

Meeting Minutes
Hightstown Borough Council
Budget Workshop Meeting
February 13, 2013
6:30 pm

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kirson at 6:35 pm and he 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 sent to 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.

	PRESENT	ABSENT
<i>Councilmember Bibens</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Bluth</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Doran</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Quattrone</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Thibault</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Woods</i>	✓	
<i>Mayor Kirson</i>	✓	

Also in attendance: Debra Sopronyi, Borough Clerk; Michael Theokas, Borough Administrator; and James LeTellier, Police Director.

Mayor Kirson opened the Public Comment Period and there being no comments, the public comment period was closed.

Councilmember Bluth expressed her disappointment with the timeliness of receiving the budget information for this evening's meeting, noting that the amount of information required more time for review and she would have liked to be more prepared. She also stated that certain departments have requested increases in their budget and she would like the details of those requests and is disappointed that the Chief Finance Officer is not at this meeting on time.

Budget Discussion

Mayor Kirson distributed and explained summary sheets that compared the salaries for the Police and Dispatch, and the income and salaries for the Court for the years 2012 and 2013; there was brief discussion.

George Lang, Chief Finance Officer, arrived at this time.

Mr. Lang distributed and reviewed the Annual Debt Statement, summary of debt, debt payment schedule, schedules of bonds and loans, and a schedule of deferred charges to future taxation. There was discussion regarding debt payments, interest rates and the Borough's debt capacity. Mr. Lang explained that notes are issued for grants, and we have never come close to our debt limit. Mr. Lang suggested that Council review the documents he distributed and he can answer their questions at the next budget meeting.

Mr. Lang then reviewed the "Budget at a Glance" as distributed in the packets to Council and the public, noting that the budget as presented, based on last year's assessed values, would mean an average property tax increase of \$80.00 per homeowner.

Discussion took place regarding school taxes, Uniform Construction Code revenue and that Certificates of Occupancy are not being required for education facilities; the possibility of charging administrative fees for facilitating union dues payments; the use of residential housing for educational purposes; special items of revenue; reserve for uncollected taxes; health benefit costs and contributions by employees; contract negotiations; and personnel policy changes.

Mr. Theokas was directed to ask Labor Counsel if the Borough can require an affidavit from employees which verifies that their spouse is not eligible for health benefits elsewhere before the Borough provides the benefits for a family.

Mr. Thibault noted that the function of Government is to provide service at the lowest possible cost. There was discussion

regarding the possibility and evaluation of cost for outsourcing various services of the Borough such as trash removal. Mr. Theokas advised that performing trash removal in-house costs approximately \$150,000 per year and the Borough is paid \$50,000 per year by Roosevelt for providing them with this service through a shared services agreement. He also noted that elimination of trash removal from the Public Works duties does not necessarily mean a reduction in work staff. There was further discussion regarding the first step of action which is evaluating the services provided by Public Works and to perform a price comparison to privatize these services. Mr. Theokas noted that the Public Works Department spends a considerable amount of time on water and sewer infrastructure issues; discussion regarding the Public Works Department continued.

Police director LeTellier then reviewed his budget request as presented to Council, which included maintenance contracts, office expenses, the hiring of Class II Officers, and training costs. Director LeTellier suggested the hiring of a 32 hour per week Class II Officer to reduce overtime cost.

There was discussion regarding a \$30,000 budget increase for Dispatch, grants, and overtime.

Mr. Theokas then re-capped the discussion and noted that follow-up is required on the following: Certificates of Occupancy in educational facilities, administrative fee charges for facilitating union dues collection, health coverage affidavits and obligations, Public Works tasks and cost, and Dispatch costs and personnel. Council then confirmed that they would like the Department Heads from the Water Plant, Waste Water Plant, Public Works, Fire Department, and First Aid to be at the next budget meeting to review their budget.

There was discussion regarding providing services and lowering taxes to attract middle-class residents. Mr. Lang advised Council that it is inappropriate to affect future budgets with cuts taken this year.

Councilmember Bibens moved to adjourn at 8:36 pm, Councilmember Bluth seconded. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra L. Sopronyi, RMC
Borough Clerk