

BOROUGH OF WEST READING
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP/COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12, 2020

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Saturday, September 12, 2020 with the following persons present: Council President Jack Gombach; Council Vice President Philip Wert; Council Pro-Tem Christopher Lincoln; Council Members Jennifer Bressler, Patrick Kaag, and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Public Works Director Dean Murray; Recreation Director Helen Moyer; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Council Member Samantha Kaag was unable to attend.

VISITORS	Lori Hoffman	Resident & Recreation Commission Co-Chair
	Nathalie Kulesa	Resident & Recreation Commission Chair (arrived at 10:55 a.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 9:11 a.m. via Zoom, which was followed by Roll Call.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Murray presented his budget noting the following:

Revenues

- Mr. Murray indicated that the only projected revenue in 2021 would be roughly \$2,000 for 01-391-430 Sale of Public Works Vehicles for replacement of the 1997 Chevy Bucket Truck with a 1979 boom arm. This vehicle will not pass inspection next year and is the only vehicle with a boom arm. The bucket truck is used for maintenance of Penn Avenue lighting and banner poles as well as tree trimming. An estimated cost for a used replacement bucket truck was \$65,000. Purchase and lease costs of a replacement vehicle were requested. This information will be provided at a later time. Also, a projected four-year vehicle replacement schedule was shared with Council.
- It was noted that the final \$53,000 annual lease payment for the street sweeper will be due next year.

Expenses

- 01-430-173 Part-Time Staff was budgeted at \$7,000 should life return to normal next year.
- 01-430-243 COVID-19 is a new line item to cover personal protective equipment expenses due to the pandemic. This has been budgeted at \$3,500 for the year 2021 should the pandemic extend through next year.
- 01-430-740 Major Equipment Purchases is being increased to a proposed \$8,200 to purchase a drag box estimated to cost \$4,200 to maintain the fields and track. A drag box would aerate the ball field following flooding incidents, thereby reducing the number of hours/days crew members would spend aerating by hand.

Streets

- 01-432-245 Snow and Ice Removal was proposed to be budgeted at \$40,000. Following a review of actual costs dating back to 2016 this amount was lowered to \$30,000.
- 01-433-245 Traffic Signals and Street Signs 2020-year end estimate is \$4,000 less than what had been budgeted. The 2021 budget was proposed at \$7,000 due to the Traffic and Infrastructure committees review of alleys throughout the Borough and the potential for revisions to parking regulations.

- 01-446-300 MS4 Cooperation Agreement proposed budget was increased to \$35,000 due to plans to begin televising storm sewer lines. Televising these lines is a Best Management Practice (BMP) that could allow structural issues to be addressed in a more cost-effective manner. Mr. Wert noted that state law changes may allow funds to be raised through a stormwater fee that would be tucked into the utility billing. Consideration of this option could be revisited following review of the televised lines. Mr. Imbesi also noted that a rain tax could be assessed to each property based on their calculated impervious coverage.

Shade Trees

- 01-455-376 Tree Trimming was proposed to remain at \$25,000. Mr. Kaag noted an increase to the number of trees damaged by weather events this year. Mr. Murray reported that hidden rotting was found in the fallen trees and preventative measures are being taken by adding tree cabling to support the structural integrity of weak limbs.
- 01-455-378 Planting/Replacements was budgeted to remain at \$3,500. Mr. Wert recommended referring back to the recent shade tree inventory study to diversify the tree canopy. Also, for stability purposes it was recommended to select a higher caliper tree.
- 01-465-370 Penn Avenue Maintenance and Repairs 2020 budget is currently \$7,000 over budget due to the lowest quoted contractor not including the total aspect of granite handicap ramp repairs. The 2021 budget of \$17,500 is being requested.

Water Fund Expenses

- 60-400-336 Vehicle Replacements: It was noted that in 2022 \$75,000 would be budgeted and split into thirds with the sewer and refuse funds to replace the 2.5-ton dump truck.
- 06-400-370 System Maintenance and Repairs: The 2020-year end budget estimate was \$7,500 below budget with an anticipated expenditure for a valve replacement on North Sixth Avenue. The 2021 budgeted amount remained at \$25,000 for general repairs and water testing.
- 06-400-416 Training Expense was increased slightly to \$2,250 for license renewals that were delayed this year due to the pandemic.
- 06-481-800 Capital Water Projects: Repaving of Pine Street and a portion of South Fifth Avenue was budgeted at \$138,000; this project was delayed this year due to the pandemic. The 2020 budgeted upgrade to the meter reading system in the amount of \$25,000 was discussed. This upgrade would replace the two handheld meter readers and software to facilitate remote reading. Replacement meter heads would need to be purchased over time and would begin with the monthly accounts. Council decided it would be best to replace the system prior to experiencing any serious issues and requested verification that this expenditure would not exceed \$25,000. Mr. Murray indicated that he would provide this information during next Tuesday's regular Council meeting.

Sewer Fund Expenses

- 08-400-300 General Expense 2020-year end estimate is \$1,400 below budget. The 2021 proposed budget was reduced to \$5,000.
- 08-400-313 Engineering Services was increased slightly to \$45,000 for the upcoming Linden Lane sewer upgrade project.
- 08-400-370 System Maintenance and Repairs 2020-year end estimate is \$9,000 below budget. The 2021 budget amount request remained at \$25,000.
- 08-400-740 Major Equipment Purchases was budgeted at \$32,500 to purchase a sewer jet trailer to remove sewer backups in the lateral line from the curb to the main. Mr. Murray also proposed to save residents money and time when a sewer backup occurs from the curb to their home by jetting their lines at an approximate \$100 savings. It was estimated that the number of sewer backups per

year could generate enough revenue to cover the cost of this equipment in a little more than a year. Liability matters would need to be discussed with the Borough's liability insurance agent and the Borough Solicitor.

- 08-481-800 Capital Sewer Project: \$450,000 was budgeted for the Linden Lane sewer replacement project with grant reimbursements totaling \$200,000.

Capital Fund Expenses

- 30-409-000 Buildings Capital Expenditure was budgeted at \$18,500 to replace windows in Council Chambers, purchase blocks to create an additional storage area at the garage, and upgrade the Borough Hall Administration Department alarm due to areas where the alarm is currently not in operation.
- 30-430-000 Highways Capital Expenditure was budgeted at \$376,000 for the following projects:
 - Final street sweeper payment: \$53,000
 - Handicap ramp improvements: \$45,000
 - Wyomissing shared paving/handicap ramp project at the intersection of Eighth and Reading Avenues: \$25,000
 - Sycamore Road paving: \$155,000
 - 400 block of Grape Street paving: \$60,000
 - South Fifth Avenue paving from Pine to Spruce Streets: \$38,000

The Public Works Department budget portion of the meeting ended at 10:45 a.m. and a break in the meeting took place until 10:55 a.m. Nathalie Kulesa joined the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

RECREATION

Mrs. Moyer reviewed the proposed fee schedule revisions with Council. Following a lengthy discussion, it was decided to slightly increase resident rates for the playground, pool, swim lessons, pool parties and rental fees and to continue to offer these services to non-residents at a significantly higher rate. Though difficult to compare the services offered in West Reading to other neighboring establishments, it seems that the quality of services offered here exceeds that of neighboring establishments and at a much lower rate. It was recommended to provide slight annual rate increases to soften the increase towards residents in the future. Council requested a history of residential versus non-residential memberships since 2016 when non-resident memberships were allowed in the Borough. Mr. Lineaweaver suggested offering an increased discount of 10% to residents that obtain memberships to the pool by May 1st each year. The newly offered babysitter rate under the resident family pool membership was discussed. It was noted that it would be difficult to limit this access to only babysitting duties since this person would have a membership card. However, should this membership be abused it could be denied in the future.

Mrs. Moyer presented the following items in her budget:

Revenues

The increased rates for the playground, pool, swim lessons, pool parties and rental fees would need to be factored into the budget worksheet. The 2020-year end estimate of \$3,500 for the haunted hayride was cancelled and therefore the revenue was removed. Mrs. Moyer shared her uncertainty in obtaining annual donations towards the fireworks and playground program during 2021 due to the pandemic.

Recreation Expenses

- 90-451-021 Office Supplies was reduced to \$1,000 due to supplies that were bought and not used during 2020.
- 90-451-109 Father/Daughter Dance was reduced to \$1,500 due to supplies that were bought and not used during 2020.

- 90-451-110 Harvest Hayride was reduced to \$2,000.
- 90-451-300 General Expense was reduced to \$500 for criminal background checks only since the employee can perform their own child abuse background check.

Pool Expenses

- 90-452-181 Pool Wages were reduced to \$70,000 since a rate increase was not been provided during 2020.
- 90-452-182 Concession Wages: Mr. Lineaweaver inquired as to the drastic increase in these wages from 2018 to 2019. Mrs. Moyer noted the new concession stand building that required additional staff members and the offering of made-to-order food items. An increase to food pricing typically results in members sneaking food into the pool area. Mrs. Moyer offered to reduce the number of hours the concession stand is open by changing the time to 12-6pm since sales normally decrease after 6pm.
- 90-452-374 Repairs and Maintenance Equipment was increased to \$32,500 to replace the main pool motor.

Playground Expenses

- 90-453-273 Reserve Equipment Claim was budgeted at \$4,000 to replace flood damaged equipment.

Capital Fund Expenses

- 30-450-000 Recreation Capital Expense was budgeted at \$114,500 for the following projects:
 - \$12,500 to repoint the pavilion
 - \$80,000 to resurface and paint the pool
 - \$22,000 to install fence sections

Mr. Kaag inquired as to delaying the fence project. Mrs. Moyer noted the sections that are in need of replacement where people have been known to jump the fence to swim after hours.

Mr. Wert recommended not cutting any projects until a comprehensive review of the entire budget has been completed.

Mr. Murray provided information quoted in March regarding replacement of the bucket truck, which was a \$72,000 purchase price or five annual lease payments of \$16,000.

Mr. Lincoln shared that since he has been working from home the designation of local services tax can be allocated towards West Reading and recommended sharing this information with anyone else in the Borough who has been working from home.

Mr. Gombach thanked Mrs. Moyer, Mr. Murray and staff members for making this process as painless as possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:29 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Wert. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary