

**BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
WASHINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES – Budget Meeting January 12,
2013**

The Budget Meeting of the Borough of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey was held in the Council Chambers of Borough Hall at 9:00 A.M.

Mayor McDonald read the following Statement into the Record:

“The requirements of the ‘Open Public Meetings Law’ P.L. 1975, Chapter 231 have been satisfied in that adequate notice of this meeting has been published in the Star Gazette and posted on the Bulletin Board stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting as required by law.

Mayor McDonald led everyone in the flag salute.

ROLL CALL:

Roll Call: Higgins, Jewell, Thompson, Torres, Gleba, McDonald

Absent: Conry

Also Present: Kristine Blanchard, RMC Borough Manager/Clerk
Natasha Turchan, CFO

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Manager Blanchard stated that her and CFO Turchan provided Council with a solid starting ground for the 2013 budget. This budget is very preliminary and missing a few key factors such as the Washington Township Police Department shared services agreement and the settlement of the CWA contract. Also, a few capital items, which Manager Blanchard recommended that the Council reduce to bring it to a flat budget (zero increase). Lastly, the calculation of the reserve for uncollected taxes.

The capital items that Manager Blanchard recommends Council remove from budget include a \$17,365 request from Recreation. Most of that cost is comprised of replacement of the grandstand safety fencing/backstop fence as well as dugout fence and fence and gates to prevent loitering and vandalism. Manager Blanchard recommends that Council bring Recreation in to discuss further. Also recommended to come out of the budget is a request from the Finance Office for new Tax Collector safes although they should be replaced in the near future.

Manager Blanchard also states that one capital item included in this budget and she recommends it remain in the budget is the cost of a new front loader. The current loader

is over thirty years old and in the past two years the Borough has spent \$10,000 in repairs to the loader. Manager Blanchard received three estimates on the purchase of a new loader and the estimated cost is \$129,000. CFO Turchan and Manager Blanchard proposed to use the \$112,000 of federal grant money from downtown to offset the expense of the loader and reduce the impact on the budget.

Councilman Torres asked about the repairs that need to be made to the air conditioning in the fire hall. Manager Blanchard stated that the estimates that she received to repair the two air handlers located in the fire hall are approximately \$25,000.

Councilman Higgins stated that he would like to see the sewer rate come down. CFO Turchan recommended that the Borough do not lower the rate this year and re-visit the idea of possibly lowering the rate next year when CFO Turchan anticipates there will be no more interfund loans.

Councilman Jewell questioned the \$69,000 amount budgeted to fire hydrant charges. Councilman Jewell stated that New Jersey American Water may be interested in building a water tower on Washburn Avenue. If that is the case, Councilman Jewell stated that possibly Manager Blanchard can work out a deal with NJAW for reduced fire hydrant charges or even zero charges. Councilman Jewell added that if this was possible, he would like to see that money earmarked towards improving the Borough's roads.

CFO Turchan added that this budget includes an additional full-time DPW employee. Manager Blanchard stated that as the economy takes a downturn, there are more abandoned homes in Washington Borough and it requires more DPW manpower to maintain these properties. Also, DPW has been assisting recreation more recently and there have been a lot of storms creating more work such as brush pickup. Councilman Jewell recommends the Borough hold off on that full time employee. After discussion, Council agreed to a part time DPW employee starting mid year.

Councilman Torres suggested Council go through the budget page by page to discuss those items that can potentially be reduced. Councilman Torres suggested reducing the amount budgeted in general admin printing and binding on page 1. Manager Blanchard agreed to reduce the amount from \$1,400 to \$700 stating that for example, the Borough has been running letterhead off on copy paper to save money.

The budgeted amount for mayor and council on page 3 will be reduced from \$16,250 to \$12,500. After Council discussion it was agreed to take the increase out of the budget at this time.

Councilman Torres questioned if the \$3,525 budgeted for the tax collection other contractual services and the \$1,700 budgeted for tax collection materials and supplies on page 7 could possibly be reduced. CFO Turchan will check with the Tax Collector to see if either of those numbers can be reduced.

On page 8 it was agreed upon to reduce the tax assessment legal services budgeted amount from \$13,000 to \$5,000.

On page 10, the planning board legal advertising budgeted amount of \$3,000 is an error. The correct amount should be \$300.

The board of adjustment budgeted amount on page 11 of \$4,055.52 was agreed to be reduced to \$3,000.

Councilman Higgins requested that Council be provided with a breakout of the costs that make up the \$12,421.56 amount budgeted to streets and roads seasonal on page 21.

Councilman Torres stated that the cleaning supplies and maintenance seems to be repetitive throughout the whole budget. Manager Blanchard will take a look and report back.

Councilman Torres suggested Council decrease the budgeted amount for electricity on page 36. CFO Turchan agreed and will reduce the amount from \$54,000 to \$50,000. Also, on page 36 it was agreed to reduce the budgeted amount for telephone from \$20,000 to \$18,000. As well as, reducing the amount budgeted for natural gas on page 37 from \$30,000 to \$20,000.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business to come before, it was moved by Jewell, seconded by Torres that the meeting be adjourned at 12:00pm.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion carried.

Scott McDonald, Mayor

Kristine Blanchard, RMC
Borough Manager/Clerk