

**BOROUGH OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
WASHINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL MINUTES –
Budget Meeting March 13, 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: Gleba, Higgins, Jones, Thompson, Torres, Conry, McDonald

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

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Manager Blanchard stated to Council that the budget distributed at tonight’s meeting is the one that was previously presented including the changes that resulted in a net of \$9,800. Additionally \$25,243 in cuts were made which brings the budget down by \$35,062. Manager Blanchard added that it is not a flat budget, it’s about one cent less than last year. Manager Blanchard also added that it needs to be introduced as is and then an amendment will be made to include the additional cuts along with the police budget numbers. Manager Blanchard stated that the Washington Township Police numbers were received today and are down about \$12,000 from what was budgeted. The total is \$2,289,461 and Manager Blanchard will provide Council with a copy. The Mayor and Council’s salary line item was cut to \$14,500 to keep it the same as last year along with the \$12,000 adjustment to the police budget. Also, Manager Blanchard and CFO Turchan reduced streets and roads back to \$115,000, keeping the original amount of \$10,000 for hot patch. Manager Blanchard added that if there is anything else Council would like to change, those changes can be included in the amendment document which will be prepared and ready for Council on April 15, 2014. Manager Blanchard stated that there will be a public hearing in regards to the budget and she will introduce the amendment, hopefully adopting the amendment and the budget in the same night.

Councilman Higgins questioned if the changes made at the February 11th budget meeting only net \$9,800, he feels it should be a higher number. CFO Turchan stated that she made all the changes that Council requested and the net effect was \$9,800. CFO Turchan will double check all the changes before it is time to adopt the budget. Councilwoman Gleba asked CFO Turchan where in the budget is the loan for the parking lot from the BID. CFO Turchan stated that \$15,000 is in the Borough Manager's budget under other expenses and \$309,000 is in capital for a total of \$324,000. Manager Blanchard added that the Borough will take over the responsibility of that loan from the BID in September.

Councilwoman Gleba also asked for explanation on the healthcare coverage costs and are employee contributions viewed as revenues. CFO Turchan replied that it is an offsetting appropriation. CFO Turchan added that when payroll is done and deductions for healthcare costs are withdrawn from employee's paychecks it goes against the budget appropriation line. Councilwoman Gleba asked for Council's permission to create mailings that will be directed to the Borough's senior citizens. There are so few residents that Councilwoman Gleba has officially registered as seniors that the cost is minimal and will not affect the budget. In addition, Councilwoman Gleba recommended that Council reduce the chemical line item under streets and roads that is currently set at \$50,000. Manager Blanchard feels it should be left as is to ensure the Borough has enough hot patch and cold patch to make the necessary repairs. Councilwoman Gleba also expressed concern with reducing the sewer rate due to the fact that BASF has plans to vacate their Washington Borough facility. Councilwoman Gleba is concerned if the sewer rate is reduced now, that it may have to be increased again once BASF leaves, which is allegedly 2014. Mayor McDonald asked CFO Turchan how much funds are in surplus. CFO Turchan replied there is approximately \$1.1 million with plans to use about \$200,000 this year to balance the budget. Manager Blanchard added that she would like to see that surplus remain there because in the process of doing a cost analysis of maintaining the dam versus decommissioning the dam it was found that the dam is failing on the Washington Township side. Manager Blanchard stated that the guard rail that was there has been compromised and is pushed away from the retaining wall which is falling into the Shabcong which in turn is compromising the road. Manager Blanchard met with the Washington Township and the Warren County engineers today at Finelli Engineering's office to try to come up with a plan of how to fix it. The County will only take care of the bridge, not the dam which is owned by the Borough or the street which is owned by the Township. Manager Blanchard added that right now they think it is just the retaining wall and the road surface. Manager Blanchard noted that she feels the road should be closed for safety concerns and the County does as well, but Washington Township does not want to close the road. Mayor McDonald added that should be in writing to protect the Borough legally in case something should happen.

Councilman Torres added that he has done some research on electronic bulletin boards to replace the letter board that is located in front of Borough Hall. A new electronic bulletin board will help notify the residents and improve communication. Councilman Torres estimated the cost to be between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for the cost of the board and would like to have a salesperson give a presentation to Council. CFO Turchan added that there

is an additional \$10,000 in buildings and grounds available for building improvements if Council wished to move in that direction.

A motion made by Torres, seconded by Conry to approve Resolution #41-2014 introducing the 2014 Municipal Budget.

Roll Call: Thompson, Torres, Jones, Conry, McDonald, Higgins, Gleba
Ayes: 7, Nays: 0
Motion Carried

COUNCIL REMARKS:

Mayor McDonald stated that at the last Planning Board meeting, the EPA and their engineer were present in regards to the Park Hill Apartments and the pollution team that is there for the PCE. Mayor McDonald added that they are talking about building ten wells along Park Avenue that will cause street closures to occur. The wells will be done between Route 31 and Pohatcong Street. Once the wells are in, the roadway affected will be paved. In addition, there will be a 7,000 square foot building for the treatment of the PCE. More information will be provided to Council and questions will be answered as the project progresses.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further business to come before, it was moved by Higgins, seconded by Torres that the meeting be adjourned at 7:45pm.

Ayes: 7, Nays: 0
Motion carried.

Scott McDonald, Mayor

Kristine Blanchard, RMC
Borough Manager/Clerk