is a decrease of \$214,000 under expenditures. Mr. Sabatini said that is factored out as a onetime increase in the previous year.

Alex talked about the DPW breakroom and BARKS pound and asked how to go about paying for the improvements. Mr. Sabatini said that the section 20 clause is part of the bond issuance, or it can be put into the budget.

Alex said that the only other thing that needs to be discussed at another date is the reexamination of the Master Plan.

It was the consensus of the council that this is a sound budget. With a 1.35% increase.

The schedule for introduction of the budget is for the first meeting in March.

Mr. Sabatini said that they need to have a conversation at a later date about the ARP money.

Councilman Roseff asked Mr. Sabatini for a list of items that could possibly be used with the ARP funds. Mr. Sabatini gave an explanation as to what it can be used for.

Motion by Councilman Bonker second by Councilwoman Franco to open to the public.

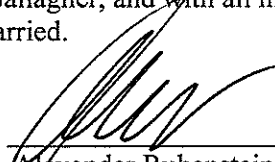
No comments

Motion by Councilman Bonker second by Councilwoman Franco to close to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Gallagher, and with all members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m. All members were in favor. Motion carried.


Cynthia Church, RMC
Township Clerk


Alexander Rubenstein, Mayor