

**BOROUGH of GARWOOD**  
***Special Budget Meeting***  
***MINUTES of the***  
**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**March 10, 2016**

The Special Meeting of the Mayor and Council was held in Council Chambers and called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Lombardo. He asked all present to participate in a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag.

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Westfield Leader and Star Ledger and prominently posted on the municipal public bulletin board and filed in the office of the municipal clerk informing the Public of the time and place according to the Provisions of the Open Public Meeting Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975).

**ROLL CALL:**

<b>Mayor Lombardo</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>		
<b>Councilwoman Cuccaro</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>	<b>Councilman Sarno</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>
<b>Councilman Martin</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>	<b>Councilwoman Todisco</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>
<b>Councilman Mathieu</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>	<b>Council President Petruzzelli</b>	<b><u>P</u></b>

Also Present: Borough Administrator/Clerk Christina Ariemma, Borough Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer/Asst Adm/Tax Collector Sandy Bruns, and Warren Korecky & Bill Swisher, Auditors from Suplee Clooney.

Mayor Lombardo announced the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the 2016 Municipal Budget.

The Finance Committee presented the 2016 Municipal Budget.

Councilwoman Todisco read the following statement:

I'd like to welcome the Mayor, my fellow Council people, and the residents to the first presentation of the 2016 municipal budget. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Councilman Sarno and Councilman Petruzzelli, as well as our professional staff of the Borough Administrator, CFO, and auditor, for the time they put into this budget at meetings and for taking my phone calls.

Our next budget meeting will be a week from tonight at 7pm here in Council Chambers and I welcome the residents to attend that session as well. The tax assessor will also make a presentation that night on the issue of revaluation. Since we decided to keep with the process of having two special budget meetings like last year, I would like tonight's meeting to focus on the operating budgets of the Borough and we will move through it page by page. Next Thursday, in addition to discussing the operating budgets, I would like us to discuss the capital requests that were made by the various departments.

I have now had the honor of serving as Finance Chair four times under two different Mayors. Each year the Committee and Council face challenges and this year is no different. Our goal should be to provide the residents of Garwood with the best possible services at the best possible price and this is mainly done through the budget process. I again would like to thank Councilman Petruzzelli and Sarno as we've had many discussions and made many unanimous decisions as we went through the budget line by line. However, we did not always agree on every decision, but we stayed focused on the task at hand and continued to move from item to item. It is more than acceptable to respectfully disagree. I ask this Council to voice their questions, suggestions, and opinions as we go through the budget. I certainly do not expect us to agree on everything and that is okay. However, for the sake of the process and time, we should be able to discuss various items, voice vote, and move on to the next matter before us. Some of the discussion may involve staff salaries or staffing levels and I ask that the Council be mindful in the conversation tonight to not mention any employee by name. We should be using job titles or positions instead.

After that prelude, I really wish I could be the bearer of better news tonight. Although we saved substantial money in many areas over last year including: \$44,000 in streets and roads salaries and wages, \$16,500 in shade tree, \$23,000 in gas, \$4,000 in tax collector salaries and wages, and \$27,530 in debt, we faced many large increases. Although generally speaking revenues were down this year, we did anticipate \$35,000 from the Senior Housing on Second Avenue. Some of the major increases included: \$44,000 in legal, \$38,000 in Planning Board (including the Fair Housing or COAH Plan), \$30,000 in tax appeals, \$54,000 in Rahway Valley Sewer Authority, and \$55,000 in the Police and Fire Retirement Systems.

With all this said, I just received word this afternoon that the tax impact is looking at \$185 per household. We are currently over the Tax Levy CAP by \$16,335. I expect us to cut spending and increase revenues by well over that amount, but by law we need to reduce appropriations or increase revenues by at least that amount. This also puts the issue of the CAP Bank Ordinance on the table and I will ask the auditors to speak to that first tonight.

Now I will turn the meeting over to our auditor to briefly explain the CAP bank ordinance and where Garwood stands. Then, I will lead the Council in moving through the budget page by page.

Borough Auditor Warren Korecky explained the Cap Bank Ordinance.

Finance Chair Councilwoman Todisco went through the budget page by page.

Councilwoman Cuccaro had questions concerning the newsletter and brief discussion regarding the publication followed.

Staffing in the finance department was discussed as well as staffing levels in the Department of Public Works.

Discussion continued and included not creating a new line item for Historical Committee. BA Ariemma suggested they charge B&G for the plaque for former Mayor Crincoli instead of creating a new tax line. Discussion on that followed.

The council discussed the budget at length. Suggested cuts were discussed but not made.

The council concluded that they would discuss cuts again at the next meeting along with capital requests.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue thanked Mayor and Council for holding the budget workshop meeting. He mentioned the overall tax increase and the needs of the Historical Committee. He asked council to re-consider their position on this matter.

Glenn Lewis, 451 Third Avenue mentioned the staffing level at the Department of Public Works for which he is employed. He said he doesn't understand the logical since with the eighth man there is still a cost savings realized. He explained the workload of the department and that he feels they sometimes work in dangerous situations because they are shorthanded. He mentioned that the department does get the job done however; he feels they really need the eighth man. He provided some brief history on the department and how the eighth man was eliminated.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue mentioned he agrees with Councilwoman Todisco's suggestion to keep a balance in the funds collected for use of the Recreation Complex.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A Budget Workshop Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on Thursday, March 17, 2016, in Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on, **TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2016**, in Council Chambers at 7:15 p.m. Workshop Session to start at 7:00 p.m.

At 8:40 p.m., a motion was made by Councilwoman Todisco, seconded by Council President Petruzzelli to adjourn the Workshop Session.

Respectfully submitted:



**CHRISTINA M. ARIEMMA, Municipal Clerk**  
Borough of Garwood