

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD BUDGET WORK SESSION
MARCH 6, 2014**

At 4:09pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk. It was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on February 26, 2014, in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor McGee. Following the flag salute a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chau, Dewees, O'Neill, Perri, Travagline
Absent: Devine, Piergiovanni

Also in attendance were Mayor Jerry McGee and CFO Dawn Stollenwerk.

READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilman Chau, seconded by Councilman Dewees to dispense with the reading of the minutes of February 4, 2013 and February 13, 2014. They have been posted, distributed to Council, and are on file in the Municipal Clerk's Office.

Roll call: Mr. Chau – yes; Mr. Devine – absent; Mr. Dewees –yes; Mr. O'Neill – yes; Mr. Perri – yes; Mr. Piergiovanni – absent; Mr. Travagline – yes Motion carries.

Council President Travagline stated that the budget is presently at a 2.37 cent increase. He added that he is not comfortable with surplus being over 50% and would like to see that below 50%, but is comfortable with the increase.

Councilman Devine entered the meeting at 4:12pm

Councilman O'Neill asked if staffing increases are in the budget.

CFO Stollenwerk stated all staffing requests have been taken out of the budget.

Council President Travagline noted that the need for the Fire Department to be first responder on EMS calls should be examined to determine if it is necessary.

Councilman Chau explained the sources of the overtime, lack of availability of volunteers on day shifts and agreed that scheduling can be reviewed to ensure maximum efficiency and minimal overtime. He added that he is now approving all

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compensatory time or overtime.

Council President Travagline directed the CFO to reduce Fire Department overtime by \$10,000.00 to \$25,000.00.

Council was in general agreement.

Councilman O'Neill suggested reducing Sewer operating expense.

CFO Stollenwerk explained the history of providing a little bit of a cushion to provide quick access to funds in an emergency.

Jim Clark, Public Works Manager, provided examples.

CFO Stollenwerk identified the Birch Grove Park Salary and Wage amount for full staffing to be \$ 102,767.40. The line item reflects \$108,000.00, the difference, which CFO Stollenwerk clarified as, charges for possible overtime and special events.

Councilman O'Neill stated he would like the budget to reflect the full staffing budget number of \$103,000.00 rather than \$108,000.00.

Discussion ensued and there was a general disagreement with the reduction.

Councilman O'Neill suggested reducing funds provided to sports groups since the City is now paying for their insurance. He suggested reducing Family Association of Northfield to \$7,500.00, Babe Ruth to \$2,500.00 and leave Little League at \$2,500.00 for a total reduction of \$4,000.00. He further recommended reducing Construction Official salary and wages by \$2,000.00.

Discussion ensued and Council generally was not in favor of reduction.

Councilman O'Neill suggested that Egg Harbor Township is overcharging us for dispatch.

CFO Stollenwerk explained that she spoke with Peter Miller and that there are other figures that need to be considered because of the way an interlocal is budgeted.

Council President Travagline urged exploration of all options.

Councilman O'Neill suggested reducing LOSAP.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that if more people qualify we would not be able to fund it, but it can be reduced some.

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Councilman O'Neill questioned Fire Department Personal Protective Equipment.

CFO Stollenwerk explained the accumulated absence fund and that Chief James will get approximately \$68,000.00.

Councilman O'Neill suggested cutting Mayor and Council operating expense to \$3,000.00.

CFO Stollenwerk explained an electronic requisitioning system at a proposed cost of \$3,500.00.

Councilman O'Neill suggested reducing Tax Assessor operating expense by \$500.00, Planning Board operating expense to \$9,000.00 and Engineering operating expense to \$30,000.00.

Councilman Dewees stated he was opposed to the Engineering reduction.

CFO Stollenwerk cautioned that fees such as Department of Transportation grant engineering fees come out of the Engineering line, and if you get a grant you may not be able to fund it.

Discussion ensued and except for Councilman Dewees Council generally agreed to reduce Engineering to \$30,000.00.

Councilman O'Neill suggested reducing Buildings and Grounds operating expense.

Council was generally opposed to this recommendation.

Councilman O'Neill proposed reducing solid waste.

CFO Stollenwerk noted that many associated costs were charged off to other areas.

Council President Travagline asked how much there is in lost assessments, in cents.

CFO stated about 1.5 cents. She added the tax increase now is 2 cents without affecting revenues. She stated the decreased use of surplus will not be exact because the reserve for uncollected taxes changes.

Councilman O'Neill stated he is working on a meeting with Somers Point and Linwood, separately, on different shared services. He added that he is looking at outsourcing trash with ACUA.

Mayor McGee asked if Councilman O'Neill can be more specific with regard to what

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is being proposed to being shared.

Councilman O'Neill stated he didn't know yet.

Councilman Perri stated he still wants a part-time Administrator as it will reduce attorneys costs.

Councilman O'Neill asked if labor and solicitor costs can be cut in half with an administrator.

Councilman Perri stated he thinks so.

Councilman O'Neill and Councilman Perri advocated for an Administrator.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that with added use of surplus, we are at 2.3 cents. She asked if Council would like to reduce use of surplus to get back to 2.0 cents. She also asked Council how they intend to fund a Grant Writer.

Council President Travagline suggested using \$15,000.00 of the proposed reduction in surplus for the Grant Writer.

6:34pm Mayor McGee left the meeting.

6:36pm Mayor McGee returned to the meeting

Discussion ensued with regard to a Grant Writer.

Councilman Perri suggested taking \$35,000.00 from capital and \$10,000.00 from surplus to fund an Administrator.

Municipal Clerk Canesi listed the stipulations that were given to the Solicitor for inclusion in the contract for the Grant Writer. She stated the contract is to stipulate a not to exceed amount and for any grant he thinks the City may be interested in, he will provide a fact sheet free of charge which includes the estimated number of hours that he will anticipate expending on that grant, if we authorize him to proceed. She clarified that he cannot proceed on anything unless it is authorized by resolution by Council. She added that all of this was given to the Solicitor to factor into an agreement. She explained the \$2,000.00 retainer will be debited against the first grant that he applies for at the hourly rate and when the retainer is exhausted it will not be replenished. She stated that she wasn't sure if the

Grant Writer has agreed to any of this but the Solicitor was directed to put it in the contract.

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CFO Stollenwerk explained that she can put a line in Executive to fund a Grant Writer/Administrator at an amount of \$45,000 with a salary and wage line of \$1.00 to be able to transfer in.

PUBLIC SESSION

Council President Travagline opened the meeting to the public and asked if anyone wished to speak on any subject.

Craig Tanzola, 10 Magnolia Court, stated the tax rate will be a 6.25 cent increase if we are at 2.0 cents because of the County and School Taxes. He complimented CFO Stollenwerk for her experience and expertise. He alleged that the City is in litigation for comp time and an Administrator would fix these problems. He stated the City should share inspections and urged to hire a part-time Firefighter. He added that the seasonal Snack Bar personnel would be eligible for benefits if their hours are increased. He urged the hiring of a part-time Grant Writer/Administrator.

Council President Travagline, seeing no one else wishing to speak, closed the public session.

Councilman Perri read the meeting notices.

At 6:48pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk