

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD BUDGET WORKSHOP  
FEBRUARY 4, 2021**

At 3:07pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk, Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 30, 2021, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-8(b), and N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.1 - 1.7, this meeting will be held in-person and as a remote public meeting (live-streamed) using Zoom conferencing service. Due to social distancing requirements related to Covid-19, there are limited seats for in-person attendance by members of the public. Visit the event calendar page for February 4, 2021 at [www.cityofnorthfield.org](http://www.cityofnorthfield.org) to determine current seating availability. Face coverings and social distancing will be required for in-person attendance. To reserve an available seat, contact the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 609-641-2832, ext 125, no later than 12:00pm on February 4, 2021. Once all available seats have been reserved, virtual attendance will be required using a web-browser to Join the Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81334730667> or by telephone using one tap mobile +13017158592,,81334730667# or direct dial +1 301 715 8592 using Meeting ID: 813 3473 0667. For those wishing to comment during the dedicated public comment portion of the meeting, but who may be unable to attend (in person or via Zoom), public comments may also be submitted in advance via email to [mcanesi@cityofnorthfield.org](mailto:mcanesi@cityofnorthfield.org) or by written letter to the Office of the Municipal Clerk, 1600 Shore Road, Northfield NJ 08225, or by hand delivery to the drop box in the parking lot at the south corner of the municipal building, addressed to the attention of the Municipal Clerk. Comments shall contain the name and address of the author, will be read aloud and addressed during the remote public meeting, and must be received by 12:00pm on February 4, 2021.

Municipal Clerk Canesi read the following statement:

“Due to social distancing requirements related to Covid-19, there are limited seats for in-person attendance by members of the public this evening. For this reason, this meeting is also being presented simultaneously as a remote public meeting, live-streamed, using Zoom conferencing service, and in accordance with the Governor’s Executive Orders and the Open Public Meetings Act. Zoom meeting participants can dial in by telephone and listen to the proceedings, or they can access the meeting using a web-browser, and be able to view and listen. Instructions on how members of the public could reserve one of the limited seats, as well as how they can access Zoom have been made available on the municipal website and were published in the Press of Atlantic City. The full text of the public meeting notice has been posted at the entrance to the municipal building and includes Zoom instructions, information on where to find the meeting agenda and relevant documents, as well as instructions on how members of the public could submit comments in advance of tonight’s meeting. For those participating via Zoom, all participants will be ‘muted’ upon entry to the meeting. Web-browser participants will not be able to share their screens or see the camera-view of anyone other than the host, which is the City of Northfield. Zoom participants wishing to exercise their right to participate during the public comment portion of the meeting should wait until the specific announcement is made

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to open the public comment period. At this time, one by one, any telephone users will be asked to identify themselves and will be unmuted to permit commentary. For web-browser participants, comments or questions may be submitted via the chat function and will not be acknowledged outside of the designated public-comment portion of the meeting; chat-users must also provide his/her name and address for the record in order to be heard. Any written comments submitted in advance will be read aloud and addressed during the public comment portion of the meeting.”

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present (in person):** Councilman Dewees; Councilwoman Madden; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Perri; Councilman Smith; Councilman Utts; Council President Polistina; Mayor Chau

CFO Stollenwerk and Chief Newman were also present.

**2021 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Council President Polistina welcomed everyone to the meeting and deferred to CFO Stollenwerk for an overview.

CFO Stollenwerk explained how surplus was used and the current fund balance, which was slightly higher than last year at this time. Our collection rate went up 1.85%, which translates to \$780,000.00 more in tax collection revenue than anticipated. Last year's net operating income was just under \$1.2 million dollars, comparatively speaking this was a strong financial year.

Councilwoman Madden asked for an explanation of increase in the collection rate.

CFO Stollenwerk explained the use of reserve for uncollected taxes. More people paid their taxes than we anticipated would pay.

Council President Polistina noted that it looked like values were stabilizing.

CFO Stollenwerk added that we've lost \$12 million every year; this year it netted out to be \$2.6 million. We also had \$3.2 million in added assessments, primarily due to the Gurwicz project. We were around 100% valuation right now. Since the revaluation, our net valuation has decreased over \$123 million since 2010. She added that for every \$1 million in assessment, we bring in \$9,600.00 to the City.

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CFO Stollenwerk prepared a summary of what was in the budget, and what she needed decisions on in order to proceed. She announced the introduction date of March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> for final adoption. We were Division review this year, so we have to send our budget to the State to get approval to adopt. Pension billing was up \$109,000.00, that was based on actuarial numbers we get from the State.

Council President Polistina asked about debt service.

CFO Stollenwerk reviewed permanent financing and our bonds from 2012 and 2016. We were waiting on the Infrastructure Trust Sewer Asset Management study.

Councilman Perri stated that it looked like we will need to move forward with the vactor truck.

Council President Polistina thought were we going to explore subbing that out.

Councilman Perri felt it was most economical to keep it in house; the State mandates the cleaning our stormwater system. The vactor truck could be used for storm and sanitary.

Councilman Dewees agreed; he commented that it would alleviate a lot of the smaller drainage problems that we have. We were the only one in the area that did not have it.

Councilman Perri noted that it required a CDL endorsement; we were working on that with the union.

Council President Polistina asked if there was an opportunity to share.

Councilman Dewees replied no, because towns need to use the equipment at the same time.

Councilman Perri added that it was now mandatory to clean the storm system.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that is one of the projects for the infrastructure trust and we still need DEP approval; that would be the next step.

CFO Stollenwerk advised that the tax increase was originally \$.02, but the sewer flow fees came in this morning, we had to fund last year's overage, the tax increase was up to \$.0242. She suggested reviewing staffing and unfunded items.

Council President Polistina added that we don't know what is happening in September, we don't know if the school would be able to assist us.

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CFO Stollenwerk replied this assumed we would pay for the hybrid school schedule for the entire calendar year.

Councilman Perri confirmed that there has been no movement from the Board of Education?

Council President Polistina confirmed.

Councilman Perri replied we were still at a stalemate.

Councilman Smith stated that he did tell the Board of Education that we were committed to the remainder of this school year, but that we would not look favorably upon continuing the same arrangement for the next school year.

Councilwoman Madden stated the school doesn't want to take any responsibility. Was that correct?

Councilman Smith replied that was correct.

Councilwoman Madden asked could it be amended to be their responsibility?

Mayor Chau replied it was up to the governing body, there were some towns that do not provide the service. Initially, the school said they would assist but unanticipated expenses changed that.

Councilwoman Madden asked if were the split sessions set up by age?

Councilman Smith explained the schedule.

Councilwoman Madden advocated eliminating the service.

Councilman Notaro felt the safety for children comes first.

Clerk Canesi reminded Council that the school operated on fiscal year and we are on calendar year; if we approve through December, we are almost by default approving Spring 2022.

Councilman Smith believed we fund only through end of this school year; we should put the school on notice that we would not fund the next school year

CFO Stollenwerk advised we were attempting to engage in contingency planning.

Council President Polistina suggested tabling at \$149,000.00 and see if we could get any movement with the school.

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CFO Stollenwerk reviewed staffing increases requested by Chief Newman and Mayor Chau on behalf of the Police Department. She distributed a spreadsheet showing costs to Council. We lost half of our Safe and Secure Grant this year, everyone did, statewide.

Councilwoman Madden stated if you don't have two lieutenants you don't have to backfill, was that correct?

Mayor Chau added that over the years, staff had been cut back in the Police Department. The Chief and Mayor have had plan to bring things back. There were no vehicles now, we were in good shape for 5-6 years. We don't have the personnel; additional administration is needed to process volumes of paperwork, which all falls to the Captain.

Councilwoman Madden felt that was a lot of people doing paperwork.

Mayor Chau wanted to bring the ranks back to where they were; some of the command staff would retire in next few years but we were not building the experience needed to replace people when they retire.

Councilwoman Madden asked Chief Newman if there had been an increase in crime to justify it?

Chief Newman replied he would have to look at that and get back to Councilwoman Madden; this was part of a plan to build bench strength for retirements that could be anticipated in the next few years.

Council President Polistina asked Chief Newman if the promotions would be to manage the staff?

Chief Newman replied that one would be an administrator; in a perfect world the Captain would be the Deputy Chief, he explained the administrative duties the Captain has in addition to staff he oversees. We also needed a training officer.

Councilman Smith asked if there was an organizational chart?

Chief Newman noted it was in the ordinance.

Councilman Perri asked for an explanation of the \$220,000.00 in the salaries line.

CFO Stollenwerk explained it was for crossing guards, contractual increases, and we lost \$30,000.00 in the Safe and Secure Grant. CFO Stollenwerk added that the promotional costs would be approximately \$53,000 in year one, plus benefits.

Councilwoman Madden asked would the third Special not be filled?

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Chief Newman replied, we tried.

CFO Stollenwerk asked Chief Newman about some equipment requests.

Chief Newman announced that we were all are familiar with what was going on in the world today and what happened in front of City Hall in July; in the contract for the Police Department, we were supposed to provide riot gear. We don't have riot gear. The department would like ballistic helmets with shields.

Councilwoman Madden asked about the cargo container.

Mayor Chau explained the current storage options were old and insufficient; he wanted to purchase a used cargo shipping container for approximately \$6,000.00, delivered and painted. We also don't have portable spotlights.

Chief Newman advised that the Fire Department used to have portable lights; they don't have them anymore.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that we were at a tax increase of 3.42 cents with police promotions.

CFO Stollenwerk added that there were increases in the OEM budget but OEM Coordinator Joo could not be here tonight; he would be here at the next meeting.

Councilman Smith asked about space here at City Hall, we've moved offices.

Clerk Canesi explained her office is using the old building department, EMS would occupy the rear, and the front space, as she understands it, would be used for meeting space.

CFO Stollenwerk explained the use of surplus was at 9.3%, we like to see use of surplus between 5 and 10%. There was definitely room for Council to appropriate more funding in this budget.

Councilman Perri noted it would take another \$300,000.00 to get us to zero.

Councilman Notaro shared that Somers Point wanted to join us in a shared service for EMS.

Clerk Canesi advised that we would have to amend our cooperative pricing agreement; Linwood was the lead, she asked Councilman Notaro if they had been brought in on this?

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Councilman Notaro replied they were aware, he wanted to get direction from Council.

Councilman Perri added that Somers Point would also have to approve it.

Councilman Notaro replied that they would at their next meeting; he asked how long would it take?

Clerk Canesi reiterated that Linwood was the lead, they could better say as to the timeline, but Clerk Canesi felt 90 days was optimistic, everything at the State right now was slow.

Council President Polistina took a straw poll vote to add police increases, for now, all were generally in favor of doing so.

CFO Stollenwerk reminded all that this would require use of more surplus.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that we could probably fund the cargo container in house.

Councilman Dewees would prefer to see what it looked like and would like to see where it would go.

Mayor Chau asked what alternatives were?

Councilman Dewees replied sheds.

Councilman Smith was concerned about it looking like an eyesore.

In regard to the court, CFO Stollenwerk advised that the division said we can average the last three years, but what if we have a shortage? She did not see court revenue coming back.

Discussion ensued amongst members of Council and CFO Stollenwerk regarding revenue and grants.

Council President Polistina suggested reviewing capital next.

CFO Stollenwerk went over new requests for 2021, OEM would explain at the next meeting, Clerk Canesi had requested auditorium seating for Council Chambers.

Clerk Canesi explained the church-style pews were originally for the court; they weren't terribly stable and stadium style seating would allow us to maximize the use of the room and create a more professional appearance.

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Councilman Perri asked for explanation of the \$183,000.00 in OEM projects prior to next meeting.

CFO Stollenwerk replied yes, she just received it and would provide it to Council.

Councilman Smith asked for list of road and sewer improvements for 2021.

CFO Stollenwerk replied that has yet to be determined.

Council President Polistina asked if all could take a look at their budgets.

CFO Stollenwerk stated there was not much extraneous in there; she reminded that we needed to add \$12,000.00 for promotional testing.

Councilman Dewees referred to the prior request for illuminated stop signs; he had a conversation with the Chief, once you put one in, you will get a multitude of requests for them. He would yield to Chief Newman.

Chief Newman replied if the City wanted to spend the money, the Chief will support it, but one will create demand for more.

CFO Stollenwerk referred to a recent requirement that police have body cameras; we have some but may need more. She could create line for public safety and use the money for public safety items.

**PUBLIC SESSION/ FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER**

Council President Polistina opened this portion of the meeting for any member of the public to speak on any topic; he noted a five-minute limit per speaker.

Seeing no one wishing to speak, Council President Polistina closed the public session.

Council President Polistina read the meeting notices.

At 4:58pm, on a motion of Councilman Dewees, seconded by Councilman Utts, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk