

BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
WASHINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES –
Budget Meeting February 11, 2014

The Budget Meeting of the Borough of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey was held in the Council Chambers of Borough Hall at 7:00 P.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, Jones, Thompson, Torres, Conry, McDonald

Absent: Gleba

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

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Manager Blanchard stated that her memo to Council summarized the 2014 Municipal Budget with the exception of some of the capital purchases that are now included. Manager Blanchard added that she did include additional money for a full time Recreation Director, also the cost of a new mason dump for the D.P.W., \$100,000 for road paving, the cost of the new boiler as well as a request from the Washington Borough Fire Department for new equipment totaling \$22,000. CFO Turchan added that a big change to the budget is \$80,000 to the Recreation Commission for salary and wages and other expenses as Recreation sees fit. Manager Blanchard added that the fire suppression system at the D.P.W. garage needs some work and the estimate is \$5,000. There is also a need for sediment control near the air conditioning unit at Borough Hall which is another estimated \$5,000.

Councilman Higgins suggested going through the budget page by page addressing any questions that Council may have. Councilman Higgins asked what makes up the general administration costs on page 1. CFO Turchan replied that is the salary and wages for the Borough Manager and her administrative staff. Councilman Higgins’ next question on page 1 asked why the increase budget amount of \$8,500 for postage. Manager Blanchard

replied that Councilwoman Gleba asked for additional money for mailings from the Senior Services Committee. Councilman Higgins stated that \$4,390 was spent last year and feels that reducing the budget number for postage to \$6,500 will still provide Councilwoman Gleba with enough funds for her additional mailings from the Senior Services Committee. Manager Blanchard added that also on page is the line item office equipment which needs to be raised from \$850 to \$2,000. Manager Blanchard stated this is due to the cost of the rental of the postage machine and the folding machine.

Councilman Higgins strongly disagreed with the amount of \$142,000 budgeted for legal services on page 5. Manager Blanchard replied that the \$100,000 is an estimate for the litigation involving the D.P.W. garage and the \$42,000 is for the retainer. Councilman Higgins suggested bringing Attorney Joe Trinity in to discuss how much longer the litigation will proceed. Councilman Higgins questioned the \$4,000 amount budgeted under contractual services for the Planning Board when only \$800 was spent last year. Manager Blanchard replied that it is difficult for the Planning Board to anticipate what may come before them in any given year and they budget the same amount every year just in case. Mayor McDonald added that the Planning Board canceled their February meeting due to a lack of an agenda. CFO Turchan suggested taking \$1,000 off the amount budgeted making it \$3,000.

CFO Turchan stated that last year Council provided Recreation with \$47,500 and this year the amount budgeted is \$80,000. After much Council discussion, it was agreed to reduce the \$80,000 budgeted amount to \$65,000 for Recreation to use towards the salaries of the Recreation Director and Secretary or however they choose to use their funds. Councilman Torres questioned the increase to the group health insurance line item on page 9. CFO Turchan replied that there is an employee who added himself and his spouse as a family plan to the Borough's insurance plan. Manager Blanchard and CFO Turchan will look into the payments and the premium numbers and review to see if this line item can be reduced.

Councilman Higgins asked about the increase by \$88,000 to the Washington Township Police Department on page 9. CFO Turchan stated that is just an estimate because the Borough does not have the final numbers from the yet. They are meeting on February 22, 2014 and after that meeting, the Borough will have the actual numbers. Councilman Torres asked about the increase to the Office of Emergency Management. Manager Blanchard replied that she provided a slight increase to that line item because she would like to see more accomplished with the O.E.M. Department.

At this time, Councilman Higgins made a motion that the budget discussion only continue for another thirty minutes, seconded by Torres.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

Councilman Higgins asked about the increase to streets and roads on page 11. Manager Blanchard replied that there is a 1.25% in raises and also added into this figure is the

current part time employee going full time. CFO Turchan stated that the salary and wage line item for the streets and road category will be cut by \$25,000 due to overtime listed twice. Councilman Jones questioned why the amount budgeted for fire hydrants is higher than the actual spent on page 11. Manager Blanchard replied that she will have double check to make sure all the bills are in before adjusting the numbers. Council asked what makes up the line item materials and supplies on page 12. Manager Blanchard replied that she will check with D.P.W. on what the materials and supplies line item is comprised of. Councilman Higgins questioned the buildings and grounds maintenance on page 13. Manager Blanchard replied that this has to do with the maintenance of the air conditioning and heating unit at Borough Hall. Councilman Higgins suggested since the Borough purchased a new boiler this year, this line item can be lowered. Manager Blanchard agreed to reduce it to \$5,000.

Councilwoman Conry asked if the time clocks were included in the 2014 budget. Manager Blanchard replied that she has that cost information and there should be room in the administrative budget for that. Councilman Torres asked if the amount in building maintenance is enough due to the amount of maintenance that Borough Hall needs such as the roof, gutters, painting, etc. Manager Blanchard replied that she agreed and would like to increase that line item by \$10,000. Councilman Torres also questioned the amount budgeted for electricity on page 16. CFO Turchan stated that she will pull the costs for electricity and review that line item.

RECAP:

Manager Blanchard stated that the postage line item will be reduced to \$6,500 and she will be adding \$1,150 to office equipment for the rental of the postage machine. Manager Blanchard added that she will bring Attorney Joe Trinity in for discussion. Manager Blanchard will also check for the amounts of the last bill for the group health insurance plan and fire hydrants as well. Manager Blanchard will change the D.P.W. overtime line item which was put into the budget twice in error. Manager Blanchard will also check on bills relating to materials and supplies such as chemicals and road materials. Manager Blanchard will also drop Recreation to \$65,000 and add \$10,000 to building maintenance. CFO Turchan stated that an additional \$1,000 from other contractual services will be consolidated to contractual services.

Councilman Higgins asked when Council can review the sewer budget. Councilman Higgins stated that it was raised by \$5 four years ago. Councilman Higgins would like to see a \$2.50 reduction per household. Mayor McDonald suggested discussing the sewer budget at the next Council meeting. Councilman Higgins added that CFO Turchan, Manager Blanchard, and Municipal Auditor Ferry did a great job taking the Borough from where they were financially to their more positive current position.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business to come before, it was moved by Higgins, seconded by Torres that the meeting be adjourned at 8:35pm.

Ayes: 6, Nays: 0
Motion carried.

Scott McDonald, Mayor

Kristine Blanchard, RMC
Borough Manager/Clerk