

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

At 6:03pm this meeting was called to order by Municipal Clerk Mary Canesi. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on March 8, 2025, and in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Councilwoman Carfagno; Councilman Dewees; Councilman Notaro; Councilman Polistina; Councilman Smith

**Absent:** Councilwoman Kern; Council President Bucci\*

*\*Council President Bucci was not present when attendance was taken but arrived at approximately 6:23pm.*

Municipal Clerk/Business Administrator Canesi, Chief Financial Officer Stollenwerk, Police Chief VonColln, Police Captain Pollak, and Fire Captain Nixon were also in attendance.

Council President Pro Tempore Dewees called for a motion on Resolution 89-2025.

**RESOLUTION**

Councilman Polistina motioned, Councilwoman Carfagno seconded, to adopt Resolution 89-2025.

Solicitor Facenda read the following resolution into the record:

**“CITY OF NORTHFIELD, NJ, RESOLUTION NO. 89-2025**

**AUTHORIZING DEBLASIO AND ASSOCIATES CONSULTING ENGINEERS AND PLANNERS TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT KNOWN AS FY2026 COMMUNITY FUNDING PROJECT GRANT FOR RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS AT BIRCH GROVE PARK**

**WHEREAS**, DeBlasio and Associates Consulting Engineers and Planners have submitted expenditure requests outlining professional engineering services that will be provided to the City of Northfield for the professional engineering services for the FY2026 Community Funding Project Grant, sponsored by Congressman Jeff Van Drew, as follows:

1. Meet with the City to discuss and select the project application.
2. Prepare Engineer's Estimate of Construction Cost.
3. Prepare Project Narrative and Concept Plan.

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

4. Assist the City with resolution and adoption.
5. Submit the grant application.

**WHEREAS**, copies of said expenditure requests have been provided to the Common Council of the City of Northfield for their review; and

**WHEREAS**, the Common Council has deemed it appropriate to authorize the expenditure of these monies as follows; and

<u><b>Project Description</b></u>	<u><b>Estimated Purchase Order Amount</b></u>
Necessary and related activities	\$1,500.00
<b>Not to Exceed</b>	\$1,500.00

**WHEREAS**, certification of funds has been received from the Municipal Finance Officer and charged against account Engineering: 5-01-20-165-200.

**THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Common Council of the City of Northfield that this Project is approved as submitted by DeBlasio and Associates Consulting Engineers and Planners.

I, Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk of the City of Northfield, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted at a Special Meeting of the Common Council of the City of Northfield held this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March 2025

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk”

Council President Pro Tempore Dewees asked if there were any questions or comments from Council; seeing none he requested a roll call.

Roll Call: Mrs. Carfagno – yes; Mr. Dewees – yes; Mrs. Kern – absent; Mr. Notaro – yes; Mr. Polistina – yes; Mr. Smith – yes; Mrs. Bucci – absent; Motion carried.

*At 6:07pm Solicitor Facenda departed the meeting, as previously scheduled.*

**2025 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Councilman Polistina announced that since the last meeting he went through every line and every department; he suggested trying to cut discretionary expenses such as operating expenses and overtime. He found just under \$22,000 doing that. He referred to the average rate of inflation of 26.5% and to the consumer price index, which was 20.5% without energy and food, meaning consumer goods, that we spend here. If we cut anything more there is no room for any surplus next year and we'll be

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

having the same discussion. He asked if anyone else found anything, and to CFO Stollenwerk, he asked if this was a 7-cent increase.

CFO Stollenwerk confirmed.

Councilman Polistina asked if she had a good number for the wastewater.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, not yet.

Councilwoman Carfagno recalled someone said they were going to look at insurance; is that far out?

CFO Stollenwerk replied, yes.

Councilman Polistina referred to a comment from Council President Bucci from a prior meeting about getting an initially favorable rate in the first year and then it perhaps being difficult to get back into the State Health Benefits.

CFO Stollenwerk stated that she'd sent our loss history reports to our Risk Management Consultant and will be speaking with them tomorrow.

Councilman Smith said he had noticed that Hamilton Township's budget is increasing by \$500,000, the same as ours, but they were a much larger town.

CFO Stollenwerk explained that Hamilton Township doesn't have post-retirement health benefits; we have 44 employees that are still on our retirement plan. Early retirees were just as expensive as active employees, we don't see the savings there until retirees become Medicare eligible. This has been sunsetted in some union contracts and eventually those savings will be realized.

Councilman Smith referred to non-discretionary costs such as contracts that have been negotiated, and then compared to significant increases in operating expenses of 30, 40, and 50%. He understood from Chief VonColln that some of these are things we have to do, but we need to tighten this up. The police department needs \$30,000 to outfit a new vehicle, we may not be able to do it.

Councilman Polistina asked could that vehicle be used in another area without outfitting it.

Chief VonColln replied, yes, it could be, and he won't have to ask for a new vehicle this year, he was also putting Chief Newman's old vehicle back in service.

Councilman Dewees noted, but unless outfitted, it can't be used for patrol.

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

Councilman Polistina reviewed the budget line by line and suggested cutting each by 10%. He added, that by the time Council signs everything it's pretty much been purchased, he suggested Council gets more involved on the front end, before things are purchased.

Councilwoman Carfagno said she had inquired a few months back about the Engineer being at every meeting. She suggested Engineer DeBlasio come to every other meeting, instead of having the engineer at every meeting.

*At 6:23pm Council President Bucci arrived.*

Clerk Canesi explained we would then incur expenses for phone calls that happen between the meetings, which had to be made to get the answers you could have gotten if the Engineer were present.

Councilman Dewees asked was it too late to go back to all departments; they should have been invited.

CFO Stollenwerk replied, the big departments were here.

Councilman Smith felt all was on the table, every operating expense should be cut by 10%.

CFO Stollenwerk suggested not cutting legal, we are negotiating with one of the bargaining units, she and Clerk/BA Canesi had discussed that we may not have budgeted high enough for the affordable housing numbers.

Councilman Smith reiterated we need to cut.

Chief VonColln explained why his operating expenses shouldn't be cut.

Councilman Smith noted that 10% of police operating expenses is \$19,000; can each of those lines be scaled back to find \$19,000?

Chief VonColln explained mandatory expenses and limited resources.

CFO Stollenwerk stated cutting 10% from each line will reduce the increase by a penny.

Councilman Dewees felt we needed to force every department to do it and live with it; some things may get sacrificed.

CFO Stollenwerk noted we keep \$15,000 in our sewer budget for capital, to be able to make quick repairs. She asked Council if they wanted to cut it to \$10,000.

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

Councilman Dewees suggested against that.

CFO Stollenwerk asked if we could we cut firefighter protection equipment.

Captain Nixon replied, we only got three last year.

Councilman Dewees suggested a hiring freeze.

CFO Stollenwerk responded that we have one retiree coming up, we did not fund that other position and there was not an extra health benefits package in there for a new employee.

Councilman Polistina asked if the Council wanted to cut operating expenses by 10%. He was not in favor.

Council President Bucci was also a no, and said she felt this budget was a lesson; prices go up every year, the taxes need to go up. We had a zero for a number of years, which was catching up to us.

Councilman Smith said he did not believe it's due to zeroes over the years, each year has it's challenges. Certain costs have come up and certain new expenses that have led to increases and that is not because we were at zero increase in 2020.

Councilman Polistina felt the zeroes were due to spending less in prior years, we were catching up to replace outdated equipment.

Councilman Notaro asked if they should clear purchases before they purchase?

Clerk/BA Canesi explained that is her responsibility, but she can get pushback from elected officials when she challenges a purchase. She would appreciate support.

Councilman Polistina agreed.

Councilman Polistina asked for a straw poll.

Council President Bucci called for a straw poll to cut operating expenses 10% across the board.

Councilman Notaro, Councilwoman Carfagno, Councilman Smith and Councilman Polistina voted yes.

Council President Bucci and Councilman Dewees voted no.

Clerk Canesi announced the results were four out of six in favor.

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD COUNCIL  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 13, 2025**

CFO Stollenwerk suggested not cutting legal, affordable housing, or engineering, and leaving the capital section alone. She added that we can't cut contractual obligations, such as solid waste. Only discretionary spending.

**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**

Councilman Smith read the meeting notices.

At approximately 6:56pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk