

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD BUDGET WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 4, 2015**

At 4:01pm, this meeting was called to order by Shannon Campbell, Deputy Clerk. It was advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 23, 2016, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

**ROLL CALL** Present: Dewees, Lischin, Murray, Piergiovanni, Travagline

Absent: O'Neill, Perri

Also in attendance were CFO Dawn Stollenwerk and Municipal Clerk Mary Canesi.

Council President Travagline welcomed everyone to the meeting and deferred to Court Administrator Donna Clark.

*At 4:02pm Councilman Perri arrived.*

Court Administrator Donna Clark spoke in regards to the digital recording system that is used in Council Chambers. The system is outdated. The court is required to record using 4 channels.

*At 4:02pm Councilman Dewees left the room.*

Court Administrator Clark went on to state that often the wires are crossed in the courtroom due to channels not working, microphones need to be set on certain channels for transcription. She met this past Monday with a representative from Office Business Systems. On the high end, replacing the entire system would cost between \$16,000.00 and \$18,000.00. He will be coming back in the next week or so to check the entire system to get a better idea of what needs to be replaced. Currently, we do not have a maintenance contract. The last time Mrs. Clark got estimates it was around \$6,700.00 to replace the computer and microphones.

Councilman Lischin asked what the cost has been for repairs and maintenance in the past 2 years.

Mrs. Clark estimated it to be around \$2,000.00.

*At 4:05pm Councilman Dewees re-entered the room.*

Mayor Chau asked if they would court preferred wireless microphones.

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Court Administrator Clark stated the Court must have wired microphones. The system was purchased in 2004. She did not include this request in her court budget as it should be capital since more than one department uses it.

Mayor Chau acknowledged that the system under the dais is an inconvenience.

Administrator Clark stated, unfortunately, the representative suggested leaving it and it did not look like it could be downsized, but, the representative would look in to it.

Councilman Lischin agreed that the system needed to be updated.

Councilman Travagline deferred to Finance Chairperson Councilman Murray.

Councilman Murray introduced Certified Financial Officer Stollenwerk to explain the 2016 budget.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that in the past surplus was used as revenue as to not charge as much to the residents. There is revenue coming in from the sewer fee increase. We ended 2015 with \$1.9 million dollars in surplus. There is no more library surplus left after this budget and the liquor license surplus is gone. In the packet that was given to Council, CFO Stollenwerk prepared a summary of tax rates and lost revenue.

Mayor Chau asked if the \$74 million dollar loss was from tax appeals.

CFO Stollenwerk stated yes. There is also lost income from Verizon no longer being taxed; \$1million dollars in assessed evaluation.

Council President Travagline asked when we found out.

CFO Stollenwerk stated we found out in the middle of last year.

The City wrote off \$350,000.00 in taxes, including City, County and schools. We have a revenue problem, not an expenditure problem. The changes in health insurance have gone up, our rate has gone up 1.5%; there are also increases in the pensions. This preliminary budget has a 5.8 cent tax increase. The assessment figures are firm. Sewer flows are going up, 103% over the budget, we are paying for 2015 in 2016, for a \$69,000.00 increase.

Council President Travagline stated he thought there was a serious problem in the system.

CFO Stollenwerk stated there was no indication of any problem; it's a function of assuming a larger portion of the sewer utility budget.

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Councilman Perri noted that everything a guestimate, we are third in line; they subtract us from Linwood and Somers Point. This rate is not the highest if you look at past history; we are looking at billing, the County car wash, and institutions that may not have been being billed properly. Our Ordinance is old. Revenue should increase.

Council President Travagline questioned the pumping stations.

Councilman Perri stated that according to electric usage we are normal. They will be looking at all of the meters and looking at numbers from the water company.

CFO Stollenwerk went over the summary sheet. Regarding the CAP information; we are \$134,000.00 over the cap, we have a cap bank that can be used. The increase with the budget as stands is 5.8 cents. The total budget is down \$110,000.00. The surplus is short; we are using less to balance our budget, leaving less in reserve for emergencies. Our local revenues are up (UCC, Court, interest is stable). The tax collection rates are down, anticipating collecting more this year.

Councilman Piergiovanni asked if the change in Verizon is because they don't own 51% of the customers in the municipality.

CFO Stollenwerk stated yes.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that salaries and wages are down due to changes in the Police Department and Public Works Department. The part time fireman was removed from the budget. The capital was increased; it was entirely depleted last year. There are two bonds outstanding; the next one matures in 2018. EMS is not included in this budget, will put in when a decision is made.

CFO Stollenwerk discussed personnel. Included is an increase of 2% for non-aligned employees. There is no increase for volunteers or inspectors. She was asked if inspectors could get an increase (plumbing, electric, fire). The Mayor asked increase to for the Deputy OEM and OEM coordinator. The construction/zoning asked for ½ person additional and the Mayor requested an increase for the Deputy Clerk.

Councilman Lischin questioned the personnel request for the construction office. Jim would like to go part time and have a full time secretary. He is looking at other options.

CFO Stollenwerk explained that it will not save money we are still adding staff.

Councilman Perri asked how much is the funded dollar amount.

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CFO Stollenwerk stated she will get the figure; it is funded. The non-funded expenses are three police officers, one firefighter and one fulltime position in place of one seasonal at birch grove.

Council President Travagline asked Acting Chief Newman what the logic is for three officers.

Acting Chief Newman replied that the department is down three officers from the full complement that they have had in the past.

Councilman Lischin asked if there is an overtime figure from 2015.

Acting Chief Newman stated that officers on workers compensation and light duty are included. Most of the overtime was due to man-power including vacations and injuries.

Councilman Lischin asked to speak on behalf of the Fire Department. The department is short staffed. They are having problems covering shifts; he likes the idea of a captain in case someone would retire. He felt that replacements are not being trained.

Councilman Perri sated he would rather an administrative person not a career person.

Discussion ensued amongst all Council members regarding career/exempt employees. There has been no official notice of retirements, the department wants a career person to be promoted to captain and add an additional firefighter.

Councilman Perri reminded Council that stipends are paid to volunteers. They don't want to work with the career firefighters; the volunteers need to help fill in.

Councilman Lischin noted he is working towards unifying the departments.

Discussion ensued regarding scheduling issues and who should be in charge of it. Council President Travagline felt the Chief should be responsible for scheduling.

Council President Travagline stated that volunteers should be available to fill in when careers are not there, we have plenty of volunteers, if they filled in it would eliminate many of these issues.

Council President Travagline questioned Acting Chief Newman about revenue.

Acting Chief Newman stated he did not have figures on the revenue; he will look into getting them.

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Court Administrator Clark noted it is very hard to get people to pay. The court is doing what they can to get people to pay. Many choose to go to jail because they can't pay the fines.

Acting Chief Newman asked Council to keep in mind that they can't force officers to write tickets, however, productivity does not produce revenue.

Council President Travagline questioned whether it is a lack of personnel or lack of people making payments.

Administrator Clark noted that many grants not available anymore. Those grants gave false revenue to municipalities. The current economy is dictating collections.

*At 5:05 pm Councilman Piergiovanni left room.*

Council President Travagline asked if there were any further questions.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that OEM requested a \$12,000.00 budget increase and asked Acting Chief Newman to speak on the lease of (3) more vehicles on fleet.

Acting Chief Newman stated that three vehicles are nearing 100,000 miles. A decision will need to be made on what to do with these vehicles.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that we do not have any current leases on other vehicles, they were bonded; SUV's can be bonded under the law.

*At 5:07pm Councilman Piergiovanni re-entered the room.*

Councilman Murray questioned how many miles a year the officers put on them.

Acting Chief Newman estimated 50-60 miles a night.

CFO Stollenwerk went over the increase in the budget for the Police Department. Requests include: Watch Guard Warranty renewal, License Plate Reader renewal and upgrade to the evidence system.

*At 5:10pm Councilman Piergiovanni left the meeting.*

Acting Chief Newman stated that the camera agreement has ended, the LPR ready to expire, the evidence system is old and needs to be upgraded. The evidence system was purchased in 2007.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that Council needs to make decisions as to what can be removed from the budget.

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Council President Travagline asked everyone to go over the budget and to talk to their departments.

Municipal Clerk Canesi spoke regarding the recording system. She noted that the Court's use is specific, Council meetings are also recorded, it's very difficult to hear what everyone is saying. Council uses the system and well as the Planning Board.

Council President Travagline opened the meeting to the public.

Seeing no one wishing to speak he closed the public session.

At 5:15pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Campbell, Deputy Clerk