

Borough of Garwood Budget Workshop Meeting of The Mayor and Council

MINUTES

March 12, 2019

Start Time: 7:00 p.m.

Moment of Silence.

Salute to the Flag.....

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Westfield Leader notification was sent to the 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:

Mayor Todisco	P		
Councilman Benoit	P	Councilman Ince	P Arrived at 7:18 p.m.
Councilwoman Blumenstock	P	Councilman McCormack	P
Councilman Graham	P	Council President Lazarow	P

Council President Lazarow:

I'd like to welcome the Mayor, my fellow Council people, and the residents to the first presentation of the 2019 municipal budget. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Councilwoman Blumenstock and Councilman Ince, as well as our professional staff of the Borough Administrator, CFO, and auditor, for the time they put into this budget at meetings. Everyone has worked tirelessly in helping to shape this budget.

This is my first time as finance chair, and while I was on the committee my first year and have been in charge for several years of a \$80,000 student accounts fund as treasurer of my school, nothing can quite prepare you for combing through and debating an over 8 million dollar budget with several different departments making many legitimate and justified requests. As I mentioned in my cover memo on the budget sheets that went out a week and a half ago, the RVSA and recycling Contract went up about \$51,000 and \$48,000 respectively. That's nearly \$100,000 on those two line items alone, and we also face an expected decrease in municipal court fees in the amount of \$25000. This cost has motivated our committee to begin looking into the possibility of sharing our court with another neighboring town to help limit these costs. On the other hand, at the recommendation of the Citizens Advisory Council, we decided to use the Russo Community development fees and part of the Paperboard redevelopment planning board application fees to defray some of these costs. The finance committee deliberated at length and 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. This budget includes hiring a full time deputy clerk starting on September 1st. This position would benefit from the training of our Borough Administrator/Clerk, Ms. Ariemma, who is set to retire within a couple years or so. In addition, the Finance Committee envisions that this role would also be responsible for being a public information officer to more efficiently communicate and update the Borough website. This position was highly endorsed by the Citizens Advisory Council in which many members shared how important it was for our town to improve the town website and to have someone designated to monitoring it along with the new Facebook page. On top of that, the idea of someone being groomed to potentially replace Ms. Ariemma was highly regarded by the Citizens Advisory Council.

This year's Finance Committee cut over \$156,000 out of the administrative budget presented to us on the onset. For example, reductions were made in Legal, the planning board, as well as Buildings and Grounds, and much more. With these cuts we were able to reduce what was originally close to \$200 per household based on a house assessed at \$100,000 to a much more reasonable increase of \$35 per household based on a house assessed at \$100,000. This is the second lowest municipal increase in the last 18 years. While we can't control the costs of the county, school, and library taxes, we did place a great deal of pride in creating a budget that was fair and understanding of Garwood residents.

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 as we have various requests to consider from the police department, borough administration, and fire department, amongst other requests. I have laid out some of the requests from all the departments. We have decided to place \$30,000 in our capital improvement fund, which is \$15,000 more than the past few budgets have supplied giving us more

flexibility to discuss and potentially move forward on necessary capital improvement projects. This was also largely influenced by the Citizens Advisory Council's desire to move forward with many of these projects. I look forward to reviewing them as a whole Council tonight and to hear from members of the public about these items.

Council asked a series of questions which were answered.

Comments concerning the hiring of a Deputy Municipal Clerk and other matters took place. Discussion followed concerning the 2019 budget.

The CAP bank ordinance was explained. Council was advised that a CAP bank ordinance will be presented for council consideration.

The Citizen's Advisory Committee was discussed and it was commented that having the input of the committee on budget matters was very helpful.

Discussion regarding 2019 Capital requests took place. The needs are:

- Traffic enforcement emergency response vehicle
- Computers for the entire borough
- Ladder truck for the Garwood Fire Department

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 five minutes.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue asked several questions including surplus number, running fund balance, grant money, sheets for public, internal hire for Deputy Clerk, dollars in budget, unemployment, fire truck rental fees, court shared service, debt amount, CAP and COLA, emergency van cost and miles on the van.

Mayor Todisco answered or directed a question to an individual for answers.

Motion to close public hearing made by Councilman McCormack, second by Councilman Benoit.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on, **THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019**, in Council Chambers at 7:15 p.m. Workshop Session to start at 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman McCormack, to adjourn
Time: 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



CHRISTINA M. ARIEMMA, Municipal Clerk
Borough of Garwood