

**TOWNSHIP OF BYRAM
TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2026
BUDGET WORKSHOP – 6:30 P.M.
REGULAR SESSION – 7:30 P.M.**

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

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

This meeting is called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Both adequate and electronic notice of the meeting has been provided, specifying the time and 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 –Councilwoman Franco, here; Councilman Gallagher, here; Councilman Proctor, here; Councilman Roseff, absent; Mayor Rubenstein, here. Also present was Township Manager Joseph Sabatini, Township Attorney Tom Collins, Township Chief Financial Officer Ashleigh Freuholz and Township Clerk, Cynthia Church

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Mr. Sabatini read presented the following:

Please see the link to the 2026 Municipal Budget Information that will allow you to get access to all the documents that have been posted on the Township's website.

https://www.byramtwp.org/index.php/town_hall/office_article/2026_municipal_budget_information

The Budget Details was updated yesterday and posted to the website.

<https://www.byramtwp.org/useruploads/files/01142026%202026%20Budget%20Workbook.pdf>

BUDGET PRESENTATION:

I would like to start by directing everyone to the Township's Website and under the 2026 Municipal Budget Information you will find all the documentation and details supporting the 2026 Budget Plan.

The 2026 Budget Process started with the Township Department Heads July 2025.

Before I start, I would like to thank all my department heads for their hard work holding the line on departmental expenses contributing to presenting a responsible budget for 2026.

The municipal budget is the Council's most important annual policy statement.

It defines how the local government team will implement its priorities for the next fiscal year, and where the money will come from to carry out that work plan.

The Mayor and Council should identify the goals and objectives for 2026 to identify resources including funding needs to carry out the work plan.

It is critical to link policies and money through the annual budget.

The 2026 Budget was kicked off with a Budget Goals and Objectives discussion with the Mayor and Council in August.

Proposed Schedule:

- *Introduction by March 3 - Byram is Group 2 municipal budget and not subject to review by the DLG*
- *Adoption by April 7*

For purposes of tonight's discussion:

- *Preliminary Budget Message - provided December 19, 2025*
- *January 16 -presented the Council with email explaining the updates to the budget.*
- *Summary of changes as follows:*
 - *On the revenue side, \$9,570 was added as this is the amount received from the Forest Lakes Dam assessment to cover the cost of managing the assessment.*
 - *Group Health Insurance line was updated after running census and taking in account employee changes. The Group Insurance and Medicare Reimbursements are now presented with an increase of \$600,673/40.06%. This is a reduction of \$29,370 from mid-December.*
 - *Municipal Alliance - Township's 25% share of \$979.50 was added on the expense side of the budget.*
 - *As presented, this budget plan has property taxes totaling \$10,154,023. This is a 7.14% or \$676,602 increase of the tax levy.*

GENERAL COMMENT:

- *This year's budget is more a conversation related to the increase of Health Insurance (40.6%) and the use of a measured portion of the Township's fund balance to soften the 2026 tax increase.*

Salary And Wages:

Salary and Wages have been populated with contractual obligations (steps, longevity and salary increases), and all known and planned staff changes. Overall, Salary and Wages for all departments total \$4,050,150 which is an increase of \$51,100 or 1.28% from 2025.

*Note - PD salaries are being kept flat.

Operational Expenses:

Operational expenses for all departments total \$1,670,204 which is a decrease of \$10,014 or 0.57%.

Overall, the Township's operating budget is increasing \$41,086 or .71%. This includes all the Township's municipal departments.

Other Categories of Expenses:

The following categories of other expenses are driving the increase of the 2026 budget and each category as a percentage increase exceeds the annual Cost of Living Cap Adjustment (COLA - 2%) for calendar year 2026.

- Group Insurance/Medicare Reimbursements:
 - Increase of \$600,673/40.06%
 - Reference detailed November 14, 2025 memo regarding the 2026 State Health Benefits Increase: <https://www.byrantwp.org/useruploads/files/11142025%20Insurance%20Increase.pdf>
- Byram Township is part of the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP), which approved a 36.2% rate increase for 2026—over 32% for medical costs and more than 62% for prescription drug premiums.
- The 2026 group insurance line item includes changes in staffing (two new police officers), changes in employee census and plan selection, as well as a reduction in the number of employees waiving coverage.
- Workers Compensation/General Liability are increasing 11.1% or a total of \$34,566
- Garbage/Recycling:
 - Increase of \$22,000/2.12%
 - Annual Garbage/Recycling Contract increase of \$12,000.
 - The SCMUA tipping fees for solid waste increased from \$107 to \$110 per ton for 2026 requiring an increase of \$10,000 in disposal cost.

Pensions will decrease by \$60,403 in 2026, mainly due to a \$60,406 reduction in the Police & Fire Retirement System (PFRS) payment.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:

- December 9, 2025 - 2026 Capital Budget Message was posted to the Township's website. Under the Local Budget Law, the Governing Body is required to adopt a Capital Budget and a 3-year Capital Improvement Program in conjunction with the annual operating budget.
- This budget plan includes the following allocation of funds supporting the Capital Budget Program:
 - Total Amount Being Raised in CIF = Currently, the proposed appropriation to the Capital Improvement Fund for 2026 is \$744,103 which is a reduction of \$92,320 from 2025.
 - Removed onetime increase (\$200,000) to fund capital improvement projects offset by an increase to Fund Balance.
 - Added 2026 net change of debt service (\$107,680).
 - Capital Supplement to Streets and Roads = \$100,000
 - Capital Supplement to Drainage Projects = \$5,000
 - Operating Budget:
 - \$100,000 DPW Equipment
 - \$225,500 Improvements to Streets and Roads - which includes \$120,000 coming from Health Savings - WAIVERS

Summary of Estimated Revenues:

Municipal Operations and the Capital Improvement Program are supported by a variety of revenues. These sources include miscellaneous revenues generated by municipal operations, fund balance, and current property taxes.

Miscellaneous revenues are the revenues that are generated by fees & permits, municipal court, interest on investments, interest and costs on taxes, receipts from delinquent taxes, grants, and State Aid. The forecast of these revenues is based upon the performance of each category in the previous year. State statute prevents the Township from anticipating more than what was realized in the prior year.

- Fees and Permits – no change
- Municipal Court – no change
- Interest on Costs on Taxes –no change.
- Interest on Investments – no change. (Note: Anticipating \$500,000)
- State Aid (Energy Receipts Tax) - no change.
- State Aid (Garden State Preservation Trust) – reduced \$9,702
- Receipts from Delinquent Taxes – no change.
- Receipts from Delinquent Taxes – no change.

State Aid (Energy Receipts Tax, Garden State Preservation Trust & Municipal Relief Fund Aid) – anticipating the same amount for Energy Receipts Tax - \$582,337

LFN 2025-18: Municipal Aid – after the state budget is proposed, the Division will notify municipalities as to the amount of Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid and Energy Tax Receipts Aid that be anticipated in budget. For planning purposes, advised to use 2025 aid amounts.

INTEREST INCOME AND FUND BALANCE:

Interest:

- *Interest on Investments – Presented budget with no change. Still anticipating \$500,000.*
- *Collected \$612,537 in interest for 2025, compared to....*
- *Collected \$801,868.26 in interest for 2024.*

Interest Rates - reducing:

January 2024 - 5.59%

December 2024 – 4.62%

Calculation of Interest Income:

- *As noted, this budget plan continues to anticipate an aggressive amount of interest income at \$500,000. In 2025, we were able to collect \$612,537 which is \$112,537 more than anticipated and was the main contributor to increased amount of fund balance in 2025.*
- *It is expected reserve balances in 2026 will start to decrease with final payouts of ARP monies, paydown of Street & Roads, and an increased dependency on fund balance.*
- *Interest rates in 2026 are anticipated to decrease, contingent on the Federal Reserve's decisions. In December, the rate stood at 3.82%. For January, it is expected to be around 3.6%, given the Fed rate was 3.64% as of December 31, 2025. By the end of 2026, projections indicate rates will be in the low 3% range, with a possibility of settling around 3.4%.*
- *Conservative analysis based on estimated balances and interest rate of 3.5% for the year suggests we would only earn \$482,520 in interest income which falls below the planned anticipated amount of \$500,000. It could be argued that we should start to reduce dependency on interest income in 2026.*
- *A significant drop in interest rates, could make it extremely difficult to balance future budgets without raising taxes or cutting expenditures.*

Best Practices:

Diversity in revenue stream - try to avoid an over-reliance on interest income.

Budget only a portion of the expected interest income to leave room for variations.

Use periods of high interest income to strengthen long-term reserves (fund balance)

Fund Balance:

- *Fund Balance is used as an revenue source in the budget (about 14%) of the budget which is dependent on the regeneration of Fund Balance.*
- *KEY PRACTICES: Conservative Revenue Forecasting and Tight Expenditure Controls.*
- *Fund Balance is primarily generated by the following sources:*
 - *Primarily is including cancellation of budget reserves from 2024. (Departments spending less than appropriated in their budgets)*
 - *Revenues in excess of anticipated amounts from 2025.*
 - *Other, receipts from delinquent taxes from 204 and added and omitted taxes collected for when construction improvements are deemed complete by the Tax Assessor.*
- *The unaudited Fund Balance analysis has been completed, with an estimated balance of \$3,695,402 as of January 1, 2026. This reflects an increase of approximately \$175,000 from the January 1, 2025 balance of \$3,520,332.*
- *The current budget plan proposes using \$1,855,000, a figure considered sustainable for average regeneration from operations. This year, we estimate regenerating \$1,833,492 from operations.*
- *As presented in my December 19, 2025 memo:*
 - *It is recommended to use a measured portion of the Township's fund balance to soften the 2026 tax increase. This lets us absorb more of the shock now while keeping essential services on track.*
- *It will be recommended to use fund balance prudently—enough to ease the increase, but not so much that we compromise fiscal stability.*
- *Fund balance is not a permanent fix. It's a bridge to protect residents in 2026 while the Township works on longer-term solutions.*

IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY FUND BALANCE:

- Fund Balance is not free money. It's an essential tool for maintaining stability and avoiding crisis.
- Spending down the fund balance may solve a short-term concern, but creates long term risks.
- Invest in priorities responsibly, ensuring we leave the municipality in strong financial health for future years.
- Normally it is recommended to use fund balance on one-time expenses vs. recurring costs. Emphasize that fund balance should be used for non-recurring, one-time expenses, such as capital projects, rather than recurring operational costs.

Summary:

Again, I would like to thank all my department heads for their hard work holding the line on departmental expenses contributing to presenting a responsible budget for 2026.

Overall, the Township's operating budget is only increasing \$41,086 or .71%. This includes all the Township's municipal departments.

The single biggest pressure on the budget this year is employee and retiree health insurance.

Because health-insurance costs are recurring, we'll need to address the structural side of benefits for 2027 and beyond. Throughout 2026 we need to evaluate options and cost-containment strategies and reporting back publicly as decisions are made.

Mayor Rubenstein questioned why debt service is dropping off. Ashleigh explained that the permanent debt is dropping. Asked why the cap improvement fund is down \$92k. Mr. Sabatini explained that we saw a one-time contribution that was offset by fund balance was removed and \$107k was shifted back. There is still \$60k in ARP funds remaining.

Mayor Rubenstein said that we cannot rely on interest rates, does not want to use any of the fund balance. The rest of the council members present agreed.

Mr. Sabatini suggested taking \$350k from fund balance into capital improvement funds for a one-time expense. Leaving \$500k in the fund balance.

The Mayor and Council agreed with Mr. Sabatini's suggestion.

RESOLUTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION – Motion by Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor, to go into executive session and adopt the below resolution.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, P. L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

- A. Attorney Client Privilege Communication
- General
- B. Contract Negotiations – USI – Health Benefits Consultant

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Township of Byram, that the public shall be excluded from discussion of the following matters:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minutes will be kept on file in the Municipal Clerk's office, and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes shall be made public.

BYRAM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL

Certification: I certify that the Byram Township Council adopted the above resolution on January 20, 2026.

Cynthia Church, Municipal Clerk

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion	x				
2nd			x		
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION - Motion by Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor to return to open session at 7:30 p.m. All members were in favor. Motion Carried.

FLAG SALUTE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to approve the agenda with the addition of Resolution No. 044-2026 - Health Benefits Consultant option B - USI

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x	x	x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

SWEARING IN OF SERGEANT – CHRIS SPALDO – Was sworn in by Mayor Rubenstein
Chief Dellicker read the following:

Sgt. Chris Spaldo was hired by the Byram Twp Police Dept in July 2020 and graduated from the 95th Basic Police Officer's Class of the Morris County Public Safety Training Academy in December 2020. Since January 2025, Chris has been assigned to the Detective Bureau. In addition to working with the community's youth at our schools as an Instructor for the L.E.A.D (Law Enforcement Against Drugs) program since his first year, Chris volunteers his time with youth sports organizations and has been a Scout Leader since 2006. Before joining the Police Department, Chris spent ten years working in investigations for retail companies and the NJ Office of the Attorney General. Joined today by Jennifer, Jackson, and Jordan.

HOLIDAY HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST WINNERS

- 1st Place – 16 Carlson Lane
- 2nd Place – 22 Little Paint Way
- 3rd Place – 24 Lynn Drive

PROCLAMATION – School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey – January 2026 – Mayor Rubenstein read aloud the proclamation. The School Board President was in attendance and thanked the mayor for the proclamation.

PROCLAMATION – Arbor Day – April 30, 2026 - Mayor Rubenstein read aloud the proclamation

TOWNSHIP MANAGER, MAYOR, AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Township Manager – The 2026 Budget will be introduced on March 3rd with the adoption on April 7th. The Township will be going out for bid for streets and roads.

Mayor Rubenstein – Had an open space meeting where they discussed and identified existing and potential for new trails. They would like to create a 3-mile loop trail. The Open Space Committee are negotiating that now.

Councilwoman Franco – 2026 Byram Fest planning is underway, the Recreation Committee has defined a committee to work with Debbie on this. The date set is August 22, 2026. Upcoming Events/Trips/Programs brochure on your desks and on the table- lots of great new things coming from our Recreation department.

Councilman Gallagher – Board of Education meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2026. Thanked the DPW for the fantastic job during the last storm.

Councilman Proctor – Planning Board meeting was held on January 15, 2026, the next meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2026

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION I

Motion by Councilwoman Franco second by Councilman Proctor to open to the public. All members were in favor.

No comments.

Motion by Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor to close to the public. All members were in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 6, 2026, Regular & Closed Session Meeting Minutes - Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to approve minutes.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

Approval to release of 2025 Closed Session Minutes with redactions - Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to approve the 2025 closed session redacted minutes.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

CONSENT AGENDA – All are considered to be routine by the Members of the Township Council and will be enacted on by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a citizen or Council member requests in which event the item may be removed from the general order of business and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda. Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- A. Resolution No. 038-2026 – Resolution Authorizing Byram Township Fire Department to Conduct a Bucket Drop – April 25th, 26th & October 10th, 11th 2026
- B. Resolution No. 039-2026 – Resolution to Amend the 2026 Temporary Budget
- C. Resolution No. 040-2026 - Authorize the Purchase of one (1) 2026 Ford F350 Regular Cab 4x4 Pick Up with Optional Equipment for the Township of Byram Department of Public Works
- D. Resolution No. 041-2026 - Authorize the Purchase of one (1) 2026 Ford F550 Regular Cab/Chassis 4x4 DRW with Optional Equipment for the Township of Byram Department of Public Works
- E. Resolution No. 042-2026 – 2026 Temporary Capital Budget Resolution
- F. Resolution No. 043-2026 – Resolution for Member Participation in the Passaic County Cooperative Pricing System ID#38PCCP

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

RESOLUTION NO. 044-2026 – USI Option B

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

BILL LIST – January 20, 2026 – Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to approve the bill list.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

ORDINANCE – 1st Reading / Introduction

ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14)

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this ordinance is to exceed the State mandated COLA percentage of 2% and increase to 3.5% and to bank the difference between the Township's final appropriation subject to the cap and 3.5%.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x

No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

BE IT RESOLVED, that said Ordinance shall be further considered for final passage at the meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Byram on February 3, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 10 Mansfield Drive, Byram Township, at which time and place all persons interested shall be given an opportunity to be heard.

- AN ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE A CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR IMPROVEMENTS OF VARIOUS STREETS AND LOCATIONS IN AND BY THE TOWNSHIP AND TO PROVIDE FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$744,548.00**

Purpose Statement: Reconstruction and Resurfacing of Various Streets and Locations in and by the Township including without limitation, Sleepy Hollow Rd, Various Roads in the Forest Lakes Community, Roadways along Tamarack Road, Various Roads in the Eat Brookwood Community, Mountain Heights Dr, Mountain View Terr, Circle Dr and other streets and roads in the Township to be determined including reconstruction of culverts and headwalls and all curbing, drainage facilities/inlets, landscaping, reclamation, milling, structures, roadway surfaces including milling and paving, oil and stone, cape sealing or similar application, crack sealing, roadway striping and repairs, all materials, equipment, site work and engineering costs.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion			x		
2nd		x			
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

BE IT RESOLVED, that said Ordinance shall be further considered for final passage at the meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Byram on February 3, 2026, at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 10 Mansfield Drive, Byram Township, at which time and place all persons interested shall be given an opportunity to be heard.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- A. Police Department Community Project Funding – Byram Township was offered a \$1.25 million federal grant to go toward the construction of a new police department. Byram Township has 30 days to accept or decline the grant. The project will cost about \$3Million. The Township would need to bond the remaining amount.

George Albrech – encourages the Township Council to not turn down the grant.

Todd Sodano – supports the acceptance of the grant.

Patty Poland – Asked if this includes the retrofitting of the tax office. Mayor Rubenstein said no it does not, a small amount of money would be used to retrofit the finance department.

Chief Thomas Dellicker – Supports the acceptance of the grant.

Motion by Mayor Rubenstein Second by Councilman Proctor to unite the council to move forward to accomplish what needs to be done to secure the documents for the grant.

	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion					x
2nd			x		
Yes	x	x	x		x
No					
Abstain					
Absent				x	

- B. Local Recreation Improvement Grant - Football Field Lights: See link below
[New Jersey Department of Community Affairs | FY 2026 Local Recreation Improvement Grant \(LRIG\)](#)

This is for the replacement of the existing lights at the CO Johnson football field.

There will be a resolution to approve at the next meeting. The council was in full support of replacing the lighting at the football field at CO Johnson.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION II

Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to open to the public.

No Comments.

Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to close to the public.

RESOLUTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION – Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher, to go into executive session and adopt the below resolution.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, P. L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

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BYRAM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL

Certification: I certify that the Byram Township Council adopted the above resolution on January 20, 2026.

Cynthia Church, Municipal Clerk


	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion	✓				
2nd			✓		
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓
No					
Abstain					
Absent				✓	

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION - Motion by Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher to return to open session at 9:30 p.m. All members were in favor. Motion Carried.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Councilman Proctor, second by Councilman Gallagher, and with all members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m. All members were in favor. Motion carried.


 Cynthia Church, RMC
 Township Clerk


 Alexander Rubenstein, Mayor