

**TOWNSHIP OF BYRAM  
TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 21, 2025  
TRAINING SESSION – 6:30 P.M.  
REGULAR SESSION – 7:30 P.M.**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER** – Deputy Mayor Franco 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.byrampwp.org/index.php/town\\_hall/township\\_council](https://www.byrampwp.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, absent; Councilman Proctor, absent; Councilman Roseff, here; Mayor Rubenstein, (6:35pm). 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 aloud the following message:

Mr. Sabatini directs everyone to the Township's Website and under the 2025 Municipal Budget Information you will find all the documentation and details supporting the 2025 Budget Plan.

Please see the link to the preliminary view of the proposed budget updated in mid-December.  
<https://www.byrampwp.org/useruploads/files/12122024%202025%20Budget%20Workbook.pdf>  
Please see link to the 2025 Proposed Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Program which includes updates  
<https://www.byrampwp.org/useruploads/files/01132025%20Capital%20Budget%202025%20-%202027.pdf>

*The 2025 Budget process started with the Township Department Heads in July 2024.*

*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 2025.*

*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 2025 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 2024 Budget was kicked off with a Budget Goals and Objectives discussion with the Mayor and Council in August.*

*Proposed Schedule:*

- *Introduction by March 4 - Byram is Group 2 municipal budget and subject to review by the DLGS*
- *Adoption by April 1*

*For purposes of tonight's discussion:*

- *Preliminary Budget Message - provided December 5, 2024*
- *December 13 -presented an update to the preliminary budget.*
- *Summary of changes as follows:*

*Appropriations:*

- *Workers Comp – Increase of \$2,395.00 – 3%*
- *General Liability – Increase of \$9,070.00 – 3%*
- *Originally anticipated a 7% increase*
- *Reallocated monies from Heating Oil to Gas/Diesel too – net effect is \$0.00 on the budget*

*Revenue:*

- *Interest & Cost on Taxes - Decreasing \$5,000*

*As presented, this budget plan has property taxes totaling \$9,507,465. This is a 3.51% or \$332,671 increase of the tax levy.*

**GENERAL COMMENT:**

- *This years budget is more a conversation related to revenue, particularly anticipation of interest income, and not necessarily appropriations. And, on the appropriations side this a discussion of items that are not necessarily that associate with departmental budgets.*

**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 \$3,999,050 which is an increase of \$47,300 or 1.20% from 2024.*

*\*Note - PD salaries are being kept flat.*

**Operational Expenses:**

*Operational expenses for all departments total \$1,670,204 which is an increase of \$15,531 or 0.94%.*

**Changes of Importance:**

- *Administration: Technology - move to Sophos MDR - \$5,000 (One-time and recurring cost) (Managed Detection and Response: A cybersecurity service that monitors networks for suspicious activity and responds to threats) & New Sophos Firewall Lease = \$2640 for year.*
- *PD Operating Reduction (\$19,000) - accommodated intergovernmental transfer in 2024 - offset by FB.*
- *Court Increase - 2% - \$3,000*
- *Note - no increase in contribution to LES - kept at \$6,000*
- *ROAD REPAIR & MAINT OE - increased \$5,000 to support hazardous tree removal*
- *Increased Fleet Budget for PD and Fire - \$7,500:*
  - *PD: Repairs and maintenance of 11 vehicles, two (2) ATV's, ATV Trailer & one (1) Message Trailer. All four (4) road job cars, Detective F150 & front-line explorer out of warranty. Three (3) front-line will be out of warranty in 2025. Increase in parts costs & maintenance cost of Tahoe's.*
  - *Fire: For repairs of seven (7) pieces of apparatus & chief's truck (currently only vehicle under warranty)*
  - *I am working with Mike to get a quote on repairs to Tanker 5. Preliminarily, it appears the cost of the repairs are around \$20,000. We may be recommending using an increase in fund balance to offset this cost as this exceeds the fleet budget for the Fire Department.*
- *Vehicle Expenses - increased \$5,000 - 2024 Expenditures for Vehicle = \$69,379.87. State Contract Pricing Updated for 2025 Vehicles w/increase of \$3,000*
- *BOH - Gypsy Moth Spraying - Increased over \$6,000*
- *CELEBRATION PUBLIC EVENTS - increased \$3,000 to \$28,000*

*Overall, the Township's operating budget is increasing \$62,831 or 1.12%. This includes all the Township's municipal departments.*

**Other Categories of Expenses:**

*The following categories of other expenses are driving the increase of the 2025 budget and each category as a percentage increase exceeds the annual Cost of Living Cap Adjustment (COLA - 2.5%) for calendar year 2025.*

- **Garbage/Recycling:**
  - *Annual Garbage/Recycling Contract increase of \$12,000.*
  - *The SCMUA tipping fees for solid waste remain at \$107 per ton for 2025.*
- **Group Insurance:**
  - *Increase of \$131,000/9.57%*
  - *Group Health Insurance was updated for changes of census and State Health Benefits rate increases (Active Employees 16.3%, Early Retirees 17.9%, and Medicare Eligible Retirees 7.0% and a prescription drug rate change of 16.5%) as well as changes for Medicare reimbursements, waivers and employee life changes.*
  - *Less Employees Waiving Health Benefits - 4 Actives & 3 Retirees - Total of 5 Waivers Paid-Out; 7 Waivers on Record (2 not eligible for Pay-Out) [Reduced \$22,000]*

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:**

- *January 13, 2025 - DRAFT 2025 Capital Budget 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.*
- *2025 Proposed Capital Budget includes updates discussed.*
- *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 2025 is \$636,423 which is a slight increase (\$2,200) from 2024. (Still includes a \$195,000 that was to be a one-time funding to the Capital Improvement Fund which in 2023 was offset by an increase in Fund Balance.)*

- 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 -

**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 – increased \$5,000
- Municipal Court – increased \$5,000.
- Interest on Costs on Taxes – reduced \$5,000.

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

LFN 2024-20: Municipal Aid and the FY2026 State Budget After the FY2026 State budget is proposed, the Division will notify municipalities as to the amount of Energy Tax Receipts aid that can be anticipated in their budgets and any other aid as presented in the Governor’s budget. Aid amounts from 2024 may be utilized in the introduced 2025 budget for planning purposes.

State Aid (Garden State Preservation Trust) – reduced \$9,702  
 State Aid (Municipal Relief Fund Aid) – eliminated \$60,025.27

- Receipts from Delinquent Taxes – no change.

**INTEREST INCOME AND FUND BALANCE:**

**Interest:**

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

Interest Rates - reducing:  
 January 2024 - 5.59%  
 December 2024 – 4.62%

**Calculation of Interest Income:**

- Estimate average monthly balance of cash and investments.
- Apply the anticipated average interest rate.
- Adjust for any known or potential changes in balances, such as increased spending, debt service payment or changes in tax collection rates.

Still sitting on significant balance in accounts - when spent this will have direct impact on interest income.

Still holding \$570k of ARP \$\$

Appropriating \$550K out of CIF towards New Police Department Building

Still have \$608k allocated to Streets & Roads which we have plans on utilizing in 2025

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:**

The Annual Financial Statement is not due until March 7. We have completed preliminary calculation for the regeneration of Fund Balance.

We have estimated that we have regenerated about \$200,000 more than used in 2024. Considering over \$300,000 was collected in excess of what was anticipated in interest income for 2024 this presents as a concern.

The total amount of Fund Balance that was committed to the 2024 budget was \$1,785,000. This is the same amount that is being recommended for 2025.

Since 2021, there has been an increased (\$219,500) dependency on the use of fund balance to support operations. The use of fund balance needs to be assessed for sustainability in future budget cycles.

- Fund Balance is generated by several sources:
- Primarily is including cancellation of budget reserves from 2023. (Departments spending less than appropriated in their budgets)
  - Revenues more than anticipated amounts from 2024.
  - Other, receipts from delinquent taxes from 2024 and added and omitted taxes collected for when construction improvements are deemed complete by the Tax Assessor.

Fund Balance is used as an revenue source in the budget (about 14%) of the budget. Dependent on the regeneration of Fund Balance.

KEY PRACTICES: Conservative Revenue Forecasting and Tight Expenditure Controls.

**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.
- Let's invest in priorities responsibly, ensuring we leave the municipality in strong financial health for future years.
- We highly recommend on-time 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.

Mr. Sabatini suggested taking funds from the fund balance to help supplement fleet (tanker issue) and to support record scanning.

Councilman Roseff:

- questioned the interest earned on investment being around \$800,000, report needs to be updated online to reflect that figure.
- asked where ratables show in the spreadsheet, Ashleigh said it shows through not to be raised through taxes.
- asked about the fund balance.
- asked for the forecast figures to be sent to him.
- would like to start looking at the cost of Health Insurance. Mayor Rubenstein said this should be a separate discussion as there are many aspects of it that will need to be considered.
- asked about the OEM delineation change.
- would like to focus on roads.

Mayor Rubenstein would like to focus on scanning files in 2025.

Mayor Rubenstein would like to see some for the fund balance to move to capital. To supplement the tanker and scanning project. Approx \$250,000.

**FLAG SALUTE**

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

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

**PROCLAMATION** – School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey – January 2025

**PROCLAMATION** – Arbor Day – April 25, 2025

**SWEARING IN OF BYRAM TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS**

Shawn Pond – Chief

Dave Morse - President

Derek Plantamura – Assist. Chief  
Dave Blakely – Captain  
Frank Dilberto – Captain  
Mark Hopkins – Lieut.  
Gary Card – Lieut.

Garrett Lonzello – Vice President  
Casey Margo –Treasurer  
Andrea Zanetti - Secretary

**SWEARING IN OF NEW FIRE DEPARTMENT MEMBER** – Robert T. Monero

**RECOGNITION OF RESIGNATION OF PLANNING BOARD MEMBER** – Eric Serrilli

**TOWNSHIP MANAGER, MAYOR, AND COUNCIL REPORTS**

**Township Manager** – the introduction to the Budget will be held on March 4<sup>th</sup> with the adoption on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Cory Stoner will be at the next meeting to present the renewals of the quarry and junk yard licenses. There were a couple unfortunate incidents that took place over the last weeks in Byram Township. There was a shooting incident involving several Byram Township Police Officers, this incident is still under investigation and will release updates as they have them. Mr. Sabatini expressed his appreciation to the commitment of the Byram Township Police Officers and to their dedication to protecting our community. There was also a fatal motor vehicle accident involving long term residents of Byram whom was also the aunt of the Byram Township Clerk, Cindy Church. Mr. Sabatini passed on his condolences to the entire Church Family and friends.

**Mayor Rubenstein** – CAG Meeting was held last week, had a change of design that will go out for bid soon. Construction is anticipated to begin over the summer.

**Councilwoman Franco** –  
Attended the Southern Chamber of Commerce meeting.

*We hosted 42 people at the Devil’s Game on January 14<sup>th</sup>. All who attended had a great time and after the game we had a group photo taken on the ice.*  
*We finalized our Spring Broadway Show trip, it will be Aladdin on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Flyers have gone out. The trip is \$140.00 per person, leaving at 1:00 pm for a 3:00 pm show.*

*Due to the below zero temperature at night we have chosen to cancel this week’s ski club and add it February 12<sup>th</sup>. This is the best decision for all our students and chaperones.*

- Our Winter programs are doing well:*
- *Chef it up has 10 kids enrolled*
  - *Country Line Dance has 12 people enrolled*
  - *Senior Yoga gets between 9-15 people per session.*
  - *Mini Movers is finally taking off. We have 9 little one’s dancing weekly.*

*Residents are beginning to sign up for our Spring selections we have put in the Community Pass Catalog. We will be sending out a more formal booklet after we finalize 2 more programs. We are also doing work on the Summer, trying to work out final details with the school to add to the back end of their ESY & Summer Adventures camps. Our goal is to make a full day option for our working parents.*  
*Reminder the Recreation Department is holding the annual Coat Drive on January 26<sup>th</sup> at the Pets Supplies Plus in Byram from 11:00 am-1:00 pm*

*The Polar Plunge will be on February 16<sup>th</sup> at Lake Lackawanna Beach at 10:00 am.*

**Councilman Gallagher** – Board of Education meeting Wednesday February 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Councilman Proctor** – Planning Board meeting was held on January 16<sup>th</sup>. The Planning Board appointed a new planner.

**Councilman Roseff** – Nothing to Report

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION I**

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

Andrew Schwarts – Following up on the nuisance code. Mayor Rubenstein is expecting to meet on this soon with the Manager and Chief of Police.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

January 7, 2025, Regular & Closed Session Meeting Minutes - Motion by Councilwoman Franco, seconded by Councilman Proctor to approve minutes.

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

**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 Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- A. Resolution No. 036-2025 – Resolution to Support a Forest Stand Improvement Program on the Open Space Parcels Know as the Cranberry Overlook
- B. Resolution No. 037-2025 – Committing Byram Township to Comply with the Affordable Housing Obligations
- C. Resolution No. 038-2025 – Resolution Authorizing the Refund of Redemption Monies to Outside Lien Holder – Block 221, Lot 1 - 216 Route 206
- D. Resolution No. 039-2025 – Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Gracie & Harrigan Consulting Foresters, to Prepare the 2025-2029 Community Forestry Management Plan
- E. Resolution No. 040-2025 – Resolution of the Township of Byram, Authorizing the Foreclosure of Tax Sale Certificates Shown on the Attached Foreclosure List
- F. Resolution No. 041-2025 – Authorization to Execute Change Order No. 1 for Proposed Resurfacing of Stonehenge Lane – Net Decrease \$650.02
- G. Resolution No. 042-2025 – Authorization to Execute Change Order No. 1 for Proposed Resurfacing of Manor Drive – Net Decrease \$565.39
- H. Resolution No. 043-2025 – Authorization to Execute Change Order No. 1 for Proposed Resurfacing of Various Streets – Net Decrease \$622.24
- I. Resolution No. 044-2025 – Authorization to Purchase One (1) Alcotest Machine for the Township of Byram Police Department – Not to Exceed \$22,822.50

Tom Collins provided an explanation for Resolution 037-2025. Within 48 hours a judgment will be filed with the superior court.

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

**BILL LIST** – January 21, 2025 – Motion by Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor to approve the bill list.

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

**ORDINANCE – 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2.5% 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	x
No					
Abstain					
Absent					

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 4, 2025, 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**

**Eagle Scout Project Municipal Sign –**

Mike Orgera met with a perspective eagle scout whom is looking to replace the sign at the municipal complex as his project.

The plan is for the township to purchase the sign, and he will handle the footing, installation, flower bed around sign and solar lights to light it. He is at the point that he needs commitment from the township on purchasing the sign, design of sign before he can submit his paperwork to the boy scout council for the project. He has received quotes and basic design. One of the quotes has been retracted. The pricing ranges from \$9,000 to \$12,000. He is also reaching back out to the vendors to make sure they are quoting the same sign.

The council would like the design to be modeled off the sign at Lee Hill Safety Building. Would like it to say Byram Township Municipal Complex.

**Cranberry Lake Pedestrian Bridge -**

- *Mayor Rubenstein received an update from the NJDEP regarding the status of the Cranberry Lake Footbridge. A few months ago, the council agreed to act as an intermediary (subject to our approval and acceptance of terms) for the grant between DOT and DEP.*
- *The DEP has worked with DOT to finally begin an engineering review of the bridge, which will result in an updated analysis and projected cost estimate. It was said this could take up to 6 months to complete. This review is being performed by an outside engineering firm, contracted by DOT.*
- *There is a follow-up Teams call on February 10<sup>th</sup> that will involve folks from DEP and DOT to discuss next steps in the grant process. The mayor continuously expressed to the DEP that the Township does not have the resources, both human and financial, to support this endeavor and that we will have to be made whole and protected by both agencies in the project, and they have continuously agreed to that sentiment.*

Mr. Sabatini said that this will be an agreement where the funds will flow through the Township. He would like to know if this will be a reimbursable grant where the township will foot the funds? Mr. Sabatini, Mayor Rubenstein, and Councilman Proctor will be at the meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION II**

Motion by Councilwoman Franco, Second by Councilman Proctor to open to the public.

No Comments.

Motion by Councilwoman Franco, Second by Councilman Proctor to close to the public.

**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
    - Shared Services
  - B. Personnel

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 21, 2025.

Cynthia Church, Municipal Clerk

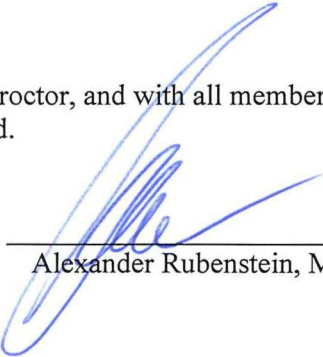
	Councilwoman Franco	Councilman Gallagher	Councilman Proctor	Councilman Roseff	Mayor Rubenstein
Motion	x				
2nd			x		
Yes	x	x	x	x	x
No					
Abstain					
Absent					

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

On the motion of Councilwoman Franco, second by Councilman Proctor, and with all members in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. All members were in favor. Motion carried.

  
Cynthia Church, RMC  
Township Clerk

  
Alexander Rubenstein, Mayor