

Meeting Minutes
Hightstown Borough Council
Budget Meeting
March 22, 2010 6:00 pm

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Robert Patten at 6:00 pm and read the Open Public Meetings Act statement which stated, "Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was advertised in the *Trenton Times* and the *Windsor-Hights Herald*, and is posted in the Borough Clerk's office."

The Flag Salute was followed by Roll call.

ROLL CALL

	PRESENT	LATE ARRIVAL	ABSENT
<i>Councilmember Bond</i>	✓	6:10 PM	
<i>Councilmember McGinty</i>	✓		
<i>Councilmember Musing</i>	✓		
<i>Councilmember Quattrone</i>	✓	6:05 PM	
<i>Councilmember Sikorski</i>	✓		
<i>Councilmember Theokas</i>	✓		
<i>Mayor Patten</i>	✓		

Also in attendance: Debra Sopronyi, Borough Clerk; Herbert Massa, Borough Administrator; George Lang, Chief Finance Officer; James Eufemia, Chief of Police; and Richard Shaklee, Labor Counsel.

Councilmember Sikorski motioned to accept the agenda, Councilmember Theokas seconded, all approved.

Public Comment I

Mayor Patten opened the floor for public comment.

There being no public comments, the Mayor closed the public comment period

George Lang and Herb Massa presented the current status of the proposed budget for 2010 with a power point presentation. Mr. Massa began the discussion by advising Council that there would be no salary increases in the budget other than those that are required for longevity and steps.

Construction Department

George Chin, Construction Official, addressed Council and gave an overview of his department's duties and budget. There was discussion regarding how fees were determined and the revenue generated from them; and raising fees to cover the cost of the department. George Lang stated that the Borough allocates a portion of the fee for the GIS to the trust fund. The discussion continued regarding the inspectors and number of inspections performed.

Municipal Court

Mr. Massa advised Council that the Municipal Court budget has been submitted to Superior Court and the the Court Administrator is entitled to longevity. This amount, as well as the previously approved Court Assistant increase has been figured into the budget. He concluded by stating that the municipal court is self-sustaining. George Lang informed Council that the excess revenue from the court subsidizes the Borough budget. There was discussion regarding grants.

Police Department

Councilmember Theokas then stated that he has gone through the Police Department budget with the Chief and he is comfortable with the concessions made. He informed Council that the original request for \$200,000.00 in capital expenditures has been

reduced to \$36,000.00, which is absolutely necessary. There has been an increase in vehicle maintenance because new vehicles have not been purchased, and there was a reduction in salaries due to staffing changes. The Chief commented that this is a very lean budget. Mr. Massa said this budget includes step and longevity increases for the Police. There was discussion regarding training and it was commented that the public should be made aware of the training our officers receive.

Assessment

George Lang addressed Council regarding the Assessment budget and stated that it includes costs for projected appeals. He also gave an overview of the process and discussion ensued regarding the revaluation and potential revenue loss. Mr. Lang advised Council that the County and School will receive their tax funds, regardless of what is collected. It was commented that the Assessor spends more time in the Borough than for which he is paid.

Tax Collection

Mr. Massa reviewed the Tax Collection budget and advised Council that it covers the Collector and one full-time Clerk. Mr. Lang said it was hopeful that we will be able to issue regular billings instead of estimated, which increases the cost for this department substantially.

Finance Department

Mr. Lang reviewed the Finance Department budget and stated that the salaries will remain the same and are partially charged to the Water/Sewer budget, but there is a slight increase in the cost for the finance program. There is no increase in the cost of the audit and financial reports are done in-house which saves a substantial amount of money for the Borough.

Municipal Clerk

The Borough Clerk gave an overview of the proposed Clerk budget. Mr. Massa informed Council that 65% of the salaries for the Clerk and part-time assistant in the Clerk's department are charged to the Water/Sewer and Board of Health budgets. There was discussion regarding bringing back the Town Crier, however it was decided that it was costly and very time intense. The Clerk inquired as to whether Council would consider eliminating the paper version of the meeting packets since they are available on-line. It was decided that the paper packets were needed by some and that the Council members would advise the Clerk if they do not wish to receive it.

Discussion ensued regarding the mandatory 1.5% salary deduction employees will have to pay toward their health benefits and shared service agreements.

Administration

Mr., Massa informed Council that 50% of the Administrator's salary is charged to the Water/Sewer budget. There was discussion regarding charging items to this budget and Mr. Massa advised that these funds would have to be appropriated in the budget and that budgeting in this manner is also a CPA mechanism. There was discussion regarding defending these allocations.

Mr. Lang gave an overview of the reduction in revenues and financial aid. There was discussion regarding tax increases and cuts in aid to the Borough and School.

Mr. Massa stated that this proposed budget presents an average tax increase of \$480.00 per property owner, and requires additional reductions. He stated that he and Mr. Lang will work further on the budget and present Council with something more detailed at the next meeting.

Councilmember Sikorski motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm and Council President Quattrone seconded; the Motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra L. Sopronyi

Borough Clerk