



The Township of Byram
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TO: Township Council

FROM: Joseph W. Sabatini, Township Manager

DATE: July 1, 2025

RE: 2026 Municipal Budget – Goals and Objectives

The Manager and staff prepare recommendations in the form of a draft budget document, and the Council must ensure that the adopted budget satisfies the needs of the community and serves the best interests of the Township. The approval and adoption of the Municipal Budget includes the budgets for the Open Space Tax and the Sewer Utility.

The 2026 Budget Process has started with the Township Department Heads. The Department Heads received the following instructions for their 2026 budget requests:

1. Each sub-account in the department's operating budget starts at zero.
2. Provide detailed justification of each sub-account identifying the good or service requested with budgeted expense.
3. No increase from the 2025 budget is expected and we should be targeting any reduction in the budget that can be sustained.
4. Populate the "2026 Requested" column with the total for each sub-account.
5. Identify any discretionary spending or other spending that can be cut from the budget. Prepare a summary of the impact of the reductions.
6. Meetings will be scheduled in September with each department head to review the budget requests.

CFO and Manager will populate Salary and Wage lines. All Collective Bargaining Agreements expire at the end of 2026. Administrative Employee salaries will be updated to support a 2% increase 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 execute the plan. The budget is,

- A statement of priorities for the community
- A management blueprint for providing services
- The document that translates policies into action
- A tool for protecting the government's long-term financial health
- A communication document for the public.

The Mayor and Council should identify the goals and objectives for 2026 to identify resources including funding needs to execute the plan. It is critical to link policies and money through the annual budget.

It is planned that all budget meetings will be done as advertised meetings of the Mayor and Council. I am planning for the first budget meeting to be scheduled for the fall. The staff is prepared to support as many budget workshops as the Mayor and Council need to support adoption of the budget in early 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Joseph Sabatini, Township Manager

Mayor and Council individual goals and objectives for 2026

Mayor Rubenstein:

1. As we have seen, drainage systems continue to be an area of concern in the town, with increased instances of failure of aging infrastructure. I'd like to see an increase in the annual allocation for repairs and improvements.
2. Clothing allowance. This does not have to be a large amount of money, but it sure would be nice for the Township to supply maybe a polo shirt and/or tee shirt with the town logo on it to wear at the workplace from time to time. I know now that most of the staff (myself included) buy these items from our own pockets. I feel that there should be some level of allowance here. Many of us are proud that we work for or represent the town, it would be nice to have something to wear to show it.
3. 2026 for me would be the beginning of substantial improvements at CO Johnson Park. Specifically, refurbishment of the field house, replacement of the football announcer booth, walking path improvements, WiFi and cameras, better storage facilities for sporting clubs, and so forth. I know a lot of this is reliant on the pending DEP application, but it would seem some of these projects could get started and completed in 2026.
4. Continuing technology enhancements in the office. I would like to see further adoption of the available technologies to us to continue to modernize how we store and interact with our data and documents. This includes digitization of older documents, stronger and more efficient usage of cloud services, and so forth.

Councilman Roseff:

1. Roads need increased immediate attention. There should be a major shift in CapEx spending from buying vehicles and equipment to roads. Some time ago, Byram returned to an oil/stone style maintenance program for parts of our community. This approach has extended the life of the old asphalt pavement but the need for new paving is increasingly clear. Some of our roadwork has also been delayed due to gas line installation which now necessitates a steeper addressment ramp up. In recent periods, we have significantly renewed and enhanced our Police and DPW vehicle fleet and equipment. It is time for a strong shift in focus towards roadwork.
2. Some stormwater improvements should be planned for. The State has increased focus on stormwater infrastructure, and we have some projects outlined in the Lake Management Study.
3. Let's increase pursuit of grant opportunities, be they State, Federal or other, for road and stormwater improvements.
4. The current level of fund balance is well above what is needed and while it may be reduced somewhat from the capital improvements that have been authorized or planned it should be reduced further. We have taxed our residents, and they should see a return on this taxation.
5. For 1 year, provide materials and hire some craftsmen for only seasonal help for DPW to demo the interior of the Field House and improve its functionality. This is not a huge project request requiring all sorts of engineering help. We may also want to invite volunteers.
6. We have received large revenue flows from earned interest on our reserve balances, but this may not continue at this level. A goodly chunk of our various reserve balances are from the extraordinary gifts we received that are being spent down on various CapEx projects. Also, a conservative view of the next year or two would forecast lower interest rates. This line item should be anticipated to shrink substantially. We need to offset this by not increasing our overhead costs.
7. There is no reason that park improvements should lead to increased taxes. Let's make sure we keep our promise to fund these improvements through the current level of the Open Space tax.
8. Before entering into employee union contract discussions, we need to better understand our management options for employee health benefits. We should hire a consultant for parts of this work.
9. While it is not a direct budget issue for next year, there is risk that the State DOT work at the Andover Tunnel will kick off a time period where auxiliary Township roads will be more heavily used by cars and trucks. We should make sure, and get written commitments, that the State is committed to repairing and repaving these impacted roads as part of the overall Andover Tunnel repair budget.

Councilwoman Franco:

1. Streets and roads getting back on track
2. Municipal Building - I have not given up yet
3. CO Johnson Park plans - dog park and circular road path
4. CO Johnson Building - perhaps a possibility for grant to update the structure

5. East Brookwood - The Well House and Pump Station on Brookwood Road - Neighbors are getting impatient with the lack of paving and building progress. The property is very sloppy, and we need to push Veolia/EPA to continue to keep the lot neat. I realize it is a "construction project", but for it to constantly be an eyesore is not right.
6. Entrance to Forest Lakes Drive from Rt 206 as well as the preparations for the Pequest construction zone.

Councilman Gallagher:

1. Work on the roads and infrastructure.
2. Like to see us upgrade the fieldhouse building at CO along with the building at NG field.

Councilman Proctor:

1. COJ Improvements
2. Fieldhouse Upgrade – Renovations and modernization to improve community usability. Meeting Space?
3. Road Maintenance and Improvement Program - Continue to effectively utilize the 10yr improvement plan. Maybe refresh PCI survey?
4. Police Department Upgrade - If we are going to see this project through, we should do so in a fiscally responsible manner
5. Finance Department and Meeting Room Planning – Determine potential relocation plan
6. Seek and utilize available grants to offset local costs for capital initiatives
7. Maintain strong fund balance to support fiscal stability and emergency preparedness. Decrease dependency for capital projects.
8. Limit municipal tax increases while sustaining service levels
9. Continue shared services exploration with regional partners to reduce costs
10. Determine and act on best ways to combat SHBP increases