

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP/COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 29, 2020**

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 29, 2020 with the following persons present: Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Deputy Fire Marshall Mark Burkholder; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council President Jack Gombach was unable to attend.

VISITORS None

CALL TO ORDER

Council Vice President Philip Wert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Chief Moyer presented his budget noting the following:

- 01-411-120 Daytime Staffers - The new daytime staffer program has had a positive impact on the timeliness that services are being provided within the Borough during business hours. Chief Moyer expressed the importance of continuing to fund this program for the entire year at a cost of \$60,000.
- 01-411-121 Salaries - A 2.75% increase in salaries was requested for the Chiefs, Captains and Lieutenants.
- 01-411-220 Administrative Expenses were reduced from \$4,500 to \$4,000 for the year 2021.
- 01-411-242 Turnout Gear – In the past funding of annual updates to NFPA compliant protective equipment has been processed through the Capital Revenue fund. Chief Moyer urged Council to consider moving this annual expense to a general expense line item to more accurately reflect these expenditures. The amount requested for 2021 was \$10,000.
- 01-411-243 COVID-19 – Chief Moyer was hopeful that there would be no expenses associated with the pandemic next year and did not budget any funds for this line item.
- 01-411-329 Communication remained budgeted at \$19,500, it is unknown at this time as to what type of increase the County will be assessing for their services during 2021.
- 01-411-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs was reduced to \$25,000 due to a savings on the smaller vehicle repairs by the Borough Mechanic.
- 01-411-338 Gasoline has been reduced from \$7,000 which was budgeted in 2020, to \$5,000 for the year 2021.
- 01-411-360 Utilities remained budgeted at \$20,000. Chief Moyer noted a savings in 2020 due to a mild winter.
- 01-411-373 Building Maintenance and Repairs remained budgeted at \$24,000. It was noted that funds may be needed for the aging HVAC system and maintenance of the bay doors.
- 01-411-750 Minor Equipment Purchases were requested at an increase of \$10,000 for 2021. Chief Moyer reported that Title 35 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly allowed fire departments to annually apply for a grant to offset these equipment expenses and the department would typically receive between \$10,000 to \$15,000. However, the Commonwealth has not authorized a

renewal of this grant opportunity for the year 2021. Chief Moyer requested Council to reach out to State Representatives to urge this renewal.

Motion to authorize the Borough Manager to write a letter to State Representatives requesting the renewal of Title 35 grant opportunities for fire departments. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried 6-0.**

- 30-411-000 Fire Capital Expense – The following annual improvements were projected:
 - 2021 – The concrete apron at the bay doors is deteriorating more than likely from the weight of the vehicles. A quote is currently being requested for these repairs.
 - 2022 – Purchase a replacement fire engine, which would replace both the fire engine and rescue vehicles. The combination of two vehicles limits the amount of space available for a cascade system that is used to fill the breathing cylinders. Chief Moyer indicated the best option would be to install a compressor and fill station at the fire station to have the capability of refilling these cylinders. An estimated cost for this option was approximately \$50,000. A 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grant opportunity would be applied for to potentially reduce the Borough's expense of a filling station.
 - 2023 – Bay door replacement. More modern technology has become available for horizontal opening doors that would reduce the rate of deterioration. An estimated cost to replace three bay doors was \$150,000. Chief Moyer recommended exploring options for door replacement.
 - 2024 – Utility 64 replacement. At this time the vehicle would be nine-years old and used more frequently for medical assists and manpower calls when the fire engine and rescue vehicles have been combined. The current vehicle would then be handed down to the fire police.

Chief Moyer recommended moving the 2021 Fire Capital Expense budgeted amount of \$10,000 to the general expense line item for turnout gear.

Mr. Wert noted that moving this expense out of the Capital Fund and into the General Fund would cause an increase to the annual general expenses moving forward. However, turnout gear is important to attract volunteer firefighters.

Mrs. Rentschler noted that concrete apron repair estimated costs would need to be inserted into the 2021 Fire Capital Expense line item.

Mrs. Rentschler also noted the following updates that are needed to the worksheet for the 2020-year end estimate:

- 14-411-120 Daytime Staffers should be revised from \$60,000 to \$30,000.
- 01-411-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair should be revised from \$2,500 to \$25,000.
- The updated year end estimated deficit should be reduced from \$85,571 to \$78,071.

Mrs. Rentschler reported that a .5 mil tax rate increase was added to the 2021 revenues, which would reduce the 2021 deficit to \$12,594. Chief Moyer noted that .25 mils of this tax would be transferred to the Special Reserve Fund to purchase apparatus.

Chief Moyer reported that beginning in 2016 .25 mils of the Fire Tax has been transferred to the Special Reserve Fund to purchase replacement vehicles. An estimated tax and interest fund balance at the end of 2022 would be \$288,655. This amount would be applied to the first payment of the new

apparatus that was estimated to cost between \$750,000 to \$800,000. Beginning in the year 2023 this tax would be applied towards payment of the apparatus loan. Chief Moyer also indicated that the fire engine and rescue vehicles would be sold to assist in the purchase of a new engine.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary