

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 12, 2026**

At 4:04pm 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 January 24, 2026, and in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

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

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

Absent: Councilwoman Kern, Mayor Chau

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

**2026 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Council President Bucci deferred to CFO Stollenwerk for initial explanation of the proposed budget.

CFO Stollenwerk referred to the budget, the state capped appropriations increase at 2%, Council did introduce an ordinance which raised it to 3.5%. She referred to revenue and the added assessments on page 7 of the packet and available surplus. She explained the importance of surplus and ratings, our surplus was around 15% of our operating expenses, she was confident that our rating would be held AAA-, which was very good; Northfield was higher than the national average. Next year we will need to permanently fund notes for prior projects, we need to keep stable for our borrowing rate to be low. We are under the levy cap. Our expenses have outpaced the 3.5% we are allowed. Health insurance is up, utilities rates are up. For a legal budget we need to cut \$8,000.00 out of our appropriations, there would be no cap going into the future.

Councilman Polistina asked how much was .01?

CFO Stollenwerk replied \$98,000.00.

CFO Stollenwerk continued, she referred to the summary provided. She noted we avoided a high health rate with a new insurance provider, employees went with higher deductible; that increase came to 6%. Pension rates went up and we needed to fund EMS for \$36,000.00. Our sewer flows were way down, the cost was about \$350,000.00 this year, the flows were continuing to drop, she attributed that to investments in slip lining and upgrades, noting they were working. Councilmen

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Polistina and Smith wanted to present this budget to Council, it was relatively flat compared to last year. Increases were adjusted for things we know have increased. The unfunded requests were not in the budget.

Councilwoman Carfagno referred to health waivers, do they get something for waiving coverage?

CFO Stollenwerk replied, yes, up to \$5,000.00.

Councilman Polistina announced we have to start cutting, the ACUA flows were down, but they are starting to come back up. Next year they may go up again, we need to be cognizant this year for next year, we need to get under the appropriations cap. He didn't see a place to add any of the unfunded requests, there was no way to add the 3 positions requested in public works.

Councilman Dewees offered to change the administrative professional to part-time.

Councilman Notaro replied, we need to find funding somewhere.

CFO Stollenwerk cautioned that we were still in negotiations, she has some money set aside from the City's last offer.

Council President Bucci confirmed we needed to cut \$300,000.00.

Councilman Smith replied yes, to get to zero.

Members discussed recycling for businesses and savings it could bring.

Councilman Polistina continued with the unfunded requests; he was not sure if we can add a patrolman either.

Chief Pollak stated the academy wouldn't start until May, things have gotten better, we have a PT test scheduled for next week as authorized by Council President Bucci and Mayor Chau, it was hard to find a trained officer.

Discussion ensued regarding the academy and whether it was funded.

Councilman Smith noted the benefits were not included.

CFO Stollenwerk added that the benefits package was an issue, the salary should be covered. One issue was prior employees, we pay \$63,000.00 for benefits for retired officers, those costs never go away.

Councilman Polistina would look at that and see where else to cut out.

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Superintendent Boyd offered to drop his requests to part-time, he felt he could cover all three. He's been short an employee for 8 months, his salary budget has \$284,00.00 in reserves.

Councilman Polistina reminded all that the contract was 2 years behind.

Superintendent Boyd advised his actual use was \$535,000.00 last year.

Councilman Polistina asked where his numbers came from?

Superintendent Boyd referred to page 5 of the packet, salaries as is come out to \$485,000.00 without increases.

CFO Stollenwerk noted vacation, on call pay and payouts were included.

Superintendent Boyd reiterated he wanted 3 part-timers with no benefits.

Councilman Polistina didn't feel there was room to do it, he suggested waiting until the contract was settled.

Councilman Dewees felt \$15,000.00 for the paint was low, that number may change.

Councilman Polistina eliminated the computer at the park and asked what safety equipment was needed?

Superintendent Boyd replied, updated confined space equipment.

Councilwoman Carfagno asked do we have the equipment now and is it being used?

Superintendent Boyd replied the equipment was 24-year-old, he would like new equipment for primary use, he explained the equipment requested.

Councilman Smith questioned the vehicle maintenance and buildings and grounds line.

CFO Stollenwerk noted it was reflected in budget transfers, same as budgeted in 2025.

Councilman Dewees felt we needed an asset management program, there are others we could look at.

Councilman Polistina suggested discussing it after the overall budget was done, if less staff it could be done, he would discuss at the next meeting.

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Councilman Polistina asked what equipment the Fire Department needed.

Captain Nixon replied they were just trying to get back, their budget was cut 10% last year; they replace 5 sets of turn out gear a year to keep on track, gear is \$5,500-6,000 per set, they need to keep to standards, he noted that truck maintenance was also in their budget.

Captain Nixon felt other budgets are increasing and his is decreasing.

Chief Pollak noted his was reduced last year.

Captain Nixon added that testing has gone up.

Chief Cummings added that radios and pagers need to be replaced, some maintenance has been put off, he referred to NFPA standards.

Councilman Polistina would come back to the \$9,400.00; we would leave out for now.

Councilwoman Carfagno referred to the summary and action plan-equipment for 2026, she asked how much for the 2 items?

Captain Nixon replied, \$13,500.00.

CFO Stollenwerk confirmed Council already did the ordinance.

Councilman Polistina stated he would come back to that with capital. As CFO Stollenwerk reiterated that has already been funded through the capital ordinance; he went over what was not removed from the unfunded requests.

Councilman Notaro asked if the asset management program would work for the sewer?

Superintendent Boyd replied yes, all public works and code enforcement.

Councilman Polistina continued and moved to page 5 of the agenda packet and asked about computer services.

CFO Stollenwerk responded that they are always going up.

Councilman Smith announced that we have 3.5 cents with additions, we were bare bones last year, we are still at an increase, we are looking to cut scraps, how much are we willing to put on the taxpayers, the money is not there.

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CFO Stollenwerk reiterated that we are not looking at a revenue problem, it's an expense problem. We have to find at least \$16,000.00 to make it legal since we added stuff.

Councilman Notaro stated sewer rates haven't been raised in 10 years.

Superintendent Boyd stated Council could pull a portion of his safety equipment, mark outs are increasing.

Councilman Polistina suggested cutting it to \$3,500.00 for equipment.

CFO Stollenwerk moved to affordable housing, we spent money and haven't built anything.

BA Canesi reminded all that Tunnels 2 Towers was ramping up, as well as Habitat, professional fees aren't going down, we needed to think about sewer upgrades if needed for Tunnels 2 Towers. She did not suggest cutting it, could be looking for it later.

Council President Bucci questioned OEM salary and wages.

CFO Stollenwerk repolled that we were getting a grant and charging salaries to that, that grant went away, we still had salaries to pay.

CFO Stollenwerk stated she would go back and look again, we have uncertainty with the union, we may be able to cut salaries and wages in the Fire Department since we are not using part timers as much, they did use all of their overtime, police on target, public works was not much.

Captain Nixon advised the Fire Department had an employee out for 6 months, he was back now, it was not planned for, the department faired pretty well.

All discussed overtime in the police department and officer in charge pay.

Superintendent Boyd suggested removing \$5,000 from streets and road, he wouldn't be sending anyone to CDL school this year.

Discussion ensued amongst all regarding power washing and painting the building, computer upgrades, police department tracking software, back up and data storage.

CFO Stollenwerk advised she would go through the unfunded list and tighten up salaries, she would go over uncertain items and try to get better costs, the big money is in salaries; she felt next year would be a little better.

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Councilman Smith asked what the increase would be if we were under the cap?

CFO Stollenwerk replied the tax increase will go down, maybe .02, she will look at negotiations.

Councilman Polistina did not feel there was much more we can do with operating budgets.

Regarding health insurance, Councilwoman Carfagno asked if it was worth looking somewhere else?

CFO Stollenwerk reported that the HIF had 20 applications, they only took 9, she advised that changing plan choices has to be negotiated, the union needed to be involved.

Council President Bucci commended CFO Stollenwerk for doing a great job.

CFO Stollenwerk replied it was a team effort.

CFO Stollenwerk asked for clarification on the asset management software.

Councilman Polistina noted it was an open item, Council would make a decision after the JIF had a chance to look at it.

Councilman Dewees referred to funding for mapping.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, we did get funding to get in compliance, \$15,000.00 was in capital, she referred to the page in the agenda with funded or appropriated items; we did sewer but not stormwater.

Councilman Dewees asked if that money could be used for software?

CFO Stollenwerk replied, most likely not, she would check the ordinance. She asked all to please review the requests sent by department heads including a summary from Fire Department regarding their asset management plan. Council may be able to free up money and appropriate to something else. She reviewed the capital plans.

Councilman Polistina asked Superintendent Boyd to contact more vendors for the insulation, we need to do better at maintaining our assets.

CFO Stollenwerk encouraged all to look through all capital requests, it needed to be approved prior to adopting the budget. The debt service shows the tax rate, as we retire the bond maintenance, we replace with something else.

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CFO Stollenwerk advised Council they need to consider the fleet as well, the Police Department needed to replace 3 vehicles, and, the Fire Department wanted a truck.

Councilman Dewees referred to 2nd floor of the football building, who requested it?

CFO Stollenwerk replied, it came from Superintendent Boyd.

Councilman Polistina referred to pump stations, he asked which one treats Dolphin Avenue, do we need to be concerned if that project happens?

Superintendent Boyd replied that it was upgraded recently, he was not sure where the new project would tie in to, it may tie in to Pleasantville.

CFO Stollenwerk announced she would bring back a list of changes to the next meeting and will see where Council was, re reiterated that we are in a strong financial position, the increase is in regular occupational increases, salaries have outpaced the percentage we are allowed to increase, we have to comply with the law, she reminded Council that our debt service was low.

Councilman Polistina noted that our Tax Assessor had done a great job.

**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 5:32pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Campbell  
Deputy Municipal Clerk