

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP / COUNCIL MEETING**

September 11, 2021 – 9:00 a.m.

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Saturday, September 11, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Recreation Director Christine Boud; Fire Chief Chad Moyer; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS:

Carl Garman, Resident

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. A moment of silence was requested to commemorate the twenty-year anniversary of those lost on September 11, 2001.
2. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mr. Gombach reported an executive session that was held on September 9, 2021 to discuss personnel. Council then recessed to executive session at 9:07 a.m. to discuss personnel and reconvened at 9:15 a.m. Mr. Gombach noted the following action item:

Motion to amend the Chief of Police contract to increase his salary to \$110,000. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Kaag. **Motion carried 6-0.**
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.
4. **RECREATION BUDGET:**
Christine Boud presented the remaining portion of the Recreation Department budget that pertained to Playground Expenses noting the following:
Expenses
 - 90-453-033 Equipment – Updated game equipment will be needed next year, \$500 was requested to cover this expense.
 - 90-453-038 Field Trip Expenses – It was noted that the budgeted \$4,000 is a pass-through expense similar to that of the basketball and pickleball programs.
 - 90-453-131 Travel Expense – The amount proposed for bus service for field trips was \$1,500.
 - 90-453-180 Uniforms will need to be purchased next year; the proposed budget was \$750.
 - 90-453-183 Playground Wages were proposed to increase by \$0.25 per hour totaling \$24,000. Ms. Boud requested an increase of \$1 per hour for a full capacity program that would require twelve staff members next year. The amount that would need to be budgeted would be \$26,000.
 - 90-453-273 Reserve Equipment Claim – Remaining pavilion insurance flood claim proceeds of \$4,055 were budgeted to replace playground equipment.
 - 90-392-001 Transfer from General Fund was reduced for the years 2021 through 2025 based on budget discussions.

Mr. Gombach requested a written action plan for fundraising and grant seeking efforts in order to continue to grow and invest in our recreation and park programs.

Christine Boud departed the meeting at 9:24 a.m.

5. FIRE BUDGET:

Fire Chief Chad Moyer reviewed his budget noting the following:

Expenses

- 01-411-120 Daytime Staffers – Chief Moyer indicated that this program has been a huge success and proposed a 3% increase bringing the total amount requested for 2022 to \$61,800.
- 01-411-121 Salaries – A 3% increase was applied to the salaries of the Chiefs, Captain and Lieutenants bringing the total amount requested for 2022 to \$8,106.
- 01-411-222 Debt Service – Chief Moyer noted that the low-interest mortgage for the fire station will be paid in full in October of 2026. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$12,141.
- 01-411-242 Turnout Gear – Chief Moyer reminded Council that this line item was moved from a Capital Expense to an annual expense since it is necessary to purchase turnout gear every year. The annual goal is to purchase three full sets of turnout gear, which consists of a coat, boots, helmet and pants. Due to cost increases the amount requested to be budgeted for 2022 was \$12,000. Chief Moyer noted that the gear for front line volunteers must be retired after ten-years of use. This gear is then cycled to new members that are not allowed to enter buildings.
- 01-411-329 Communication – It was noted that the County will not be raising their dispatching fees for 2022. The amount budgeted was \$19,500.
- 01-411-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair – It was noted that a few large repairs were needed this year, which will cause this item to be over budget for 2021. The amount proposed for 2022 for a smaller fleet and new engine with a warranty was \$25,000.
- 01-411-351 Fire Company Vehicle Insurance was proposed at \$7,494 or a 7% increase. Mrs. Rentschler stated that the Tompkins Insurance agent shops for the best policy and price.
- 01-411-373 Building Maintenance and Repairs – Chief Moyer indicated that the projected year end 2021 budget is \$4,000 less than what was budgeted due in part to COVID grant funds being used for cleaning and building expenses. The proposed 2022 budget remained at \$24,000.
- 01-481-800 Transfer Fire Tax to Capital – Chief Moyer noted a meeting with the Center for Excellence in Local Government to discuss long-term budgeting of future vehicle replacements, and the recommendation to refrain from using a special fire tax for these types of purchases that take place every ten years. The reasoning behind this theory was for the property owner that may only own property in the Borough for three years that would not reap the benefit of this type of tax. Alternatively, it was suggested to enter into a new bond in the year 2032, once the 2021 Bond has been paid in full, to purchase a replacement vehicle in the ten-year rotation.
- 01-492-030 Transfer to Special Reserve Fire – The 2021 Bond savings of \$136,946 will be moved into this fund for future needs, including replacement of the utility vehicle that is planned in the year 2025.

- 30-411-00 Fire Capital Expense – Chief Moyer requested \$10,000 in the year 2022 to complete the needed concrete apron replacements. He noted that grant funding was pursued to purchase a filling station and compressor to fill cascade cylinders. The grant application had been denied, however, Chief Moyer plans to apply again next year, noting that the cylinders can be filled on the new engine with the ability to refill the engine at a neighboring fire station. Chief Moyer intends to pursue grant funding to replace HVAC units in the years 2023 and 2024. It was recommended to apply for a grant through the Berks County Community Foundation to obtain funding to replace the aging HVAC units as well as to perform an energy audit of the building. Mr. Kaag requested to view the individual HVAC units and noted that the redundancy of these units is preferable to avoid the entire building from being without service at one time, and this also offers the opportunity to replace one unit at a time.

Revenues

- 01-301-150 Real Estate Taxes Fire Current – There was no proposed fire tax increase for the years 2022, 2024 and 2025; a quarter mil tax increase was proposed for the year 2023.
- 30-392-660 Transfer from Special Reserve was budgeted in the year 2022 at \$18,000 in order to balance the budget. The amount of \$163,946 that is proposed for the year 2025 is an approximate total of the Special Reserve savings. A portion of which would be used to purchase a replacement utility vehicle.

Chief Moyer thanked Mrs. Rentschler for offering her patience and time to make the budget process as simple as possible.

Chief Moyer noted a potential issue whereby a number of businesses along Penn Avenue have approached him about not being billed for their fire safety inspections. He inquired with Jeanette and found that only \$162 of the \$7,500 expense has been collected this year. Chief Moyer wanted to ensure that this important program continues and offered to provide a list of inspections performed by the Fire Marshal within his September report to Council.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Mr. Garman noted that while he was on Council, he recommended ear marking funds to special reserve funds in order to handle unknown expenses.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:19 a.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary