



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Jodie Kulpa-Eddy

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Christopher Brittan-Powell (Mayor Pro Tem)
Shinita Hemby
Faustino Menjivar
Jason W. Papanikolas

Budget Worksession Minutes Town Council Chamber March 4, 2023 | 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Mayor Jodie Kulpa-Eddy let residents know that the meeting start time was being delayed briefly due to technical difficulties. She called the meeting to order at 9:08AM.

Present were Councilmember Shinita Hemby, Councilmember Faustino Menjivar, with Councilmember Jason Papanikolas attending remotely via telephone. Mayor Pro-Tempore Brittan-Powell joined by Zoom at 9:24AM, at which time CM Papanikolas joined via Zoom as well. Also present were Interim Town Manager Peter Jones, Town Clerk Melanie Friesen, Town Treasurer Mike Lightfield, Code Compliance Director Hollyce Goodwin, Chief of Police Kenneth Antolik and Lieutenant Daniel Unger, and Public Works Director Brad Pudner.

1. Approval of Agenda

CM Menjivar moved to approve the agenda. CM Hemby seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously 4:0 as MPT Brittan-Powell had not yet joined the meeting.

2. FY2024 Budget Presentation, ITM Jones

a. Budget Summary Memo (Enhancements, Tax Rates)

ITM Jones reviewed the summary budget memo, highlighting a proposed across-the-board COLA salary increase for staff of 2%, citing the high inflation rate experienced over the last two years. He shared his recommendation to use the Public Safety Reserve Fund to pay for a new vehicle for the Police Department, accessing the General Fund Reserve to pay for the staff salary increase. He also highlighted the addition of the Red-Light Camera program both in revenues and expenditures.

ITM Jones reviewed the two proposed revenue scenarios which include maintaining the current tax rate at \$.545/\$100 of assessed value or instituting the Constant Yield Tax Rate which would be a tax rate of \$.5187/\$100 of assessed value. There is a difference of \$112,309 in potential revenue between the two scenarios.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked for clarification about the budget numbers that ITM Jones is discussing, as he also shared comparisons of what the Constant Yield Tax Rate for FY23 would have been. TT Lightfield clarified that the two revenue projections for the FY24 budgets will be at FY24 Constant Yield Tax Rate (0.5187/\$100) and at the current tax rate of \$.545/\$100 of assessed value.

ITM Jones then reviewed the FY23 adopted budget, Year-To-Date actual expenditures, and FY24 proposed budget totals for each department and highlighted comments on each department that explain the proposed changes. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the source of the revenue for the Public Safety Reserve Fund, which is being proposed as the source for a

new police vehicle. TT Lightfield explained that it comes from speed camera revenue. ITM Jones shared that there is a considerable increase in the Public Works budget as there is a request for a roof repair. Additionally, in Streets and Sanitation, there is an increase based on a proposed reorganization of staff and the purchase of new vehicles and equipment. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the increases in Street Lighting. Director Pudner clarified that there was a repair to the school flashing safety light which caused the increase. TT Lightfield reviewed that the estimated actuals for the rest of the fiscal year are based on the year-to-date actuals, divided by 7 (months) and then times 12 (months).

After reviewing the major items as part of his Budget Summary, ITM Jones highlighted that there is currently about a \$450,000 gap between revenues and expenditures.

b. Real Property Tax Forecast (Revenues)

TT Lightfield shared that the forecast is based on both the current tax rate and the Constant Yield Tax Rate, and that ITM Jones has the breakdown of regular real estate tax revenue, the road repair fund, and how we capture the public safety taxing district revenues.

c. Draft Budget Line Items (i.e., spreadsheets, including Fund Balance and Reserves)

Rather than review the entirety of the budget in this section, Mayor Kulpa-Eddy suggested that they begin to go over the departmental budgets and review line items through that process.

d. Public Safety Taxing District

ITM Jones shared that this will be covered at another meeting as this report was not yet ready.

3. Administration Department

ITM Jones highlighted the Administration enhancement requests, including keyless entry to Town Hall and Town Center, new windows at Town Hall, an outdoor electronic communication board, outdoor bulletin board replacements and a replacement pull-down screen for the Town Center. He noted that the replacement screen may yet be purchased during FY23.

a. Discussion

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the air cards listed in the Mayor and Council section, wondering if these were necessary and if these costs could be reduced. She also asked about where the cost for translation services will be captured, as it will no longer be part of the Police Department expenditures. There was discussion regarding if staff would be receiving merit or COLA increases. There was discussion regarding the increase in legal expenses and how to predict those costs. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy also asked that we reach out to the utility companies and attempt to determine rate increases and incorporate those into the budget. MPT Brittan-Powell reiterated his desire from a previous meeting to add more modules to the software package the Town uses, which will increase costs.

4. Code Compliance

Director Hollyce Goodwin shared her budget highlights for Code Compliance and shared the departmental goals for the upcoming fiscal year. She stated they plan to renew the Comcate compliance software subscription and described what they use the software for. She mentioned a desire to give staff a merit increase based on their improved performance and completion of continuing education through the International Code Council (ICC). She shared some of the neighboring communities and their COLA and merit increases as a reference. She explained that she has asked for a boost in the training line item as there are a number of classes through ICC she would like her staff to complete, such as diversity and inclusion training, situational awareness and 4th amendment training. There is also a slight increase on the line item for repairs on the Code Compliance Fleet as the vehicles are aging.

a. Discussion

CM Hemby stated that she believes this to be a well thought-out budget, expressing support for the training, especially on diversity and inclusion. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the equipment line-item decrease, when there may be a need to purchase new noise monitoring instruments. MPT Brittan-Powell asked about how some concerns that become public safety issues and police calls could possibly be addressed by Code Compliance prior to needing police intervention. He asked that there be a plan to fund for increased costs based on a potential increase in Code responsibilities. CM Hemby stated that there are other projects that Code is involved with, such as the teen volunteer program, that will add to what is asked of them. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about separating merit and COLA increases. CM Papanikolas asked for an explanation on the 4th Amendment training Director Goodwin is requesting. She explained that while typically this is a police issue, it also addresses the “search” process and how and when a Code officer can be on a property.

5. Parks, Recreation, Education and Civic Affairs

ITM Jones shared he reached out to each of the Town Organizations to ask if there were any adjustments that needed to be made in their budgets. He reported that all organizations either did not respond to the request or reported that they did not need any adjustments. He added that Mr. Smith from the Senior Center had made a suggestion that the Town set aside \$5000 for block parties. CM Papanikolas shared that he had reached out to groups to determine if they had lost any revenue due to Covid closures, but that most groups have stated that they are fairly flat in funding needs. He added that he would like to sit with the Green Team as some of their initiatives could likely use an increase in funding. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the addition of the Men’s League budget line item. ITM Jones explained the roundabout way in which the Men’s League reimbursement from M-NCPPC occurs and that this addition makes it easier to manage. CM Hemby asked about the maintenance and issues at Sports Park and Pontiac Field, with the goal of ensuring that the fields are maintained to keep the Town’s children safe. CM Menjivar added that the Boys and Girls Club doesn’t use the Pontiac fields very much. CM Papanikolas shared the use agreement with PGCPD is nearing the end of its term and will need to be reviewed. CM Menjivar asked about getting a Public Works employee trained in playground inspections so they could keep that cost in-house. CM Hemby asked about \$5000 for a scholarship to be included for the teen volunteer program. CM Papanikolas and ITM Jones will work with her to determine the best spot for that item. CM Hemby also asked about the Boys and Girls Club line item, wondering if it needed to be adjusted to increase membership. CM Papanikolas shared that the lineitem covers the liability insurance that the group needs. CM Menjivar added that the Boys and Girls Club used most of their reserve funds during Covid to keep kids registered when parents couldn’t afford it. There was discussion on how the Club might receive some ARPA funds to cover expenses such as equipment.

6. Public Health and Safety

Lt. Unger reviewed the enhancement requests for the Police Department, including a promotion for one officer, a new vehicle and the upfit for that vehicle, Lexipol, and language pay for the new Spanish-speaking officer. In detail, he explained that the vehicle estimate of \$60,000 is based on last year’s numbers and that they would likely choose a Chevy Tahoe or Durango instead of the Ford, given the delay in manufacturer delivery of Ford vehicles at this time. He encouraged Council to remember that a vehicle is an office for the officer and they are in them all day, every day. Lt. Unger shared that State Law HB670 added a number of administrative tasks for the

Police Department, and it is difficult for a staff the size of our department to keep up. Lexipol webservices is a solution to this, as it would take over the maintenance of General Orders and policy updates. The company also monitors for legislative changes. Lexipol is a requirement for Department accreditation and it would result in a discount from LGIT. He reported that representatives from Lexipol are willing to meet with Council if there is interest. After presenting the enhancements, he shared that a fleet condition report is also included in the proposal. There was discussion regarding the fleet replacement schedule and if the requested vehicle for FY24 falls within the replacement schedule. TT Lightfield stated he would check on the replacement schedule. Lt. Unger stated they try to replace one vehicle per year, with 15 vehicles for 10 officers so that there are spare vehicles available when a vehicle needs to be in the shop. There was discussion about maintaining a uniform fleet, the value of hybrid and electric vehicles, and how vehicles are chosen. Chief Antolik shared that he uses a study done by the Michigan State Police annually reviewing the available police vehicles. There was discussion about the condition of the fleet and how much of it is not listed in good condition or greater. Factors in determining the condition include maintenance costs, age, mileage, etc. CM Hemby expressed concern about the condition of the fleet.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about moving translation services out of the police department expenditures and into general funds. Chief Antolik expressed his desire to leave several line items at previous years expenditures, such as uniforms and public relations. Chief Antolik stated he will work with the red-light camera vendor to get estimated revenues and expenditures .

7. Public Works

Director Brad Pudner reviewed the proposal for Public Works in broad strokes and then in more detail at the Council's request. The first issue addressed is staffing, in that Public Works is missing two essential leadership roles and he would like to reorganize staff in a way that gives credit to those who have stepped up. He would restructure the full time foreman position to a part time position and create some crew leader positions. This would require tweaking the Maintenance Worker III job description. He explained that to be a Maintenance Worker III, the current requirement is to have a CDL. This limits those who exhibit leadership skills or special technical skills from becoming a Maintenance Worker III. He would like to add these as alternate requirements to a CDL in ways to become a Maintenance Worker III. He also explained that the daily tasks of Public Works requires 6 full time staff and they currently only have 6 full time staff. This presents a problem when someone is sick or takes a vacation, meaning he fills in on their role. He'd like to reinstitute a position that could be assigned to other duties as needed, to enable him to focus more on his duties as a director.

Director Pudner addressed facility needs, including a new carport roof. He also spoke on space issues as the yard is crowded. He'd like to look at storage elsewhere for some of the vehicles, such as the leaf vacuum, that are only seasonally needed. Additionally, he expressed a desire to have some in-house salt storage capacity. He proposed replacing trucks 1 and 13 as they have been identified as near the end of their useful life. Truck 1 is heavily used and a key snow plow vehicle. Truck 13 is the Town's only dump truck and is used heavily during leaf season, but is only used intermittently during the rest of the year. He also requested a piece of equipment called a Dingo that has a number of attachments which makes it a versatile piece of equipment that could be used to pick up large tree branches or clear sidewalks, for example. To improve residents' experience with trash, he presented three options for food compost containers. He is recommending this as an "opt in" program and that the cost of containers would be fairly neutral compared to what the Town paid Compost Crew for their pick-up at Town Hall. He also shared residents desire to have 64-gallon trash cans purchased and provided by the Town. He estimated

these would cost the Town about \$50 a piece and that the Town would need about 1300. He explained that the trash trucks have tote lifters, but when we expect residents to purchase their own cans, they frequently are not compatible with the lift. Finally, he recommended a certified arborist to evaluate the curb trees and complete a tree inventory, identifying tree risk and the ability to be proactive on tree maintenance. He is recommending this be part of the Urban Forest budget line item.

a. Discussion

CM Menjivar stated that trash cans need to be added to the tracking sheet and that a proposal needs to be put together. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked about the refuse and recycling fee that covered the original cost of the recycling bins and that pays for the tipping fees. She mentioned that the fee was suspended last year to help alleviate the tax burden in light of Covid. TT Lightfield confirmed the fee would generate a total of \$97,945 in revenue. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated the Council needs to review bringing this fee back, as there have been unexpected and significant increases in the tipping fees and asked for staff to determine if the County's fees for FY24 have been set. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy would like to explore ways to encourage recycling as the Town pays significantly less for dumping recycling material than for trash. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that he is in support of restructuring Public Works, including the staffing and plans to acquire more CDL drivers. He noted that acquiring CDL crewmen is an inflation item as it costs more to have staff with that skill. He thanked Director Pudner and CM Menjivar for their work. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked for clarification on the source of salt for winter weather, as the Town had an agreement with the Maryland State Highway Administration. Director Pudner stated that he believes the agreement is still in place with the State Highway Administration but he has not needed to use them as a source of salt. CM Papanikolas offered that there are federal funds available to help current ("incumbent") workers with training costs for CDLs. He stated this may be true for all department but particularly Public Works. Director Pudner stated that this is another one of the reasons he has for increasing staffing in Public Works, as he doesn't have enough crew to cover the work in order to send an employee to training.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked to ITM Jones to cover Miscellaneous Expenditures. ITM Jones noted there is a small increase proposed, including \$10,000 for Network and Software Support across the board but a decrease in Worker's Compensation due to fewer claims. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that general items such as Health Insurance and Worker's Compensation can be hard to forecast while some items such as the pension, dental, and vision are relatively straightforward. CM Hemby asked for clarity about the employee merit increases. ITM Jones stated these have been moved to the respective departmental budgets but he would confirm that with TT Lightfield. She also asked about the Employee Recognition Award line item. TT Lightfield stated that this is generally for things such as the Longevity Award that is given at intervals for every 5 years of service. CM Hemby asked what line item would be available for staff recognition for outstanding service, such as with the storm response. It was determined this would likely be under 560.066 (as a Recognition Award) and CM Hemby recommended this be increased to give recognition to employees who gave exceptional service during the storm responses during the 2022 summer storms. She stated that she does not understand why that hasn't happened yet. ITM Jones stated the three proposed trucks for Public Works need to be added to the Capital Expenses section of the budget. CM Hemby asked about the line item for an Employee Wellness Initiative. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that she believed this was related to lowering insurance costs by creating incentives for employees to be proactive on their health. CM Papanikolas added that the Town received \$14,000 for keeping costs low and this

was earmarked for employee wellness and an employee retreat. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked that TT Lightfield review the history of this line item. She believes the rest of the funds may have been spent associated with managing the costs of health insurance as providers have changed.

8. Budget Discussion Wrap-up and Next Steps

a. Council discussion on Tax Rate

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy opened discussion about revenues, comparing the Constant Yield Tax Rate (CYTR) of \$0.5187 and the current tax rate of \$.545 per \$100 of assessed value. TT Lightfield explained that when comparing budgets there are two line items to review, one is the Real Estate Tax Revenue (\$2,195,935) and the other is the Road Repair Fund (\$127,929). Maintaining the current tax rate results in \$112,000 of additional revenue. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy highlighted that new revenue items need to be added for the red light camera and to bring back the refuse and recycling fee, which would be a set amount. ITM Jones recommended that the refuse and recycling fee be \$90. MPT Brittan-Powell brought up that funds will be needed for ongoing stormwater and climate change issues, as they will be chronic issues and the Town will need to have ongoing funds for these purposes. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy mentioned the Council could institute a surcharge on property taxes to address this. ITM Jones confirmed that the amounts listed for Highway User Revenues are accurate and the amount listed for Police Aid is an estimate.

b. Budget Process calendar

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy opened discussion about the tax rate as the public hearing notice will need to be published in the April Bulletin. She is recommending that this be discussed at the next worksession and voted on at the next Town Meeting. She also mentioned that there is the possibility of raising tax rates to above the current tax rate as well, but that this would have a greater impact on the property taxes for residents.

MPT Brittan-Powell asked about the decision making process for the Council to use while determining the tax rate, asking if there were a systemic means to ensure that the Councilmembers are all on the same page. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy expressed that Council must agree on a proposed tax rate and FY24 budget. CM Hemby was concerned about raising the tax rate, especially post-Covid, as there are funds that can be repurposed and expenses that can be eliminated. ITM Jones and TT Lightfield will provide an updated budget spreadsheet by the Monday worksession. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy asked that CMs talk with the department directors that they liaise with to discuss priorities and community needs and how to accomplish both. MPT Brittan-Powell expressed the importance of objective rather than subjective decision making and will share some methods at an upcoming worksession. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy highlighted that a balanced budget is one of the most important tasks of Council. CM Hemby expressed her opinion that CMs will need to advocate for their department and then determine what aspects are needed for the good of the Town. MPT Brittan-Powell stated that there are items that may need to be added or taken out of the proposed budget such as ARPA and Community Development. Mayor Kulpa-Eddy stated that Council will just focus on the regular budget at the moment and address ARPA funds later. She asked that all changes be given to ITM Jones quickly so they can be incorporated in the spreadsheet for Monday's meeting. CM Papanikolas stated that he will talk to MPT Brittan-Powell for some ideas on an approach to budget decision-making. He stated that he believes the Council has a pretty good idea of what the Town needs on the macro level and some strategies, such as SWOT, could take more time than is available.

Mayor Kulpa-Eddy thanked everyone for their participation in the budget retreat session.

9. Adjournment

CM Menjivar moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Hemby seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 12:50PM.