

MEETING MINUTES

**TOWNSHIP OF OCEAN
COUNTY OF OCEAN
BUSINESS MEETING
April 6, 2023
10:00 am**

Call to Order

Flag Salute

ROLL CALL: LOPARO X DODD X BAULDERSTONE X

STATEMENT: Pursuant to the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, adequate notice of this meeting was properly provided by sending a copy of the Notice of Meeting to two newspapers, The Asbury Park Press and the Press of Atlantic City. The Notice was posted at the office of the Township Clerk

Discussion

- 2023 Municipal Budget

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed giving the Township Committee a copy of the budget yesterday. CFO Casey Walford and Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio have been working to reasonably increase the budget due to the fact that the health benefits have gone up 7%. The Township is thankful it is not part of the State health benefits, which has gone up 22%. Pensions have gone up 11%. NJ Natural Gas and electric have gone up. Garbage and Recycling contracts have gone up \$150,000. The Township is now paying for daytime ambulance services. The ambulance company has been very good about deducting what they receive for Medicare. Ambulance day service is costing approximately \$140,000 for the year.

The Township has been successful with getting additional money for the cell towers and bidding out new occupants for the Greenbriar water tower, which is a little difficult due to the material of the water tower. They are working on a solution for that and it will be included in the 2024 budget.

The water and utility budget are looking better due to the rate increase last year. The Township also had to include \$50,000 this year for the Revaluation over the 5 years. The Joint Insurance Fund (JIF) and Workman's Compensation Insurance has increased. The Township's JIF did not go up as substantially, due to the fact the Township implemented its cyber security items.

The Township is at a 2.5 cent increase with the budget. That includes the Police car. The Police had money left over from last year for the vehicle. The Police car is only funded for \$25,000 but the Township does not have the half-of-car it has been trying to do. The Township is hoping next, with the cannabis businesses opening this year and possibly Joe Caldeira's property for manufacturing/growing, that could be used to offset to the increases in 2024 budget. The Township does not have any major capital items for the Department of Public Works (DPW) or for any of the other departments. The two things that were put into the budget are Mitchell Humphrey to obtain payments online. That is a state law. It was pushed out a year and might be pushed out another year. Also, the Citizen Service Reporter program needs an upgrade. There is money in the budget for that.

Mayor Baulderstone requested Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio explain the mandatory payments online.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed two years ago the State of New Jersey implemented a law in Construction and Zoning that people should be able to upload permit applications and pay online. The State is supposed to provide municipalities with a program, which is usually not a good program. The State has not come up with a program, due to COVID, and has pushed it out to the end of 2023. The Township uses Mitchell Humphrey. Mitchell Humphrey does Code Enforcement and Construction and Zoning. It is a very good program. Mitchell Humphrey has implemented its own program that can upload applications and pay for permits online. Cartegraph has been bought by OpenGov and has a plan to accept money online. The Letters of No Interest and Road Opening permits will be able to pay online. The State has also allowed charging the credit card fee to the applicants.

CFO Walford and Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio also took the Administrative Offices and deducted the 2% off of their administrative fees. Department Heads were explained they have to have an absolutely need for purchases, as their administrative budget was cut to keep the Township at the 2.5% moving forward. The Township has made as many cuts as it can at this point. Part of the issue is at the end of 2022, due to the school budget passing that referendum, it was not in the Township's budget and it caused the Township to have a problem with our Annual Financial Statement (AFS).

CFO Walford discussed when the school increased their tax rate and the overall taxes increased, it affected the Township. When the Township approved the budget last year, the reserve for uncollected taxes was lower because the Township had a collection percentage of 98%. The 2022 tax collecting increased in November, but the Township has not collected any of it yet. It is almost \$1 million of school taxes. It made the Township's tax collection percentage decrease to 95%. That will level out next year when the Township collects the taxes. As of December 31, 2022, the AFS shows what the Township is allowed to do with this budget.

Mayor Boulderstone discussed the Township has to reserve this year.

CFO Walford discussed, correct. The Township's reserve for uncollected taxes is high right now.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed it is due to the school referendum.

CFO Walford discussed on top of everything increasing, that is affecting this year's budget.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed, "and the 2% cap". The items the Township is allowed to put outside of cap, that we first got excited about, were the pensions but the Township is not allowed to put the 11%. We can only put the 7%. You can only put outside the cap what the extra is, not the whole portion. The same for garbage.

CFO Walford discussed garbage was part of the cap exclusion. Even with the cap exclusion, there are still increases. Even though it helps our proration cap, it is staying within our appropriation cap. There are still increases. Health benefits was a big one that we thought was going to be a cap exclusion but it was not. They did not include health benefits at all.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed she gave everyone what the 2023 would be, with the Township average home at \$272,000, which is \$68.03 a year and the \$323,000 is \$80.90 for the average Greenbriar home, which is exactly the same number from last year.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed she put a call out to Michael Gluck to meet with her and CFO Walford to discuss permanent financing or continuing with the note. With the interest rates possibly increasing, the town has over \$5 million in bonds that are on notes instead of permanent financing. The Township is paying the principle now. If everyone is comfortable with this budget, we can introduce on April 18, 2023. The Township is self-examining this year so we will be able to adopt on May 16, 2023.

Some areas were cutback. The Police staff had hardly any overtime last year. The Township was very fortunate that there were no storms. Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed if the Township Committee is comfortable with the budget, CFO Walford and herself would like to start preparing the documents for the introduction of the budget.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Township has to make sure the surplus is there if there is an emergency.

Deputy Mayor Dodd discussed it seems the surplus never goes down.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed it does go down but it is never extreme. A perfect example is the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) grant for \$400,000 to fix the roads. The Township will bond for the NJDOT prior to the project and the Township is reimburses upon completion. The Township will bond for that this year and then pay down that debt with the money received from the NJDOT. This is why permanent financing might be the way to go instead of having these notes. Even when the notes were rolled over last year, they did come back higher than the 1%. I have a call out to Michael Gluck, Bond Council. Once the Township does permanent financing, the principle and the interest will be consistent. This is the cost of doing business as a municipality. Being consistent is as much as paying down the debt. The Township is going to the NJ Infrastructure Bank (I-Bank) for the Dock Avenue and Lead-Based Service Line projects. Township Engineer Jim Oris is waiting for the Township's final answer and thoughts on the 8th Street Plant. Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Township should go to the I-Bank, and the Township can obtain some loan forgiveness, which is better than a regular bond. The least expensive is to rebuild the 8th Street plant or the Township could leave it there or look to purchase property and move it.

Committeeman LoParo discussed leaving the 8th Street plant where it is. If there is a huge flood, that plant can be shut off remotely.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed yes now that the Township has the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems working. When the new building is built, it will have the SCADA system in there. Long Beach Island built theirs with garages. It is higher and is next to their water tower so it blends in. The Township would spend substantial money to move the plant and purchase property.

Committeeman LoParo discussed it will cost \$3-\$4 million more to move it.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed she would like to have the Township Utility Engineer Oris moving on the I-Bank applications. That building is moving into disrepair. The Township should start submitting the paperwork. Township Utility Engineer Oris would put together the request for I-Bank funding and will give the Township the costs.

Deputy Mayor Dodd and Committeeman LoParo discussed they would like the 8th Street plant to stay located on the same property.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed the Township needs to see the study report first before we plan on the 8th Street plant.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed she will get the study report from the Township Engineer.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired if the Township Committee has additional comments on the budget.

Deputy Mayor Dodd and Committeeman LoParo discussed, no. Committeeman LoParo discussed the police vehicle was his biggest concern.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed Sheet 4, current fund anticipated revenues, on the budget. There is a line for costs on taxes. Last year was \$85,000, realized \$55,505. Mayor Baulderstone inquired if that is the school's tax increase.

CFO Walford discussed, no, that is actually the Southern Ocean Landfill Sale Agreement. It was municipal liens. That is a one-time thing and that is why anticipated revenue was not increased for this year.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed on the same page, fees and permits, the budget was \$130,000 and it came in at \$94,000. Mayor Baulderstone inquired what was driving the 2022 budget number that it is so far above what was actually achieved.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed Rodney Haines put the budget together last year and he used the year before as the anticipated number.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired what the other fees are on this page.

CFO Walford discussed these are license fees, 200' lists and miscellaneous fees collected.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed Sheet A lists cell tower fees. 2022 fees were close to \$90,000 and we budgeted \$80,000.

CFO Walford discussed she likes to leave a bit of a cushion. In case something happens and the cell companies do not pay. It also helps the surplus when we anticipate less.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed they are having issues and she is not comfortable adding it until those issues are resolved. They have been working on it for a couple months.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed Sheet 6. The UCC fees. We were under budget \$20,000.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Township is getting less permit fees. Last year the State ended permits for roofing and siding permits. The Township did not know the State was going to make that change when the budget was completed.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired how the fees are determined.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Township sets some of the fees but most of the UCC fees are done by State Law. What we pay the State is under State Law and what the Township have in our ordinances is what is collected for the Township.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed considering inflation, we should look at increasing.

Township Attorney Dasti discussed the Construction Official has recommended updating the fees. He has a UCC Guide Handbook.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed by State Law, Barnegat and Township of Ocean's fees have to match due to shared services.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired if the Construction/Zoning office is paying for itself.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Construction/Zoning office has not paid for itself in 10 years, due to the salaries, expenses, and vehicles. There is a substantial savings with the Construction Official, whose salary is \$40,000 per year instead of well over \$100,000, due to shared services. The Township is saving by shared services with all Sub-Code Officials. Without shared services the Township could not sustain.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired if there is anything we can do to get the increase the same as last year. It has gone up. Last year the average increase for the Township was \$5.66 a month. Mayor Baulderstone discussed the budget is showing solid waste collection is going up about \$16,000 and he expected it to be more than that.

CFO Walford discussed that is something that is with a cap exclusion. Part of it is on Page 20A, which is out of cap. The \$16,000 is in-cap.

Mayor Baulderstone discussed the cap is at 2.572.

CFO Walford discussed it increased to 3.5.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the increase is 2.5%. It includes everything.

CFO Walford discussed she believes Mayor Baulderstone is talking about the appropriation cap. If you look at Sheet 8, 3B, it shows how the Township is under the appropriation cap, that's assuming the 3.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) rate, the town is allowed to increase.

CFO Walford discussed the tax levy cap is 2%. The appropriations cap is 2.5%, 3.5%, if you do the COLA rate. The tax levy cap is going to be on Sheet 3. That will show how we are meeting that requirement.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed as the Township Committee agree the budget is ready for introduction on April 18, 2023.

- Tournaments at Ballfields – Discuss charging.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed there is a baseball tournament coming to our Township ballfield. It is being run by one of the local residents. The Township allowed the tournament last year without any fees. It was right after COVID and the Township wanted to bring people into the town and use our businesses. There is tournament scheduled this year. It looks like it is going to be larger. Stafford Township charges \$2,500 for use of their ballfields. The Township has one field and the school owns the others. Last year, if they had to call Public Works for bathrooms backing up or anything, the Township is going to charge them a set fee of \$250.00 for Saturday and \$350.00 for Sunday, which they did not need.

If there is a tournament, maybe the Township could charge \$1,000 to use the field. Residents pay \$200.00 to use the Community Center and the Lake Pavilion, plus a \$100.00 security deposit. Using the ballfields should have the same standards. This group is for-profit.

It is a gentleman who lives in town who has always been involved in the Waretown Athletic Association (WAA) baseball. There is a WAA Baseball but the Township no longer insures WAA. It is not WAA but is run through the WAA. In the beginning it was two fields but now they are going to be using additional fields. They are getting more teams than they anticipated. There will have to be no parking signs on that side of the street. The Police will be present. The First Aid Squad has been made aware. Public Works preps the field for the Township's baseball and softball teams.

Softball has 110 girls and is non-profit. The softball team is asking the Township to fix the lights at the field, which the Township has always assisted in these repairs in the past. The Township owns the lights. A lot of the lights do not work. In the past, the Township has always paid for the infield mix on the ballfield, which they are asking for again. It is included in the budget this year. It is \$8,000 to fix the lights.

Township Attorney Dasti discussed the Township can certainly ask for tournament fees and not codify. There are towns that charge outside organizations a fee to come in and monopolize their fields for a weekend.

Committeeman LoParo discussed if it is for a profit, it is a whole different story.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed you can take a chance that our parks will be available but if you want to have a wedding and the park is booked, then you cannot use the pavilion. The tournament is charging teams to come in and use the Township fields. The teams are coming from all over now, which is good for our restaurants and businesses. The tournament group is making money on the Township fields. The Township could charge per tournament or per day. The groups take all their garbage to the dumpster.

Committeeman LoParo discussed a security deposit could be charged if they do not take their garbage to the dumpster. The security deposit would be for profit only.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed the Township could use this funding for the field's lights etc. There is a Veterans pickleball tournament that gave us their proof of non-profit.

Mayor Baulderstone inquired if the group is raising money for himself or for WAA.

Township Administrator/Clerk Ambrosio discussed she it is for the travel teams. Years ago, you can have your tournament here, as long as the Waretown team plays for free. They charge each team \$750.00. Now the Township does not have a Waretown Team. The teams are mostly travel teams and the children playing are from all over the state. The \$8,000 for the lights can come from Open Space and Recreation. The lights are over 20 years old. The bulbs need to be changed to LED's.

Committeeman LoParo inquired if they can put a clause in the ordinance to pull the team off the field in a lightning storm.

Township Attorney Dasti discussed there would be no one there to enforce it but he can put it in the ordinance that they would play at their own risk.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Motion to open Public Comment was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo.

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

No comment from public.

Motion to close Public Comment was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo.

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Consent Agenda

The below listed items are considered to be routine by the Township Committee of the Township of Ocean and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no formal discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, this item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered separately.

- 2023-125 Resolution accepting the resignation of Valerie Anzovino as a full-time dispatcher as of April 2, 2023
- 2023-126 Resolution of the Township of Ocean, County of Ocean, State of New Jersey regarding the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse accepting a grant terms year 2 funding for the youth Leadership grant in the amount of \$5,307.86
- 2023-127 Resolution authorizing a salary adjustment for David Rossi in the Tax/Utility Collectors office.
- 2023-128 Resolution authorizing the hiring of Martin Tellekamp Jr as a Full-Time Plumbing Sub Code HHS and Fire Inspector ICS for shared services with Barnegat Township.
- 2023-129 Resolution authorizing the hiring Ericka Ponce as a Full-Time Finance Clerk starting on April 17, 2023, contingent on completion of background check.

Mayor Baulderstone requested Resolution 2023-129 be removed from the Consent Agenda and discussed during Executive Session.

Township Attorney Dasti discussed Resolution 2023-129 could be discussed in Executive Session under Personnel.

Motion to approve Resolutions 2023-125 through 2023-128

Motion to approve was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo.

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Mayor Baulderstone discussed he would like to discuss the process of issuing permits during Executive Session.

Township Attorney Dasti discussed Mr. Balderstone's request could be discussed briefly in Executive Session under potential litigation matters.

Resolution 2023-130

Resolution authorizing the Township Committee to go into Executive Session for the reasons: Personnel, Litigation

Motion to approved was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Motion to approve the below listed dates for the use of the Community Center, Corliss Park Lake & Recreation Area, Waretown Bayfront Park & Pier, Toumey Park, and Ballfields:

Kathi Naia – May 13, 2023

Rodney Koodray Jr. – April 29, 2023

Todd Camburn – October 7, 2023

Sharon Kaneaster – June 3, 2023

Motion to approve was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Executive Session

Motion to move into Executive Session was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Open Session

Motion to move into Open Session was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Resolution 2023-129

Resolution authorizing the hiring Ericka Ponce as a Full-Time Finance Clerk starting on April 17, 2023, contingent on completion of background check

Motion to approve was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Adjournment

Motion to approve was moved by Deputy Mayor Dodd, seconded by Committeeman LoParo

Roll Call: LoParo: Yes, Dodd: Yes, Baulderstone: Yes

Signed and Submitted:

Diane B. Ambrosio, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Date

Next Scheduled Business Meetings

April 18, 2023 – 6:00 pm

May 16, 2023 – 6:00 pm

June 20, 2023 – 6:00 pm

**Meetings can be added or cancelled as necessary