

**Borough of Garwood**  
**Meeting of the Mayor and Council**  
**SPECIAL BUDGET MEETINGS**

**MINUTES**

March 06, 2018

Start Time: 7:00 p.m.

Moment of Silence.....

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>P</b>		
<b>Councilwoman Blumenstock</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilman McCormack</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilwoman Cuccaro</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Councilman Sarno</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Councilman Lazarow</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Council President Todisco</b>	<b>P</b>

Councilman Sarno arrived at 7:27 p.m.

Also, present: Borough Administrator/Clerk Christina M Ariemma, CFO/Treasurer Sandy Bruns and Auditor, Warren Korecky

Finance Committee presented the 2018 Municipal Budget.

I'd like to welcome the Mayor, my fellow Council people, and the residents to the first presentation of the 2018 municipal budget. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Council President Blumenstock and Councilwoman Cuccaro, as well as our professional staff of the Borough Administrator, CFO, and auditor, for the time they put into this budget at meetings as well as over the phone and email. I can assure you there has been no such thing as a short Finance meeting this budget season for us.

I have now had the honor of serving as Finance Chair five times under two different Mayors. Each year the Committee and Council face challenges and this year is no different. As I mentioned in my cover memo on the budget sheets that went out on Friday, the RVSA and police pension system (Police Fire Retirement System) went up at \$63,600 and \$61,482 respectively. That's over \$120,000 on those two line items alone and they are not discretionary spending. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the non-union pension system (Public Employee Retirement System) of \$28,112. As a committee, we spent hour after hour examining each line of this budget carefully, discussing our ideas, and making decisions. We compromised during the process, too, so we come here tonight in unanimous support of the budget before you.

Our goal as always is to provide the residents of Garwood with the best possible services at the best possible price. That goal was even exceeded this year by allocating \$17,000 for a Parking Enforcement Officer as well as \$5,000 for a Property Maintenance Officer as the Council is continuing to work on updating the property maintenance ordinance. These enforcement positions were created and funded as a direct response to concerns we heard from residents about the level of enforcement on parking restrictions and property maintenance. The path we've taken is more cost effective than having these duties filled by full-time police officers. Therefore, this budget actually represents an increase in services to the people. On another note about additions to the budget, the Committee decided to allocate \$500 for the Historical Committee. The Historical Committee requested \$1,000 as it did in past years, which met some resistance from Councilmembers because a new line item would be created. However, the Historical Committee has proven to be an active group and we all know it serves a very important purpose to our community, so this line item both recognizes its status as a Borough entity, much like the Celebrations Committee, and provides a little funding. A little can go a long way, especially when it comes to this Committee. Also, it's important to note that the Historical Committee had a line item years ago, but it was removed when the group became less active.

A couple other hot topics this year included how the operating expenses of the Recreation Complex are funded as well as raises for non-union municipal employees. Since the Recreation Complex opened in December 2014, \$86,200 has been brought in through rentals to date. Just recently, \$13,000 was generated for this spring season. This budget does not allocate any money to cover operating expenses of the Complex and everyone on the Committee saw first-hand that this project is self-sustaining its operating expenses. Also, we spent more than an hour specifically discussing how to handle the question of raises for non-union staff. We compromised as a Committee because that's important to us and

we wanted to show the rest of the Council and the public that compromises can be made. Therefore, 2% will be given to non-union employees and a fixed dollar amount was set for part-time, non-union employees, such as the Planning Board Secretary and OEM Director, in this budget. On the matter of the DPW foreman, the compromise included a \$2 increase over the top hourly laborer rate, instead of the \$3 originally discussed at past Council meetings, in an effort to get closer to equitable.

This year's Finance Committee cut over \$48,000, then an additional \$108,000, out of the administrative budget presented to us on the onset. For example, reductions were made in Legal, Police as well as Streets and Roads Salaries and Wages as well as Other Expenses, Shade Tree, Retirement and Sick Payroll, and much more. We also took advantage of one-time revenues to the budget, including FEMA money and \$75,000 in fees from the Russo I project.

With all of that said, I want to express like I have in the past that there is no magical wand to make sure taxes don't increase, otherwise taxes would stay flat. Yet, on some level the stars must align to make it a reality. A combination of diligent work on the part of the Committee and Borough professionals, one-time revenues, and additional fund balance, has made the stars align here in Garwood. So, I have great news for everyone tonight--as the budget sits before you, there will be no municipal tax increase to Garwood taxpayers this year. This is the first time a 0 budget has been reached in the last 17 years. I have anticipated this moment since I joined the Council in 2011, always believed it was possible, and here we are.

If anyone has any questions or suggestions on the operating side of budget, we will discuss them shortly. We should also discuss capital requests and needs tonight. After a great deal of discussion, the Committee unanimously recognized necessary capital investments that would need to be bonded for in order to get the work done or the equipment purchased, simply because the Borough has minimal capital reserve and to include it in the operating budget would substantially impact the tax levy. Copies of many of the requests are in front of you tonight, but there were some verbal requests as well. We look forward to reviewing them as a whole Council tonight to make sure we can proceed with the plan.

Councilwoman Todisco explained the suggested capital purchases. Discussion followed.

Councilwoman Todisco explained the 2018 Union County Infrastructure Grant. All agreed to the document scanning project.

Councilman Samo expressed that a zero increase could be a bad decision. Lengthy discussion followed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Is there anyone in the audience who wishes to address the mayor and council please step to the microphone, and state your full name and address. Please limit your comments to three minutes.

Arlene Yanogacio, 211 Cedar Street asked if every employee gets an increase each year. Councilwoman Todisco answered thoroughly. She also asked about the records management project.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue asked questions which were answered.

Councilwoman Todisco mentioned the Breaking Down the Budget Meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at Borough Hall. Brief discussion followed and all agreed to cancel the March 20<sup>th</sup> budget meeting.

Mayor Lombardo commended the Finance Committee.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

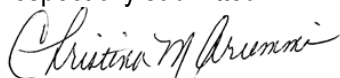
The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on, **TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018**, in Council Chambers at 7:15 p.m. Workshop Session to start at 7:00 p.m.

**THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC HEARING IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ON ORDINANCE NO. 18-03, ON TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018, AT 7:15 P.M. OR SOON THERE AFTER.**

Motion by Councilwoman Cuccaro, Second by Council President Blumenstock to adjourn.

Time: 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



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