

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 27, 2025**

At 4:00pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 11, 2025, and in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Council President Pro Tempore Dewees.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilwoman Kern; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Polistina; Councilman Smith; Council President Bucci

**Absent:** Mayor Chau\*

*\*Mayor Chau arrived at approximately 4:06pm but was not present when attendance was taken.*

Municipal Clerk/Business Administrator Canesi, Chief Financial Officer Stollenwerk, Police Chief VonColln, Police Captain Pollak, Fire Chief Cummings, and Superintendent of Public Works Vitale were also in attendance.

**READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

On a motion by Councilman Dewees with a second by Councilwoman Carfagno all members present were in favor of approving the minutes of February 13, 2025, without formal reading.

**2025 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

CFO Stollenwerk began the meeting stating since our last meeting she reduced the increase by 5.9 cents, we would be using all our CAP bank, we used old capital money as revenue, adjusted salary increases for non-aligned employees, she cut operating budgets back. CFO Stollenwerk noted non-discretionary increases, loss in state aid, and unanticipated costs for affordable housing. The court interlocal was saving \$120,000 and she was still waiting for final numbers from the ACUA.

Councilman Polistina asked if the sewer reduction was in the budget?

CFO Stollenwerk replied it was anticipated but she was waiting for the final number from the ACUA.

*\*At approximately 4:06pm Mayor Chau entered the meeting.*

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Councilman Polistina asked were the affordable housing costs due to the upcoming projects.

CFO Stollenwerk replied yes, Clerk Canesi asked her to put it in there.

Councilman Polistina suggested freezing overtime.

Councilwoman Bucci stated all non-aligned salaries should be capped at 4%.

Councilman Dewees added, but not the stipends, just the base salaries.

CFO Stollenwerk to Councilman Smith, you had asked about police overtime, with officer in charge (OIC) pay and the comp time payout, the total was \$64,000 for 2024.

Councilman Notaro asked why was overtime so high?

CFO Stollenwerk explained contractual changes related to the payout of comp time and OIC pay.

Chief VonColln explained the comp time buyout as a negotiated item.

Chief VonColln distributed to Council supporting documentation for technology related budget increases.

Councilman Notaro asked was the contribution to the ACEA a yearly fee?

Council President Bucci replied it's where she can get grants for the City, she got a \$17,000 grant.

Councilman Polistina asked about the vehicle maintenance, what was in the line?

CFO Stollenwerk replied, any vehicle costs of repair.

CFO suggested taking \$30,000 out of the police budget, she explained that a proposed and required software upgrade would include the evidence library that the \$30,000 was earmarked for.

Chief VonColln advised that OEM turned over their Tahoe to the Police Department today and that vehicle would need to be upgraded and equipped, so that would require the \$30,000.

Councilwoman Carfagno asked if the library go back to the County?

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Clerk Canesi advised that would require a ballot question.

Councilman Dewees stated, it's a wash.

Councilwoman Carfagno, regarding the park maintenance line, asked what this was used for.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, tree removal, irrigation, etc.

Superintendent Vitale added that we closed the campground, which made \$40-50,000 a year.

CFO Stollenwerk created a separate line from public works to get a better handle on what we were spending on the park.

Councilman Dewees stated we have to reduce services, there was no other way to get down to what we want.

Councilwoman Carfagno questioned, can't we change insurance companies, shop to get a better rate?

Councilman Polistina explained we would have to get all the unions to agree, there would have to be a comparable plan.

Councilman Polistina asked what was driving overtime in the Fire Department. He suggested reducing vacation buy back – it would have to be negotiated with unions.

Clerk Canesi added, and you'd have to 'buy' it from the unions.

Councilman Smith noted over \$400,000 increase in police and fire salaries and wages since 2020.

CFO Stollenwerk said she'd just checked the vacation buy back number; it cost \$61,000 last year.

Councilman Dewees asked that Council consider waiving their salaries; we've asked employees to give some up.

Councilman Smith replied, employees haven't been asked to give anything up, maybe giving up increases in some cases, but Council hasn't had a raise in 20 years.

Councilman Polistina asked about what would make this budget not a legal budget.

CFO Stollenwerk advised that there was \$386,000 left in the cap bank, we have funds, but we won't in three years when it lapses.

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Councilman Notaro felt we needed to get grants up, too.

CFO Stollenwerk explained those would go up as we go through the year.

CFO Stollenwerk expressed her reluctance to use more revenues because we were budgeting so close and the impact it would have on future surplus.

CFO Stollenwerk referred to the proposal to have the ACUA do the pump stations; she asked if Council wanted her to put a dollar figure in the line as a place holder.

Councilman Polistina felt if there was the potential to yield something good, we should. He asked if we have a meeting on the books for capital.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that she got very few requests; she suggested Council may want to look at what we want to do for roads and sewer.

CFO Stollenwerk asked for confirmation that the Council was prepared to introduce at a seven-cent tax increase. All were in agreement.

**PUBLIC SESSION/FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER**

Council President Bucci opened the public portion of the meeting for any person to comment on any subject, she asked that they state their name and city of residence for the record and observe the five-minute limit per speaker.

Seeing no one wishing to speak, Council President Bucci closed the public comment portion of this meeting.

**MEETING NOTICES**

Council President Bucci read the meeting notices.

At approximately 5:14pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk