

**Borough of Garwood
SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
MINUTES
March 31, 2022**

Time: 7:00 P.M

Moment of Silence.....

Salute to the Flag.....

Adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the Union County Hawk advertised on March 3, 2022. Notification was sent to the Star Ledger, and is posted on the Municipal website, 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 Graham	P	Councilwoman Loffredo	P
Councilman Kearney	P	Councilwoman Salmon	P
Councilman Lazarow	P	Council President Blumenstock	P

Also Present:

Kyle Harris, Borough Administrator
Adam Abramson, Borough Attorney
Sandy Bruns, CFO/Treasurer/Tax Collector
Warren Korecky, Borough Auditor
James Wright, Borough Chief of Police

Executive Session:

RESOLUTION NO. 22-061

CLOSED SESSION RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AND MATTERS OF ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE RELATING TO THE ABOVE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A., 10:4-12, Closed session, Meetings open to public; exclusion of public; subject of matter.

WHEREAS, it is necessary for the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Garwood to conduct an executive session closed to the public in order to discuss the above listed matter.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Borough of Garwood hereby move to go into executive session in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et. seq., for the purpose of discussing the subject stated above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the matters discussed in and minutes of the closed session shall be disclosed to the public when the reason for confidentiality no longer exists.

Action will not be taken after the Executive session

A motion was made by Councilman Graham, second by Councilman Lazarow, to adopt Resolution 22-066.

Roll Call:

Councilman Graham	AYE	Councilwoman Loffredo	AYE
Councilman Kearney	AYE	Councilwoman Salmon	AYE
Councilman Lazarow	AYE	Council President Blumenstock	AYE

6-AYES, 0-NAYS Resolution 22-061 was adopted.

At 7:30 P.M. a motion was made by Councilman Kearney, second by Council President Blumenstock, to adjourn the executive session.

All in favor.

At 7:30 P.M. a motion was made by Councilman Kearney second by Councilman Graham, to resume the regular session.

All in favor.

FINANCE COMMITTEE PRESENTS THE 2022 MUNICIPAL BUDGET:

Finance Committee presented the 2022 Budget.

Councilman Lazarow read the following statement:

I'd like to welcome the Mayor, my fellow Council people, and the residents to the first presentation of the 2022 municipal budget. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Councilwoman Loffredo and Councilman Kearney, as well as our professional staff including our Borough Administrator, Mr. Harris, Mrs. Bruns our CFO, and auditor, Warren Korrecky, for the time they put into this budget during our several meetings. Everyone has worked tirelessly in helping to shape this budget. I also want to thank all of the members of the council for reaching out to me to share your questions and concerns to help you make more informed choices with tonight's budget. I want to remind everyone that the current budget presented is not set in stone and the feedback we hear tonight can and oftentimes do result in revisions to the final budget.

This is my fourth time as finance chair, and while I have experienced the trials and tribulations of budget discussion under my belt, this year has certainly been a roller coaster ride of combing through and debating an over 9 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 ago to the mayor and council, we faced increases in various areas, We faced increases in various areas, including nearly \$90,000 increase in active and retired employee health benefits as well as a \$63,059 increase in RVSA Sewer charges. Also, salary increases from union negotiated contracts increased by \$144,000, not to mention the anticipated increases to gasoline costs of \$20,000. Also there were increases on the interest from our debt incurred by our emergency bond note from the state mandated reevaluation, the purchase of needed equipment such as the ladder truck, and bonding required due to Hurricane Ida which all totaled over \$168,000. However, we were able to defray those costs by anticipated revenues from Vermella in the amount of \$420,000 and designate the full \$150,000 of the PILOT money that the BOE requested to help in paying off the costs of a new gym floor. Also, we aggressively pursued the sale of the last of our flow rights to Springfield to the tune of \$243,000. Therefore we are proposing an average of \$73 per household increase per house valued at \$400,000. This is a product of thoughtful planning, fierce negotiations, and a commitment to all our stakeholders. We literally spent hours via email and in person questioning and debating every single line item and were able to trim the budget dramatically from where we were first looking at over 300 dollar increases per household. 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.

Our goal as always is to provide the residents of Garwood with the best possible services at the best possible price. This budget makes significant investments to improve Borough services. This budget makes significant investments to improve Borough services. For example, we are adding a 17th police officer that was advocated by the Police Department and endorsed by the Citizens Advisory Panel. This was actually added to the 2020 budget but later removed due to the pandemic. The chief of police made it clear that with the overwhelming increase of county and state directives, the police department has been greatly challenged in their ability to complete these tasks. There has been a new Use of Force Reporting System, Operational Helping Hands for Opioid Counseling, and Officer Accountability and Integrity Directives that have required enormous amounts of additional hours to achieve compliance. On top of that, the department has implemented ambitious community policing programming with successful events like Coffee with a Cop,

Youth Academy, Street of the Week. We also must consider that we want our officers prepared to help the likely increase in pedestrian traffic that will result from new development and to provide a very visible and recognizable presence at Lincoln School. In addition we are increasing our parking enforcement officer hours starting in July in anticipation of the influx of new residents from the Vermella property and potential visitors. We also prioritized increasing the budget of our fire department with increased training to deal with potential water rescue operations as well as the gear and equipment needed to complete this task to combat any future Hurricane Ida like situations.

Our capital improvements fund has seen a major increase as we have placed \$70,000 in this account. This will allow us to bond and/or purchase a variety of important equipment and projects. These include the following items that either a majority of the finance committee approved or were unanimously approved.

Department	Item/Operational Change	Cost	Why?	Finance Committee Decision
Fire	Water Rescue Gear	\$12,000 (for six people)	Hurricane Ida rescue in the underpass	Majority Approved
Fire	Water Rescue boat	\$8,000	To help assist with water rescue in flooding situations	Majority Approved
Fire	Fire Gear (Radios, Turnout gear, toughbooks, battery operated pressure operated fans, Escape System)	Radios- \$24,600 Turnout gear \$20,000 Toughbooks- \$27,514 Escape Syst- \$9,206 Knox Box- \$1700 Pressure Fans \$8917 TOTAL: \$91,937	Needed safety gear	Unanimously Approval
Fire	17 Oxygen Bottles	\$247,542	Replace expiring bottles (applied for FEMA grant--hear back in May)	Unanimously Approved
Police	911 Enhancements	\$75,000- \$100,000 (startup costs) Annual fee of (5,000-7,000 from 3200)	The current system will not function with new required NG 911 network	Unanimously Approved (Need to discuss county dispatch option)

Police	Portable Radios	\$70,000-\$100,000	Current radios have been discontinued since 2015 and parts are becoming inaccessible.	Unanimously Approved (Need to discuss county dispatch option)
Police	Solar Powered Feedback Signs	(3 @ 6k each) \$18,000	Radar feedback signs have helped slow traffic..the additional one will be placed at other critical speed areas in the Borough	Unanimously Approved
Police	Rapid Flashing Pedestrian Beacons	\$33,500	Help increase pedestrian safety	Unanimously Approved
Roads/Engineering	Curb Repairs on South Avenue	\$200,000 (Applied for county infrastructure grant that could be up to \$40-50K)	Curbs are missing/broken in numerous areas; Better to complete before County repaves South at the end of this year	Unanimously Approved
Roads/Engineering	Adding Sidewalk on both sides of West St between Myrtle and Willow	\$10,000	Increase pedestrian access to and from redevelopment area.	Unanimously Approved
Roads/Engineering	Paving of street on 2nd and 3rd with drainage and aprons	About \$405,000 (\$250,000 Federal DOT Grant)	Maintain Street repaving scheduling	Unanimously Approved

Roads/Engineering	Paving of 4 different roads.	About \$500,000 (up to \$400,000 could be funded by DOT grants)	Maintain street repaving scheduling	Unanimously Approved
Administration	Security Entry	\$25,000	Key Fob entry to Firehouse and Borough Hall for better security	Unanimously Approved
Buildings & Grounds	Hartman Park Disability Access	\$35000 (partially funded by recreation matching grant)	Make Hartman Park handicap accessible.	Unanimously Approved

If anyone has any questions or suggestions on the operating side of budget, we will discuss them shortly. We should also discuss these capital requests and needs tonight mentioned above. I look forward to reviewing them as a whole Council tonight and to hear from members of the public.

Name of Grant Department Dollar Amount

Name of Grant	Department	Dollar Amount
NJ DOT Grant	Roads/Engineering- Paving of 4 roads	Up to \$400,000
FEMA Grant	Fire Department Oxygen Tanks	\$247,542
FEDERAL Transportation Grant	Roads/2nd and 3rd Avenue	\$250,000
County Infrastructure Grant	Roads/Engineering- Curbs on South Avenue	\$45,000
Recreation Trust Fund County Grant	Buildings and Ground- Hartman Park Accessibility	\$17,500

Total Capital Recommendations Costs without grants: \$1,613,629

Total Capital Recommendations Costs with grants: \$658,587

Current amount in Capital Fund with 2022 recommendation: \$128,000

Mayor Todisco thanked Councilman Lazarow and the Finance Committee for their hard work compiling the 2022 budget.

Mayor Todisco stated Operating, Revenue and Capital budget items will be discussed.

Mayor Todisco requested the Council review the Operating budget.

Council Discussion:

Councilman Lazarow explained the Administrative and Executive Salary and Wage line.
Councilman Lazarow read the budget in full.

Councilman Graham requested clarification regarding the employee group insurance costs.
Ms. Bruns and Councilman Lazarow provided clarification.

Councilman Lazarow and Ms. Bruns clarified the salary and wage numbers in the Fire Department's budget.

Council President Blumenstock requested consideration to provide an in-house mechanic stipend of \$5,000 to an existing employee to pay outside mechanic costs.
Council agreed to consider.

Ms. Bruns clarified the Celebrations Committee's trust account and events expense account.

Jennyfer Guerrero of the Celebrations Committee presented information regarding the Celebration Committee's expenses and requested an increase to their budget based on said expenses.

Mayor Todisco informed all in attendance of a discrepancy regarding the amount of PILOT funds projected to be received, and of which has been incorporated into the budget.
Mayor Todisco informed all in attendance that the redevelopment attorney will present details at the next regular council meeting

Mayor Todisco stated the tax impact to residents would be \$75 per household if the mechanic stipend became formalized.

Mr. Korecky explained how the American Rescue Act impacted last year's budget funding.

Chief Wright clarified the capitol items listed in the Police Department's budget.

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.

Clarissa Nolde, 414 Locust Avenue, requested clarification regarding the cost of legal services. She stated support for the Historical and Celebrations Committees, and requested fully funding for both committees.

Bill Nierstedt, 320 Hickory Avenue, commented on the PILOT funding for the Garwood Board of Education, and requested funding be reallocated to support the establishment of a forestry management plan and a shade tree trust.

Kathy Villaggio, 313 Fourth Avenue, requested clarification on revenue generated from the use of recreation fees.

Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the PILOT agreement amount.

Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding Library In-Kind fees.

Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the decrease in shade tree salary and wages.

Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the increase in finance salary and wages.
Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the increase in health insurance costs.
Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the increase to salary and wages for the Fire Department.
Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding sewer maintenance costs.
Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the bulk permit cost.
Ms. Villaggio requested clarification regarding the status of Hartman Park Ramp and CDBG funds.

John Bartolick, 231 Hemlock Avenue, requested clarification regarding the American Rescue Acts funds expended during COVID.

Mr. Bartolick requested clarification regarding the status of shared court services.

Mr. Bartolick requested clarification regarding the cost of employee group insurance and requested alternatives that may be available.

Bruce Paterson, 325 Willow Avenue, requested clarification regarding grants use.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the decrease in assessment tax.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the increase in recreation salary and wages.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding funding for the seniors.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding the increase to RVSA.

Mr. Paterson requested clarification regarding tax bank increase.

A motion was made by Councilman Lazarow, second by Councilman Kearney, to close public comment.
All in favor.

Mr. Harris clarified the cost of legal services.

Mayor Todisco clarified the BOE PILOT allocation.

Mayor Todisco and Ms. Bruns provided clarification regarding the questions as presented.

Mr. Korecky provided clarification regarding the American Rescue Act.


ADJOURNMENT:

The Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council will be held on **THURSDAY, April 7, 2022**, at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers.

Information for meetings is posted on the Borough website: https://garwood.org/gb_notices

A motion was made by Councilman Kearney second by Councilman Lazarow to adjourn.
Time: 10:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:


Catherine D. Cameron, R.M.C.
Borough Clerk