

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD BUDGET WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

At 6:03pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk. This meeting has been properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 25, 2020, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: Dewees Korngut, Madden, Smith, Perri

Absent: Utts, O'Neill

Mayor Chau, CFO Dawn Stollenwerk and Chief Newman were also present.

Council President Perri welcomed everyone to the meeting and deferred to CFO Stollenwerk to speak.

CFO Stollenwerk explained that the budget had to be ready by March 24, 2020. She proceeded to review key elements of this year's budget, which is a zero tax increase. Our net valuation went down \$6.5 million; prior years have been double that. Since our revaluation we've lost \$123 million in valuation which equates to \$1.2 million in revenue. Our tax collection rate is up, we saw an increase in Uniform Construction Code (UCC) fees, and interest earnings were up slightly. We received \$580,000.00 more in tax revenue because of the increase in the collection rate. The City made \$26,000.00 on a property sale. We ended the year with \$2.3 million in surplus available for appropriation. We had a savings in health insurance, a savings in fire, police and in court. The worksheet, previously handed out to Council, had been broken down into what was funded and what needed to be discussed; CFO Stollenwerk explained. She then reviewed the unfunded requests.

*At 6:09pm Municipal Clerk Canesi noted that the recording equipment did not appear to be functioning – she tested it, but was unsuccessful – she continued the meeting. It was later confirmed that no audio record of this meeting exists.*

CFO Stollenwerk continued; she asked Mayor Chau if he wanted to get Council's decision on the recycling containers.

Mayor Chau noted that all were familiar with his proposal; other municipalities have found it to be successful. It is his recommendation that we proceed. He asked if there were any questions.

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Councilwoman Madden added that it was almost \$100,000.00 over five years, we have a lot of unknowns coming up; she noted the Tricare increase. We were at zero increase and she would like to stay at zero.

Councilman Smith noted that the request was presently funded in the budget; we were at zero.

Councilwoman Korngut thought when it was brought up the first time that all were in agreement that it was a dead issue. She recalled they had a lifespan of seven years and it would take five to pay for them.

Mayor Chau advised that he owned one. He has had it for seven years and it was in very good shape.

Councilwoman Korngut added that there were 300 people who already purchased them.

Mayor Chau said that the containers could also be used for yard waste. He reiterated that other towns have been very satisfied.

Councilwoman Korngut felt it may be an issue for seniors. She would like to have a year where we reduce taxes.

Mayor Chau had not had any complaints or concerns from residents.

Councilwoman Korngut replied that she did not think residents were aware that this was being contemplated.

Council President Perri asked about the Recycling Tonnage Grant and Clean Communities money.

CFO Stollenwerk explained that we use those funds to offset ACUA fees, to pay for street sweeping, dog-depot bags, etc.

Councilman Smith replied that the ACUA seemed to be getting the benefit of it, yet we were spending \$100,000.00.

*At 6:20pm, Councilman Utts entered the meeting.*

Councilman Smith and Councilwoman Korngut reiterated that the ACUA was reaping benefits if we use the recycling totes but not passing any savings along to us.

Council President Perri said he would want the package researched more; with more than one quote. The grant was exclusive to one manufacturer. He would like CFO Stollenwerk to research and give her opinion.

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CFO Stollenwerk responded that it was a national purchasing contract. In 2018 it was \$173,000.00, now it's \$153,000.00. If Council waited it may go down. The ACUA pays the vendor and we would get a no interest loan from the ACUA to pay them. The ACUA received \$47,000.00 in the grant.

Council President Perri conducted a straw poll, with the following result: Councilman Utts and Councilman Dewees wanted more information. Councilwoman Korngut, Council President Perri and Councilwoman Madden do not wish to proceed.

Council President Perri asked Chief Newman to speak regarding police promotions.

Chief Newman reviewed the history of command staff positions being reduced; the job had gotten more complex and more administrative tasks were required. In 2016, when he was promoted to Chief, they received between 25-30 new policies. The vast majority of them are mandates from outside agencies and are unfunded. We needed to start thinking about the future, sees policies becoming more and more complex. He would also like to develop a framework for the future Chief of Police. We have a standing list and would not need a test. It would be a morale booster, and would assist with training.

CFO Stollenwerk asked, would a sergeant go to a lieutenant, a patrolman would go to sergeant, and we would hire another patrolman on the bottom?

Chief Newman replied that would be great, but it doesn't have to.

Councilwoman Madden asked about recent additions to staff.

Chief Newman responded that the recent hire was a replacement for an officer who left for another agency. Last year we added one.

Mayor Chau added that we run a three-man squad, with two officers and a sergeant.

Chief Newman replied that actually we were running a four-man squad right now, one is a training officer. We have three detectives and three administrators.

Council President Perri reviewed the complement: one chief, one captain, one lieutenant and five sergeants. That was eight in management, adding one more, that's nine.

Chief Newman confirmed.

Council President Perri commented that there was so much more that the state and federal levels required.

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Chief Newman explained that the calls for service have been increasing. In 2014 the Police Department had 16,000 calls, last year they had 24,000. Year to date the Police Department was at 2,500. The same time last year they had 2,200 calls for service. He did not see the trend changing.

Councilman Utts asked if the budget numbers account for payroll overhead.

CFO Stollenwerk replied no, just salary.

Chief Newman added that the State was talking about a licensing program, which will involve CEU's, to be a police officer. We were one of the few states that do not do it.

At the request of Councilman Utts, Chief Newman clarified the role of police administrative staff.

Council President Perri asked if there would be an overtime issue if this position was filled.

Chief Newman replied that there could be; there was always a potential for that.

Councilman Smith asked what the second lieutenant would be responsible for.

Chief Newman replied that the second lieutenant would do records, training and criminal. He was not in favor of splitting supervision over the patrol squads.

Council President Perri noted that this was unfunded. Page 13 of the budget package gave the breakdown of the impact of the PBA contract.

Councilwoman Madden noted that over the four-year term the increase was close to 16%.

Council President Perri replied that this was where we're at; it was the Chief's recommendation. He asked was there more discussion or would Council like to conduct a straw poll.

Councilman Utts asked for Mayor Chau's opinion

Mayor Chau stated that as the Chief had said, increased mandates have put a lot of work on the Captain; he was approached by the Chief about adding the position. From the amount of paper work he had seen and in discussions with the Chief, it's a lot of work, and we have to find the manpower.

Councilman Utts was worried that this would leave us a patrolman short and was concerned about overtime.

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Chief Newman replied could be; that would be the best-case scenario. If they had to make shift adjustments, they would. The short term would result in one squad being one man short.

Councilman Utts asked if increased workload resulted in overtime for the Captain.

Chief Newman replied no; overtime had reduced significantly.

Council President Perri asked how many specials were funded.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, three.

Chief Newman explained difficulty in recruiting for the position; all three positions were vacant at present.

Councilman Perri asked Council if they wanted to vote, or pass the matter on to the next meeting.

Councilman Utts abstained; he was not educated enough at this point.

Councilwoman Madden replied, no, she was concerned about a tax increase.

Councilwoman Korngut replied, no.

Councilman Dewees replied, yes.

Councilman Smith would like to discuss it at the next meeting; he would like to ask more questions.

Council President Perri will accept the extension to the next meeting.

Councilman Dewees said he had a request from the Advisory Board. Members were aging out; they were having problems organizing events. He read a summary of proposed tasks from a draft of a job description for a 'facilities and events coordinator'. Moving forward we are going to have a need; through the Advisory Board we were trying to get more events. He foresees the need to have someone manage this. He was proposing a \$6,000.00 stipend for this position. He was proposing a stipend because if the position did not work out, we could just pull it. He felt it will benefit the City. He asked for Council's feedback.

Council President Perri asked CFO Stollenwerk if should be a stipend or hourly.

CFO Stollenwerk replied that a stipend would probably be the best bet.

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Mayor Chau agreed with Councilman Dewees. We were reaching the stage where we were losing many long-term volunteers. He supported the need for the position.

Councilwoman Korngut was not necessarily opposed to it, but asked if we had tried to get a volunteer to do it.

Councilman Dewees replied that volunteers were limited in what they can and cannot do. He felt they were better off with an employee.

Councilman Utts liked the idea of a clearing house for events.

Councilwoman Korngut asked for confirmation that if it didn't work out, we could discontinue.

Councilman Dewees confirmed.

CFO Stollenwerk felt the position could also generate revenue.

Councilwoman Madden stated that this was the first she's hearing of it. Could we discuss at our next meeting?

Councilman Smith thought it was a great idea and was overdue.

Council President Perri felt if we had a Coordinator, that events at the school should be held and insurance waived.

Discussion ensued amongst all members.

Council President Perri felt events should be coordinated to be held at the school, he gave seniors as an example. As our activity, our insurance would cover them.

Council President Perri took a straw poll and all were generally in favor.

Councilwoman Korngut asked what the field improvements were.

Councilman Dewees explained that the football field may need sod; the Babe Ruth field needed to be graded. A volunteer had spent significant money on the turf and due to puddling the grass had become diseased. There were five light poles on the Bike Path that needed to be replaced; none were due to motor vehicle crashes, so the cost to replace them would be ours.

Councilwoman Madden asked if the Bike Path lights were on all night.

Councilman Dewees replied yes, dusk to dawn.

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Council President Perri confirmed that the \$15,000.00 was approved for fields.

Councilwoman Korngut questioned the increase for the Business Administrator; she asked when was the last time it was increased.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, never.

Mayor Chau added that the business administrator was appointed to 4-year term in December of 2015. At \$4,000.00 it was a stipend that had never increased. Former Council President Lischin and Mayor Chau met with the Business Administrator to discuss the \$4,000.00 stipend; she said she had not received an increase. If Council wished to reappoint her, she had requested an increase from \$4,000.00 to \$10,000.00. It may sound like a lot, but Mayor Chau felt she had done an excellent job. For \$4,000.00 it's was a steal. He asked another town what a business administrator gets, and we are getting a bargain. The Planning Board Secretary receives a salary of \$8,000.00.

Councilman Dewees stated that she provided purchasing oversight; she was good at drawing attention to areas of need. He felt she was worth the money and saved us that much.

Council President Perri added that he dealt with Mary all the time and she did a good job and we get our money's worth.

Council President Perri took a straw poll vote, all members were in favor.

Mayor Chau noted that the Business Administrator would do all of the work with the exception of one department.

Councilman Dewees replied that she did not do that department now.

Councilwoman Korngut stated that she thought all of Council knew what she contributed.

CFO Stollenwerk confirmed that the only outstanding decision was the police department promotions.

Councilman Smith spoke; he explained that he met with Tricare. They proposed to reduce the increase by \$250.00 per month, to \$3,000.00 a year for us, with certain parameters. There were details they wanted to adjust; they would no longer go to non-emergency calls for the Fire Department.

Captain Nixon, in attendance in the audience, stated that it was put in place after the City started paying for the service.

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Council President Perri noted the price to the public has increased from \$650.00 to \$900.00.

Councilman Smith asked about the increase to \$900.00; if you have insurance, they would take whatever they give you. Otherwise, the patient pays the \$900.00 - Tricare indicated to Councilman Smith that they did not balance bill.

Council President Perri stated that they were increasing the fee per ride; Council President Perri was dissatisfied that Tricare negotiated without the committee.

Councilman Smith replied that Tricare did not want to come down at all.

Clerk Canesi clarified that Tricare was going on non-emergency fire calls was not in the original agreement – she did not have an opinion on it, but it was a policy, Tricare was not changing the term of the contract.

Council President Perri would rather see the City pay the increase than pass the cost along to the consumer.

Councilman Smith asked Council President Perri if he balance-billed when he ran the Rescue Squad.

Councilwoman Korngut commented that just because the Rescue Squad didn't, doesn't mean Tricare won't.

Councilman Utts replied that Medicare would cover seniors.

Council President Perri stated he sees it every day in foreclosures: ambulance bills.

Council President Perri felt Linwood acted in bad faith by moving forward without consulting Northfield; one Council member cannot make a decision for the governing body.

Councilman Smith replied that he did not presume to do that.

Clerk Canesi asked Councilman Smith if he respond to the email Mr. Maneri sent on February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Smith replied, no.

Clerk Canesi asked how it was left with them.

Councilman Smith advised that he would take it back to our Council.



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Council President Perri read from the contract - dispatch procedures indicated Tricare should be on all fire calls and motor vehicle crashes.

Mayor Chau suggested going back to Linwood to reluctantly return to the original terms.

Council President Perri suggested a letter to Linwood that if negotiations were occurring we should have been told, to invoke the extension clause.

Councilman Smith did not want ill will towards Tricare; they were responding to his request to reduce costs.

Council President Perri directed Councilwoman Korngut to tell Linwood and Tricare we were not changing terms; we would accept increase or negotiations had to be reopened with an extension.

Council President Perri thanked CFO Stollenwerk.

**PUBLIC SESSION/FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER**

Council President Perri opened the public session, seeing no one wishing to speak he closed the public session.

Council President Perri read the meeting notices.

At 8:09pm on motion of Councilwoman Korngut, seconded by Council President Perri, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk