

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

October 16, 2021 – 9:00 a.m.

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Saturday, October 16, 2021 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln (via Zoom); Council Members Jennifer Bressler (arrived 9:27 a.m.), Patrick Kaag, Samantha Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Public Works Crew Leader Kerry Grassley; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

VISITORS: There were no visitors.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.

3. **PUBLIC WORKS BUDGET:**

Mr. Murray presented the budget noting the following:

Public Works Revenues

- **01-362-500 Public Works Request for Assistance** – This revenue reflects reimbursed services for events, such as the French Fry Fest, Friends of Reading Hospital Fun Run, and Out in the Park. These events were estimated to generate \$2,647 next year.
- **01-391-430 Sale of Public Works Vehicle(s)** – A vehicle replacement for the bucket truck was ordered earlier this year, and is scheduled to arrive in late December. The existing bucket truck that does not pass inspection will be sold once the replacement has arrived. Replacement of the twenty-year-old truck #52 is planned for next year. Mr. Grassley recommended listing this vehicle with a reserve price of \$12,000 to potentially keep this vehicle as a backup to salt, plow or for use during cold patching. Council agreed to keep truck #52 as a backup and budgeted \$500 for the sale of the bucket truck next year.

Public Works Expenses

- **01-430-130 Salary of Public Works Director** – It was recommended to retain the current rate of \$75,500 for the new Public Works Director. This position is available 24/7 by phone, comes out to emergency callouts, events to assist crew members. This rate includes the annual 3% increase. The total amount proposed for 2022 was \$56,819 for the nine months following the conclusion of Mr. Grassley's trial period.
- **01-430-140 Crew Wages** – A crew leader and seven crew members with a 3% increase brings the contractual 2022 budget to \$507,438 and this amount includes a possible new hire.
- **01-430-172 Overtime** – This includes overtime for the crew leader and crew members based on time and a half after eight hours, and double time on holidays. A 3% increase was proposed for the 2022 budgeted amount of \$43,766. It was noted that a cold, wet winter is predicted this year and to ensure there are enough funds available to cover these expenses. Mr. Grassley recommended ordering salt in advance to avoid shortages.
- **01-430-173 Part-Time Help** – Three part-timers were hired this year due to two crew members that were out for injuries. One part-timer worked 40 hours per week and stayed

to assist with Fall Fest working only 25 hours per week to follow the contract. Two-part timers are budgeted for 2022 totaling \$11,520.

- **01-430-185 Boot Allowance** – Contractually this was changed to a \$200 pay out two times per year for nine members. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$3,000.
- **01-430-196 Health and Accident Insurance** – Teamsters composite rate minus employee deduction was budgeted at \$213,500. It was noted that the new hire was included in this amount at the highest level.
- **01-430-198 Life Insurance Premium** – This includes American United Life Insurance benefit of \$70,000, AFLAC injury insurance and AFLAC short term disability. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$9,031. It was noted that these rates dropped by 2%.
- **01-430-243 COVID-19** – A contractual reimbursement for working through COVID-19 provides a one-time payment of \$2,000 to eight crew members, plus an additional \$1,575 for supplies next year brings the total amount budgeted for 2022 to \$17,500.
- **01-430-336 Vehicle Replacement** – The backordered bucket truck that was ordered last January was leased at a rate of 2.15% in five annual payments of \$15,077.
- **01-430-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair** – Public Works vehicle repairs, supplies, inspections, etc. were budgeted at \$36,750 for the year 2022. It was noted that the best decision made was in hiring a mechanic.
- **01-430-351 Vehicle Insurance** – Quotes have not yet been received, the amount that was proposed for the budget was \$18,900.

Jennifer Bressler joined the meeting at 9:27 a.m.

- **01-430-416 Training Expense** – Training to keep crew member licenses current in pesticide, employment related classes, and background checks was budgeted at \$1,250.
- **01-431-374 Street Sweeper Maintenance and Repair** – This number was increased slightly to \$4,725 due to the age of the sweeper. It was noted that the purchase of this sweeper lowered the manpower needed to operate from four to one. The purchase price was roughly \$250,000 and it was thought that it may be beneficial to begin setting funds aside in a Special Reserve Fund to purchase another sweeper in approximately ten-years.
- **01-431-455 Dumping Leaves** – The bulk of compost material is delivered to Giorgio Mushroom at no cost. The remainder of materials are taken to Ridgewood Soil or Zwicky's and was budgeted at \$1,838.
- **01-432-245 Snow and Ice Removal** – Salt contracts and snow removal by a contractor if needed were budgeted at \$60,000.
- **01-433-245 Traffic Signals and Street Signs** – A number of changes have been made to street signs with the recent ordinance amendments. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$7,500.
- **01-433-246 Line Painting** – Major intersections are lined with thermal tape to minimize maintenance. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$3,500. Mr. Grassley offered to paint piano key cross walks to the traffic circle in an effort to improve visibility of pedestrians. It was thought that any improvements to these dangerous crossing areas would be welcomed.

- **01-433-354 Traffic Signal Construction** – There are no immediate plans to improve traffic signals. Long-term goals would be the Fifth Avenue signal at the hospital, Parkside Drive North and Eighth and Reading Avenues.
- **01-433-375 Traffic Signal Maintenance and Repair** – Routine maintenance and repairs are performed by Telco. The amount budgeted for 2022 was \$5,250.
- **01-438-370 General Maintenance and Repair** – This includes funding for replacement concrete projects, blacktop and cold patch repairs. Per a discussion in the recent Traffic and Infrastructure Committee meeting, the Public Works Department will be repairing or replacing curbing as time allows within upcoming paving projects and areas that are in need of repair. The proposed budget was increased to \$20,000.
- **01-446-300 MS4 Cooperative Agreements** – Funding for memberships with the County and Wyomissing Joint Creek Authority to implement and manage repairs to storm sewer systems. Mr. Murray noted that storm sewer videotaping is planned next year. The amount reserved for video-taping and unknown expenses was \$26,250.
- **01-455-376 Tree Trimming** – Contractor removal of trees, trimming projects and grinding of stumps was budgeted at a 5% increase totaling \$26,250.

Ryan Lineaweaver departed the meeting and rejoined via Zoom at 9:59 a.m.

- **01-455-377 Tree Spraying** – Ehrlich's removal of hornet's nests, fertilizing of trees and pest control was budgeted at \$525.

Mrs. Rentschler noted that a new GL Code has not yet been created to budget parking study expenses. An overall study was estimated to cost \$30,000.

4. **WATER/SEWER/REFUSE BUDGET:**

Water Fund Expenses

Mrs. Rentschler noted that water revenue numbers illustrated in red are placeholder information that has not yet been reviewed.

- **06-400-313 Engineer Services** – Engineering fees associated with water improvement projects were recommended to be budgeted at 9% of the total cost of the project. The amount proposed for 2022 was \$46,000.
- **06-400-336 Vehicle Replacements** – One-third of the cost, shared with the sewer and refuse funds, to replace truck #52 was proposed at \$25,000.
- **06-400-370 System Maintenance and Repairs** – Fire hydrants, water main repairs, materials and supplies used for the water system was budgeted at \$26,250.
- **06-481-800 Capital Water Project** – Projects planned in 2022 are the Playground Drive water main replacement estimated to cost \$375,000, and the meter pits at Franklin Street and Buttonwood Street estimated to cost \$35,000 and \$37,000 respectively. It was noted that there were three water main breaks along Playground Drive this year, and revisions to the meter pits are planned to safely access these areas from street level. The total proposed budget for 2022 was \$447,000.

Mrs. Rentschler provided an overview of the following transfers out of the Water Fund:

- **06-492-009 Transfer to Sanitation** – This was a onetime transfer to refuse that is no longer needed.

- **06-492-010 Transfer to General Fund** – Five percent, or \$529,200 reimburses this fund for administrative expenses and overhead such as insurance.
- **06-492-300 Strategic Plan/Rate Increase** – Forty-five percent of the General Obligation Bond payment totaling \$365,017 was budgeted for 2022.

Mrs. Rentschler indicated that without a rate increase the fund is projected to end the year with an approximate fund balance of \$500,000. It was noted that Western Berks Water Authority is raising their rates 5-8% next year. It is recommended to maintain a minimum 15% fund balance; the projected end of year fund balance is 26%. Therefore, it was thought that a water rate increase was not necessary.

Sewer Fund Expenses

Mrs. Rentschler noted that sewer revenue numbers illustrated in red are placeholder information that has not yet been reviewed. It was recommended to factor in additional revenue for the nine new townhomes at an average use for a three-person family.

- **08-400-230 Heating Fuel/Natural Gas** – Maintenance of the backup generators for the two sewer pump stations were budgeted at \$2,300.
- **08-400-370 System Maintenance and Repairs** – Spare pumps for each of the pump stations were discussed to avoid down time and the need for expensive rentals. The cost for two pump motors was estimated to cost \$35,000. It was decided to purchase one in 2022 and a second in 2023. The total amount budgeted for 2022 was \$68,000.
- **08-481-800 Capital Sewer Project** – It was noted that the 2021 Linden Lane project may be delayed until the Spring of 2022 due to a shortage in materials. Therefore, this project and the televising of mains was budgeted at \$791,000 for the year 2022. Mr. Murray stated that the \$200,000 grant funding for the Linden Lane project is not reflected in this amount. Paving of this roadway is planned next year with the engineer or public works members inspecting the rate of compaction on a daily basis.

Refuse Fund Expenses

Due to extremely high charges for services the Public Works Department plans to investigate the trash hauler vehicles to ensure they are not beginning the day with a partial load on the vehicle by requesting that they visit the garage prior to starting collection. It was also noted that the current hauler removes all items, even recyclable materials on trash days, regardless of the limitations that are set in place. Council was open to the idea of purchasing trucks and the use of Public Works manpower to perform this service.

Mayor Kearney departed the meeting at 10:46 a.m.

Capital Fund Expenses

- **30-409-000 Buildings Capital Expenditure** – Various replacement windows were estimated to cost \$5,000; blocks for the garage were estimated to cost \$2,000; and camera system additions and upgrades for the Police Department, Administration, and Code Department Secretaries, and upgrades to both the Police and Administration Departments existing camera system were estimated to cost \$80,000. The proposed 2022 budget was \$87,000. Camera improvements were estimated high and will be placed out for bid.
- **30-430-000 Highways Capital** – Sycamore Road paving and curb repair project was estimated to cost \$275,000, 400 block of Grape Street was estimated to cost \$70,000, and the

500 block of Sunset Road was estimated to cost \$75,000. The total proposed 2022 budget was \$420,000. It was recommended to request the engineer to perform an analysis and design to improve the storm sewer system within this area due to drainage issues.

- **30-450-000 Recreation Capital** – The black decorative fence material was not available this year to complete the fence project. Council decided for uniformity purposes to wait until the matching material is available and to budget \$27,000 to complete this project next year. Repointing of the pavilion was not completed this year due to contractor health issues. Mr. Grassley plans to repair areas close to walkways until the contract can be honored next year at an estimated cost of \$15,000. It was recommended to pressure wash and repaint the pool in-house at a cost of \$50,000. The total proposed 2022 budget was \$92,000.

Special Reserve Fund

As recommended by the Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG) last year water and sewer Special Reserve Funds will be moved to their respective funds for savings. The only funds that are to be kept in the Special Reserve Fund moving forward are General Fund type savings.

Liquid Fuels revenues from the state have decreased 7% this year and according to the CELG they will continue to decline each year. There will be funds available next year for handicap ramp improvements. The other item that will be affected by this decline is funding of electricity for street lights. Mr. Kaag noted a conversation that he had with a Met-Ed representative where they would allow the Borough to purchase street lights in groups. However, the greatest expense would be for the Borough to install a new base, pole and electric.

Mr. Murray asked Council to consider keeping the rescue fire truck should bids not meet reserve pricing criteria to allow Public Works to use this vehicle during water main breaks or overnight sewer line repairs. The rescue fire truck is equipped with electric, and air lines that would remove the need to operate individual generators. The rapid response vehicle could be sold in lieu of the rescue fire truck. Cost versus savings estimates were requested for further consideration.

Mr. Grassley requested permission to begin curb repairs before winter weather and before crew members are out on vacation. Council agreed to a trial period to ensure that normal Public Works activities would not suffer by taking on this added responsibility.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.
6. **ADJOURNMENT:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:21 a.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Ms. Kaag. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary