

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD BUDGET WORK SESSION
MARCH 22, 2012**

At 4:00pm, this meeting was called to order by Mary Canesi, Municipal Clerk. It was advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on March 17, 2012, in accordance with Public Law 75, Chapter 231.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mrs. Brown, Mr. Dewees, Mr. O'Neill, Mr. Perri, Mr. Polistina, Mr. Vain, Mr. Carew

Northfield CFO Dawn Stollenwerk was also in attendance.

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor Mazzeo; following the flag salute a moment of silence was observed.

2012 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Council President Carew deferred to the CFO who provided a summary of the budget. The City is under the appropriation cap and levy cap and we are currently at a 1.82 cent increase. She stated that the City lost \$9.6m in ratables, which equaled approximately \$75,000 in revenue for the local purpose tax as a result of tax appeals.

Mayor Mazzeo reviewed outstanding items, including dispatch, a firefighter, and how much surplus to use. He suggested hiring two part time firefighters, and possibly next year a full time position. This would save approximately \$20,000 in benefits.

Councilman O'Neill asked for the overtime and comp time numbers from 2011; he suggested the City hire only one part time person. Assistant Chief Crooks responded that overtime was \$16,000. Council President Carew added that non-working hours such as training are also in the overtime number. Councilman Polistina spoke, saying that there are 777 hours of comp time being carried right now.

Fire Chief Martinelli explained why part time firefighters are not a good idea; these individuals are not as reliable or invested in the City.

Discussion ensued amongst all members of Council regarding the elimination of the first responder program, the merits of full time vs. part time, the costs of overtime, and the number of hours a part time firefighter would work. Stollenwerk explained the use of part time firefighters as opposed to a one full time at a recruit rate; she added that it is now budget-neutral for this year. Council President Carew said we will keep the number at two part timers for this year and move the money from benefits to salaries to cover it.

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Councilman Vain explained the Cultural Committee's request for \$1,000 additional this year.

Mayor Mazzeo asked if Channel 2 had been negotiated. Councilman O'Neill stated that the number should be the same as last year at \$1,500.

Councilwoman Brown stated that we are holding firm at 50/50 split for shared court with Linwood, but that negotiations have not been finalized.

Council President Carew said there is \$340,000 in the budget right now for dispatch. Councilman O'Neill suggested waiting another month, to see if there are other options. Carew requested that Chief James provide an overview and opinion of Egg Harbor Township as our dispatch provider.

Chief James responded and explained the history, including initial issues with staffing. He has concerns with current staffing levels being proposed by Somers Point. Start up costs are an issue, and if we started now we'd be 6 months out because of how long it will take to set up. Also, with Somers Point, we have to buy and maintain all equipment; we don't have these costs with Egg Harbor Township.

Chief Martinelli noted that it took ten years to get dispatch service where it is today. He does not want to start over.

Council President Carew directed Stollenwerk to drop dispatch to \$315,000 with Egg Harbor Township; she stated that we are now at 1.56 cents. Carew advised to take another \$50,000 from surplus; Stollenwerk said we are at 1.04 cents. She said this is an increase of \$10 per \$100,000 in assessed valuation, and a 1.31% increase over last year.

Councilman O'Neill urged the use of more surplus. Councilman Polistina explained the danger of using too much surplus. You can't replenish it, and then have to make it up in each succeeding budget year.

Councilman Perri requested an explanation of capital; Carew responded. Discussion ensued with regard to incorporating 2012-2013 capital in the 2012 budget. Carew stated that it was the recommendation of the auditor that we do so. Stollenwerk explained that Northfield has projects that are already committed that will require that we borrow money very soon if you don't transfer the \$100,000 into the capital improvement fund.

Councilwoman Brown mentioned a letter from the City Clerk to all of Council, requesting the addition of a deputy clerk's position. Carew directed Stollenwerk to take \$25,000 out of capital and put it in the City Clerks' budget for a part time person.

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Council President Carew opened the meeting to public for anyone wishing to speak.

Robert James, Chief of Police, 1600 Shore Road, referred to earlier discussion of an attendance tracking system for all City employees. The cost would be roughly \$15,000 to 20,000. He asked if this was still being considered. Council President Carew replied that this is something they are very interested in pursuing.

Seeing no others wishing to speak, Council President Carew closed the public session.

Council President Carew read the meeting notices.

Councilwoman Brown noted that there is a City Council meeting scheduled for September 25th, which is Yom Kippur, a high holiday for the Jewish faith. Council may wish to consider rescheduling.

At 6:03pm, on motions properly made and seconded, this meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Canesi, RMC, Municipal Clerk