

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 22, 2024**

At 4:00pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk Mary Canesi, 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*

**At approximately 4:05pm Mayor Chau entered the meeting.*

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

2024 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Councilman Polistina gave an overview of the City's current financial position regarding funded items and reviewed the surplus balance.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that we are currently at a 9-cent tax increase, which exceeds both the appropriation and levy caps.

Councilman Smith asked what was the driver of the 9-cent increase? He felt the Council needed to do more than achieve a legal budget.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, mostly personnel costs.

CFO Stollenwerk explained we were replenishing surplus, a large portion of that was added assessments that we will not see going forward. There were increases in assessed valuation, now versus the past 12 years, which is a good trend.

**At approximately 4:05pm Mayor Chau entered the meeting.*

Councilman Polistina reviewed appropriations and personnel requests.

CFO Stollenwerk added that all requests have been funded in what is being presented here.

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Councilman Notaro asked about the Clean Communities position.

Clerk Canesi explained the position and that the stipend would be grant-funded.

CFO Stollenwerk and Councilman Polistina explained the budget overage, versus the levy cap. We must cut \$61,000.00 from the budget for it to be legal.

Chief VonColln asked if the Police Department's 5-year capital plan was included in this budget?

CFO Stollenwerk explained that items were disbursed throughout the budget where they belonged.

Chief VonColln stated that in the past we have waited for someone to retire to put out a test, under this practice, it takes several months to bring a new hire on board. He was trying to get ahead of that curve, and not have shifts short and incur overtime while we wait for a new hire. It was nice to have people in the pipeline.

Councilman Polistina asked for confirmation that if we don't replace the retiring firefighter, it would be a \$70,000 savings.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, yes. She noted that she did fund additional hours for a part-time firefighter at Captain Nixon's request.

Captain Nixon explained; he proposed scheduling a part-timer as a first responder on weekends, to give them hours. He was concerned that they weren't being scheduled sufficient hours to keep their skills up.

Clerk Canesi provided clarification as to the requisite '500-hour' threshold for part time firefighters in the Fire Contract; she suggested scheduling part-timers to replace the retiring full-time firefighter to provide opportunity for the desired number of hours.

Captain Nixon and Chief Cummings both said they felt that would not be easy, the part time firefighters all have full-time jobs.

Lengthy discussion ensued amongst all; a thorough review was conducted of each appropriation, and an explanation provided for each budget line. All reviewed the capital plan and discussed elimination of non-necessary projects. Sufficient proposed appropriations were eliminated to place the budget at a legally adoptable level; all agreed further review and reductions would be considered at the next budget meeting.

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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.

MEETING NOTICES

Council President Leeds read the meeting notices.

At approximately 6:42pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk