

Meeting Minutes
Hightstown Borough Council
Budget Meeting
March 27, 2017
6:30 pm

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Quattrone at 6:32pm 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 followed Roll Call.

	PRESENT	ABSENT
<i>Councilmember Bluth</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Hansen</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Kurs</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Misiura</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Montferrat</i>	✓	
<i>Councilmember Stults</i>	✓	
<i>Mayor Quattrone</i>	✓	

Also in attendance: Debra Sopronyi, Borough Clerk/Acting Administrator; and George Lang, CFO

Councilmember Kurs moved the agenda for approval, Council President Stults seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Council members Bluth, Hansen, Kurs, Misiura, Montferrat and Stults voted yes.

Agenda approved 6-0.

Mayor Quattrone opened the public comment period and the following individuals spoke:

Dimitri Musing, 137 Stockton Street – thanked the Council for their due diligence with the budget.

There being no further comments, the public comment period was closed.

Mr. Lang reviewed the changes implemented at Council's request from the last budget meeting noting that \$25,000.00 has been added for building improvements and that the Environmental Commission has submitted an \$18,000.00 budget request that includes changes to the Public Works budget for trees. There was discussion regarding a shade tree trust fund and the goal of the Environmental Commission. Mr. Lang explained the basis for a trust account.

Discussion ensued regarding tree planting and cost, and the lack of Public Works input on projects proposed by the various Boards and Committees. Ms. Sopronyi noted that the Liaisons should inform their various Boards, Committees and Commissions that they should be reaching out to Public Works with their projects so they can have input and to confirm DPW's availability to accomplish the work associated with them; she noted that this has been a real problem for Public Works. After further discussion, it was decided that the Environmental Commission shall be given a \$2,400.00 budget for the trees, making their total budget in the amount of \$3,410.00. There will be no changes to the Public Works budget.

Mayor Quattrone then invited Dimitri Musing to come forward and defend the \$8,000.00 budget request from the Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Musing addressed Council, noting that two additional Commissioners from the HPC were also present to defend the budget. He then informed Council that the increased budget request is for the printing and hardware to install banners on telephone poles in the Stockton Street Historic District. Mr. Musing advised that the Borough values its historic inventory and the HPC feels that the banners will provide a benefit to the Borough by noting the Historic Stockton Street District. He continued that the banner idea has been around for many years and the HPC would like to move forward with the project and marketing Hightstown through its gateways, noting that it could be possible to alternate the historic banner and general Hightstown banners.

There was discussion regarding the size, life span, color, installation costs and chosen locations for the banners; and the application to the utilities to use the poles for the hanging of the banners. It was suggested that additional banners be purchased for the downtown district to promote Hightstown Borough. Discussion continued regarding possible grant opportunities that may be available and fundraising that could help defray the cost to the taxpayers. Council expressed concern with the taxpayers carrying the cost when only a specific district in town will benefit, and advised that they would like the HPC to fundraise and seek grants to cover the cost as other boards do. Mayor Quattrone thanked the HPC Commissioners for coming to the meeting to defend their budget.

Mr. Lang then confirmed the Borough's request at the last meeting that RISE and Better Beginnings donor agreements be set at the rate given last year. There was discussion regarding eliminating donor agreements with non-profits as they do a substantial amount of fundraising. It was decided that the amounts for these donor agreements should be reduced each year until they are phased out and that the agreements shall be reduced by half for the coming year to \$1,500.00 for RISE and Better Beginnings to \$4,000.00.

There was discussion regarding the use of surplus and the surplus balance; police overtime and bail reform; the Parks & Recreation Commission budget; street lighting costs and participation in cost cutting programs; salaries; healthcare costs and employee contributions; and the tax rate for the schools.

Mr. Lang then reviewed the Borough and utility debt; principal and interest payments; and the impact on this year's and future year's budgets. He noted that going too low on the budget this year could cause a substantial increase in next year's budget. There was discussion regarding the stability of the budget and the tax rate.

Council then re-visited the Historic Preservation Commission's budget request for the banners and decided to give the HPC a budget totaling \$4,000.00 noting that they encourage them to do fundraising and seek grants for the balance needed for the cost of the banners.

Council then reviewed the request from the Fire Department for turn-out gear funds in the amount of \$48,797.00. It was noted that their last purchase was for 20 sets of turn-out gear three years ago, but that they may be rotating their ordering so they do not all expire at the same time. This will be reviewed prior to any capital purchase being made.

There was discussion regarding the date for introduction of the budget and it was decided that the budget would be introduced at the meeting of April 17, 2017 to allow the CFO time to prepare the budget with the changes requested.

Councilmember Bluth moved to adjourn at 9:00pm, Councilmember Montferrat seconded. All ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra L. Sopronyi
Borough Clerk