

Fiscal Year 2017 Proposed Budget Message: General Fund

Dear Mayor, Town Council Members, and Berwyn Heights Residents:

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 proposed budget is the first in several fiscal years not needing to utilize previous years' surplus to balance the budget due to the increase in revenue from real property taxes and income taxes. The budget for FY 2017 is scheduled to be introduced at the Town Meeting on April 13 and adopted at the May 11 Town Meeting, as required in the Town's Charter.

This proposed budget holds the real property tax rates at current levels of \$0.50 per \$100 of assessed value for residential real property for the operating budget and \$0.03 per \$100 of assessed value for the dedicated road tax. The personal property tax rates, paid by businesses, also remains unchanged at \$1.25 per \$100 of assessed value and \$0.075 per \$100 of assessed value for the dedicated road tax. The proposed budget achieves balance through:

1. An increase in real property tax revenue as a result of the new real property assessments;
2. Continued growth in income tax receipts driven by rising numbers of multi-income families and more working adults occupying rental properties instead of college students;
3. Achieving operational efficiencies related to telephone service and employee benefits;
4. Modest increases in Police, Code, and business license fines with the expectation that departments will be fully staffed;
5. Sale of surplus vehicles and equipment in the Town's fleet.

The following are expenditure highlights of the FY 2017 proposed budget:

- **Administration** – Funds administrative functions like finance and human resources and the maintenance and operation of the municipal building, Town Center, and Senior Center with three full-time employees and two part-time employees.
- **Code Compliance and Transportation** – Supports the Town Council's commitment to upholding community standards through a full-time Code Supervisor, 35 part-time weekly staff hours for Code inspection and administrative support, and management of the Town's Call-a-Bus program.
- **Police** – Provides 24/7 police protection with eight full-time officers and one full-time clerk, leading to historically low crime rates in Town. BHPD maintains community partnerships with the B.H. Elementary School and the Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness Committee, and provides traffic enforcement through the speed camera program.
- **Public Health and Safety** – Supports the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department with a \$10,000 contribution and allocates \$3,000 for the Emergency Preparedness/Neighborhood Watch Committee.
- **Public Works** – Funds the collection of refuse, bulk trash, yard waste, and recyclable materials. Eight full-time employees and one part-time employee are proposed in order maintain quality levels of service in infrastructure and facilities, with a FY 2017 focus on replacement of signage to meet new reflectivity standards and working with the urban forest consultants.
- **Parks and Recreation** – Continues to fund Recreation Council special events such as Berwyn Heights Day, with devoted resources to maintain Pontiac Street Field and Pop's Park. The Boys and Girls Club requested the Town's financial assistance with the electricity bill at Sports Park and \$2,500 is proposed in this budget.
- **Insurance and Employee Benefits** – Anticipates transitioning to a municipal health pool for cost savings and a better benefits plan for employees, with slight increases expected in premiums for insurance the Town is required to carry. \$750 is allocated to facilitate the Town's acceptance of credit cards in-person and on the Town's redesigned website. Funding is also provided for the Town's match for participation in the State of Maryland's pension system.
- **Transfers** – Allocates the full annual amount (\$93,400) needed to replenish the vehicle replacement fund; \$189,672 for the Infrastructure Improvement Reserve Fund (\$90,216 from Highway User

Revenues and \$99,456 generated from the dedicated real and personal property road tax rates); and a transfer of \$200,000 to the Greenbelt Station Reserve Fund.

- **Capital Projects** – Proposes replacement of heating and cooling equipment at the end of its useful life in the Town Office for greater energy efficiency; adding the business license module to Code’s existing software package to streamline the licensing process; the upgrade of analog model phones at work stations with digital models to increase employee productivity and effectiveness; and security improvements like cameras and access control devices at Town facilities currently lacking these tools to protect Town employees and property.

Residents are encouraged to participate in the budget process at the public hearings held during the Town Meetings scheduled for April 13 and May 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully,

Jessica Cowles
Town Administrator