

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 7, 2024**

At 4:01pm this meeting was called to order by Deputy Municipal Clerk Shannon Campbell, who welcomed the audience. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on February 13, 2024, and in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

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

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

Absent: Mayor Chau

Municipal Clerk/Business Administrator Canesi, Chief Financial Officer Stollenwerk, Police Chief VonColln, Fire Chief Cummings, Fire Captain Nixon, and OEM Coordinator Joo were also in attendance.

READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On a motion by Councilman Notaro with a second by Councilman Dewees, all members present, were in favor of approving the minutes of February 22, 2024, without formal reading.

2024 BUDGET DISCUSSION

CFO Stollenwerk announced she made some changes since the last meeting; the Fire Department had received notice of a grant award and that was now included in this budget. She noted that the Governor had cut municipal relief aid this year that we received last year. We are at a 4.8 cent increase with the loss of aid.

Councilman Smith asked for clarification; we lost the municipal aid, and the local and regional schools also lost funding?

CFO Stollenwerk confirmed. She added that this is a legal budget; at the last meeting it was not. We should have a surplus of around \$300,000.00; we are under the appropriation cap.

Council President Leeds noted that the request for communications could be removed.

CFO Stollenwerk replied that it was in capital.

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Councilman Polistina asked about additional staffing.

CFO Stollenwerk advised that the patrol officer, additional public works laborer and construction records digitizing were removed.

Council President Leeds stated that we needed to add funding for EMS services.

Councilman Polistina asked when the contract was up.

Council President Leeds replied, June.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that we have not gone out for proposals, something funded may need to be removed.

Councilman Smith advised that he spoke with Mayor Matik of Linwood, they were sending letter to Inspira wishing to take the first opt-in year. There was no official response right now, but they were working on an RFP just in case. Our current contract is zero.

Council President Leeds was advised that the preliminary price was \$375,000.00 between the two towns.

Councilman Polistina discussed appropriations, commenting that a lot was payroll. He felt we may need to ask departments to get down to last year's spending.

CFO Stollenwerk explained the reserve budget, she would provide numbers from 2023 if Council wanted.

Council President Leeds asked about the IT vendor contract.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that we have saved significantly with current vendor.

BA Canesi added that we may not save with a new vendor; we can look at the contract for man-hours, but the lion's share of our technology expenses was equipment.

All discussed equipment, software, and storage.

Councilman Polistina continued reviewing appropriations.

Councilman Smith stated that the projected increase of 4.8 was not acceptable; he asked if there a target that was acceptable?

CFO Stollenwerk reminded Council that the cap was 2.5.

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Councilman Notaro asked about salary and wage increases, were they negotiated?

CFO Stollenwerk, regarding the Fire Department, there were 5 fully funded part-timers, plus overtime.

Councilman Polistina asked can the retiring firefighter's spot be filled with part-timers.

Captain Nixon stated it was not ideal, he felt there would be a decrease in service.

Discussion ensued regarding shifts for part-timers and filling shifts, and salary funding.

Council President Leeds asked about our surplus balance.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that Council needed to think about decisions they made that need to be funded, several factors affect the budget, we would need to cut back on capital due to increase in interest rates.

Councilman Smith was not supporting anything over 3 cents. He asked about increases in operating expenses for OEM and fire equipment.

Councilman Polistina reminded Council we need to cut spending and increase surplus.

CFO Stollenwerk asked where Council wanted to be realistically? She can go back and ask departments to see where they can cut, we are currently at 3.7 for the operating budget using \$100,000 surplus and \$20,000 from the levy cap bank.

Councilman Notaro stated he was against using surplus.

Discussion continued regarding capital projects, fencing around the drainage ditch between the fields was added, exhaust fans for fire department and little league field upgrades.

Council President Leeds took a straw poll vote to see if Council was in favor of moving forward with the Little League Field upgrades, all members present were in favor.

Councilman Dewees announced that the pole barn project could be removed from the capital plan.

Council President Leeds asked if there were any further discussions or questions.

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There were none.

PUBLIC SESSION/FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

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

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

BA Canesi asked if the Council would be canceling the previously scheduled third budget meeting.

Council President Leeds took straw poll vote; no members present were in favor of holding another meeting.

Canesi advised she would publish the cancellation.

MEETING NOTICES

Councilman Polistina read the meeting notices, noting the third budget meeting was not needed.

At approximately 5:18pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Campbell, RMC
Deputy Municipal Clerk