

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL MEETING
APRIL 11, 2006**

This meeting was called to order by Carol A. Raph, Municipal Clerk, according to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. This meeting was advertised in The Press on April 7, 2006 for the purpose of Budget discussion and Introduction of the 2006 Budget.

FLAG SALUTE: Led by Mayor Frank Perri, Jr.

ROLL CALL: Present: Carew, Notaro, Martinez, Turon, Mazzeo, Schlachter
Absent: Kern

City Administrator Jeffrey Bruckler and Chief Financial Officer Marilyn Dolcy were present.

2006 BUDGET REVIEW

Mayor Perri announced that the tax rate has been lowered since it was last discussed in Budget Work Sessions. Council President Mazzeo then turned the meeting over to Administrator Bruckler for overview.

Councilman Carew stated his disappointment at how the budget process was handled.

Administrator Bruckler explained that the initial 2006 proposal for the first workshop projected a \$.16 increase. Following the second night of budget hearings it was projected to decrease. Further review/recalculations by Bruckler, CFO Dolcy and Council President/ Finance Councilmatic President Mazzeo resulted in a proposed Final Budget of \$.069. Bruckler stated that the Final Budget was fiscally tight, yet responsible and would not impact any services or current personnel.

Administrator Bruckler explained that projected revenues for the Final 2006 Budget are:

- Fees & Permits increase over 48% from 2005
- Interest and Investments increase over 154%
- Grants that have been awarded since the last budget workshop to include the following: Open Space, Clean Communities, Homeland Security, and Click It or Ticket.
- Plans to use \$14,700 from the Special Water Assessment Fund and an additional \$200,000 in surplus over the surplus used in 2005.

Bruckler continued to explain that the projected appropriations for the 2006 Final Budget had been modified since to include three major changes that affect the Police Department, the Municipal Court and Tipping Fees.

The police Department agreed to stay status quo in regards to personnel, holding off on any new hiring until after the department is reorganized. This results in a savings of approximately \$184,000.

Councilman Carew asked if that was under the S/W line item in the Police Department. Bruckler confirmed affirmatively. Carew briefly recapped the changes that Administrator Bruckler had

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previously mentioned. Carew questioned/confirmed the Safe and Secure Grant represents \$60,000 and questioned what the Police Department does with that money. Administrator Bruckler responded that it pays salaries. CFO Dolcy stated that the department hired two people in 1996 and that the \$60,000 per year continues to pay portions of those Officer's salaries. Mayor Perri noted that the City lost the Federal Grant when President Bush took office but still receives the State Grant to offset their salaries. Councilman Carew concluded that a total of \$120,000 is part of the estimated \$184,000 savings in the Police Department.

Administrator Bruckler added that the Police Department is down to one secretary, with the second position currently unfilled and unpaid. Councilman Carew questioned whether or not the position will be filled and should be accounted for in the budget. Bruckler responded no; the position is not being budgeted for. Councilman Carew questioned if the Police Department is comfortable with going without the two new officers.

Administrator Bruckler continued to explain the rest of the Appropriations. The Municipal Court hours will be changed from evening to day-time hours effective in June. This combined with other departmental changes, such as overtime, reflects a savings of approximately \$19,000 for the remainder of the year. Councilman Carew noted that if this savings is only for half the year, the City should stand to save double that next year. Mayor Perri noted that will hold true only if the stats don't go up.

Councilman Carew questioned what two new hires were cut from the Police Department? Administrator Bruckler responded they are not cuts. Mayor Perri explains that two retirees (patrolman) will not be replaced.

Administrator Bruckler explained that Tipping Fees have been recalculated to show a savings of approximately \$30,000.

Mayor Perri asked if there are any other questions. Councilman Carew asked if there are any changes other than what has been discussed already. Administrator Bruckler responded that there are some minor changes in O/E. CFO Dolcy added that social security and unemployment went down which reduced S/W.

Councilman Turon questioned the Clean Communities line item in the amount of \$8,120 and asked if the City received the grant last year? Administrator Bruckler responded affirmatively but added that the State warned the City may not receive it this year. Turon questioned why it was not in the 2005 budget. CFO Dolcy responded that it was not in the budget but was added later in the year.

Councilman Turon questioned the increase in Fees and Permits. CFO Dolcy responded that the City brought in more last year. Councilman Carew asks Administrator Bruckler if he anticipates a \$20,000 increase. Bruckler responded yes.

Councilman Carew questioned/reviewed the Appropriations for the Municipal Courts and other budget line items for his own clarification. Carew questioned the Office of Emergency Management line item under S/W for \$2000. Mayor Perri responded that it is the stipend for the coordinator. Carew asked if we have paid that in previous years? Mayor Perri responds no, not when the Fire

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Department handled it, but previous to that in 1996 there was a stipend. Carew questioned why the Fire Department is not doing it this year – for a \$2000 savings? Mayor Perri responded that the terms and conditions were agreed to with the coordinator and it was his decision to choose the coordinator.

Councilman Carew questioned Administrator Bruckler if there are any other changes that he may be unaware of. Bruckler responded there have been no other additions. Councilman Turon asked about the Engineering O/E that is up \$10,000. CFO Dolcy responded that the money was moved out of gasoline into Engineering to compensate for the cost of tax map updating.

Councilman Carew questioned salary and wages in the Buildings & Grounds Department. CFO Dolcy responded that it comes out of the O/E. Carew, Dolcy and Administrator Bruckler discussed the \$10,000 cost for this service.

Councilman Carew questioned what cost went up – the Prosecutor or the Defender? Mayor Perri confirmed – the Prosecutor by 5%.

Councilman Turon questioned the increase of \$11,000 in S/W in the Parks and Playgrounds Department. CFO Dolcy answered that last year it was short. Councilman Carew asked how much it went up - \$8000? Dolcy answered \$10,600 and explained that Park monies were used to make up the shortage. Discussion took place between Dolcy, Carew and Administrator Bruckler on salaries and wages for Buildings & Grounds and the transition of some monies over to the Parks & Playgrounds Department.

Councilman Carew brought up the miscellaneous/ other expenses in the All Sports Association of \$13,225 and stated that it could be bumped up by 2 or 3% a year and he commented on how well they are doing and how much they have grown.

Council President Mazzeo reported that there are upcoming Recreational Impact Fees that are anticipated to be about \$5000 and suggested that a committee be named in the future. Carew noted that the \$13,225 is an operating budget and is not used for the impact fees and should be kept separate. Mayor Perri noted that a great deal of money is being put into the infrastructure.

Councilman Carew questioned the Surplus and how much is being used. CFO Dolcy responded that about half is being used. Bruckler and Dolcy confirmed for Carew that there will be about 1.3 million left in Surplus. Every \$54,000 equals \$0.01.

Carew commented that it is an aggressive budget but if the City still has 1.3 million in Surplus, it might not be a bad idea to return some to the taxpayers and reduce the Surplus to 1.2 million. CFO Dolcy and Carew discussed what is anticipated for next year and the idea of using more Surplus. Dolcy explained the negative affects on bond rating by doing so and that lowering Surplus is considered by bonding companies to be fiscally irresponsible. Administrator Bruckler cautioned Council and reminded them that these are only projections.

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Councilman Carew reviewed the breakdown by Department of the proposed Final Budget (cuts and projected revenues). Dolcy reported that money was moved to Capital. Carew stated that \$50,000 was supposed to be dedicated to Capital and questioned the \$30,000 coming out of Sewer. CFO Dolcy stated the Capital account is now at \$100,000. Carew stated the Council must be made aware of these changes and adds his disappointment at the lack of communication in 2005-2006.

A consensus of the Governing Body was requested by Councilman Carew to use more Surplus. CFO Dolcy stated that the budget has already been printed and has to be introduced as-is but can always be amended. Carew suggested that it should be discussed at this time to get a feeling of interest and suggested bringing it down to 5.4 from 6.9 by using Surplus. Mayor Perri stated he'd rather adjust the bond payment than use the Surplus. CFO Dolcy cautioned against using Surplus pointing out again that bond ratings may be affected. Administrator Bruckler stated that it is a very aggressive budget in paying down the debt and in his opinion uses the most Surplus possible without putting the City in jeopardy of large tax increases next year.

Councilman Turon asks about the \$350,000 Atlantic County Open Space Grant money shown as a revenue. CFO Dolcy stated it's both a Revenue and an Appropriation.

Council President Mazzeo called for a motion to read Resolution 63-2006 by title only. One motion by Councilman Notaro, seconded by _____. All present in favor.

RESOLUTION

63-2006 2006 Introduction to Budget
 No Public input on introduction
 Advertised in The Press on April 15, 2006
 Final Adoption on May 9, 2006

Full copies of the 2006 Budget are available in the City Clerk's office

Motion made by Notaro to accept the introduction of the 2006 Budget, second by _____, a roll call was taken: Carew – yes, Notaro – yes, Kern – absent, Martinez – yes, Schlachter – yes, Turon – yes, Mazzeo – yes. Motion carries.

PUBLIC SESSION

Council President Mazzeo opened this session to the Public. Discussion between Mayor Perri and Steve Vain, 908 Ridgewood Drive, as to what could be asked/discussed. Meeting was advertised as a Budget meeting/workshop meeting and anything that was discussed tonight can be questioned. Mr. Vain questioned the stipend of \$2000 for the Emergency Management Coordinator and asked if

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there was a posting advertised for the position and questioned the qualifications of the person currently holding the position. Mayor Perri stated there was a stipend paid to the position in the past (1996). Mayor Perri stated it was his decision and appointment and that the credentials will have to be discussed with Mr. Adams. Mr. Vain again questioned the qualifications. Municipal Clerk Raph suggested that the discussion be taken up at a later time with the Mayor.

Mr. Vain questioned the increase in Park & Playground salaries and asked if there were any new hires. Administrator Bruckler responded that there were no new hires but a contractual increase that was not budgeted for. Additionally, there were no changes from part time to full time status.

Mr. Vain questioned how permit fees compare to other districts, noting the increase in Planning Board Fees. Vain suggested increasing those fees rather than taxes. Administrator Bruckler could not comment with certainty but stated he would research it. CFO Dolcy stated that both fees were increased two years ago.

Council President Mazzeo asked if anyone from the public had any further questions. Seeing no one, the Public Session was closed.

MEETING NOTICES

School Board Election	April 18, 2006	2:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Work Session	April 25, 2006	7:00 p.m.
Regular Session	April 25, 2006	8:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn, all present in favor, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Raph, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk