

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP/COUNCIL MEETING**  
**SEPTEMBER 22, 2020**

West Reading Borough Council held a Budget Workshop and Council Meeting at Borough Hall on Tuesday, September 22, 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, Samantha Kaag and Ryan Lineaweaver; Mayor Andrew Kearney; Police Chief Stephen Powell; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; Treasurer Jeanette Rentschler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

**VISITORS**     None

**CALL TO ORDER**

Council President Jack Gombach called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. via Zoom, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call. Mr. Gombach requested a moment of silence to remember those impacted by the COVID-19 virus locally and globally.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

Chief Powell presented his budget noting the following:

**Revenues**

- Revenues associated with parking tickets and parking meter violations are projected to be below budget for 2020 due to the pandemic. Due to the uncertainty of pandemic affects to the 2021 budget, revenue for these line items remained at the 2020 budgeted amounts.
- The following revenue enhancement ideas were discussed:
  - Renting spaces within the municipal parking lot along Franklin Street. A lottery type selection process for overnight parking was preferred with four-hour parking enforcement during business hours. Further details of this option will be discussed at the next Traffic and Infrastructure meeting.
  - Increase the \$15 fine for paid parking violations. A \$10 increase to this fine was preferred to encourage use of the kiosks. The current \$15 fine is a less expensive alternative to paying the \$1 per hour fee to park on the lot between the hours of 6am – 2am.
  - Increase the Penn Avenue free parking timeframe from two to three hours while increasing the fine from \$30 to \$50.
  - Paid permit parking along the primarily residential areas of the 300 block of Penn Avenue and the 100 block of South Fourth Avenue. Borough-wide permit parking changes were preferred should funding be available to conduct a parking study.
- Code violation revenue would need to be discussed with the Code Department Manager.
- Mrs. Rentschler provided an update to the incorrect revenue amounts within the budget worksheet. The current year 2020 budget revenue totals \$238,100 with a year-end estimate of \$176,357 due to COVID-19 impacts. The 2021 budgeted amount for Public Safety – Police Services 01-361-100 is \$1,000 unless Council decides to bill the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) for services during their events. Chief Powell noted that approximately four officers are staffed between the hours of 7am to 11pm at an overtime rate for these annual WRCRF events. It was suggested to charge the WRCRF a reduced rate for these services as opposed to providing in-kind services. Mr. Wert requested that Council members be cognizant

that the WRCRF also provides the Borough services at no cost such as the recent five-year strategic economic development plan in the amount of \$40,000. Chief Powell noted that the one officer now designated to the Penn Avenue area would be paid straight time for these events.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to the 2020 budget for Aggressive Driver Enforcement. Chief Powell indicated that vehicle code details were performed in August and not reflected in the worksheet. Aggressive Driver Enforcement 01-361-113 pertains to grant funding that is received and is a pass-through expense minus court expenses. Revenues for these violations are reflected in 01-331-120 Violations Ordinances and Statutes.

### **Expenses**

- Mrs. Rentschler provided an overview of the year-end estimate difference from what was budgeted in 2020 for police salaries. A 1.5 percent increase was provided in January and July, which causes an inflation to this percentage during the second-half of the year. Also, there are twenty-seven pay periods in 2020 as opposed to the normal twenty-six pay periods. This provides additional salaries during 2020 to the sergeants, patrolmen, parking enforcement officers and administrative personnel. Salaried personnel wages are divided between the twenty-seven pay periods, reducing their income for the year. A 2.75 percent salary increase has been budgeted for 2021.
- Shift Differential, On-Call Pay, Sick Time Pay Outs and Officer in Charge budget amounts for 2021 remain the same as the 2020 budgeted amounts.
- FICA/Medicare Taxes were increased by 1.45 percent for officers and 7.65 percent for parking enforcement and clerical personnel.
- Contractual benefits for Holiday Pay and Longevity were increased.
- Uniforms and Uniform Cleaning budget amounts for 2021 remained the same as the 2020 budgeted amounts.
- 01-410-190 Civil Service Testing/Fees were not budgeted for 2021 since there are no plans to hire new personnel.
- 01-410-194 Hiring Cost Full-Time Officers was budgeted at \$1,000. One officer is eligible for retirement; however, this position may not be filled immediately.
- 01-410-196 Health and Accident Insurance was budgeted at a three-percent increase for 2021. At the present time it is unknown as to whether this would increase between one to three percent.
- 01-410-198 Life and Ancillary Insurance Premium rates will not increase for 2021, and were budgeted at \$11,469.
- 01-410-210 Material and Supplies budget amount for 2021 remained the same as the 2020 budgeted amount.
- 01-410-220 Administrative Expenses increased slightly for 2021 to \$1,200 due to price increases on supplies.
- 01-410-222 Crime Prevention Supplies remained budgeted at \$1,000 should events such as the Citizens Police Academy be held in 2021.
- 01-410-225 Investigative Expenses were reduced to \$1,500 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-232 Memberships were budgeted at \$2,250. Chief Powell noted that association memberships provide valuable information to the department.
- 01-410-242 Ammo and Weapon Supplies budget was reduced to \$11,500 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-243 COVID-19, this new line item budgeted amount was \$8,000 should the pandemic continue and additional personal protection equipment be needed during 2021.

- 01-410-252 Technology Fees remained budgeted at \$60,000 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-300 General Expenses had been reduced to \$3,000 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-305 Canine Program remained budgeted at \$2,500 even though the 2020 year-end estimate exceeds the budgeted amount with the anticipation of \$5,000 in grant funding.
- 01-410-314 Legal Expenses were increased to \$12,500 in anticipation of contract negotiations.
- 01-410-315 Arbitration Fees were also increased to \$5,000 in anticipation of contract negotiations.
- 01-410-316 Medical Evaluations remained budgeted at \$1,000.
- 01-410-319 Telephone Expenses were reduced to \$12,500 due to the savings on the cell phone plan.
- 01-410-320 Communication Expenses remained budgeted at \$38,000, it is unknown at this time as to what type of increase the County will be assessing for their services during 2021.
- 01-410-327 Computer Maintenance remained at \$2,500 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-337 Vehicle Maintenance and Repair was reduced to \$15,000 since the mechanic has been doing well lowering this expense on an aging fleet.
- 01-410-338 Gasoline was reduced to \$16,000 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-350 Berks County Crime Alert Donation remains at \$500 as a nice annual gesture.
- 01-410-351 Police Auto Insurance was increased three percent to \$15,129. It is unknown as to what percentage of increase will be assessed in 2021.
- National Nite Out Expenditures and Maintenance and Repairs budget amounts for 2021 remained the same as what was budgeted in 2020.
- 01-410-460 Education/Training was reduced to \$10,000 for the 2021 budget.
- 01-410-500 Mayor's Office Expenses were budgeted at \$106 for annual software services for the Mayor's laptop.
- Major and Minor Equipment Purchases budget amounts for 2021 remained the same as what was budgeted in 2020.
- 30-410-000 Police Capital Expenses were reduced to \$10,000 for camera maintenance.

Upgrades to the camera system were discussed, and it was noted that replacement parts are becoming difficult to obtain to make repairs to the existing system. Additional camera installations near busier residential intersections and intersections near the hospital were suggested. Chief Powell offered to reach out to the Wyomissing Foundation to see if they are amenable to another grant application as well as the District Attorney's office. It was noted that these cameras have been used by other agencies as needed or requested.

01-410-336 Vehicle Replacements were discussed in length. The mechanic provided a replacement vehicle schedule today that was shared with Council. It was noted that vehicle 38-8 was totaled last year and has not been replaced. Insurance proceeds received for this loss total approximately \$15,000. Vehicle 38-3 is costing more in repairs than what the vehicle is worth and it is recommended to be replaced this year. Vehicle 38-34 is the K9 vehicle that Officer Breitenstein is researching grant opportunities for replacement. Chief Powell will obtain quotes for a replacement vehicle and share this information during the October Council meeting. Replacement vehicle costs with lights and graphics was estimated around \$46,000. Combining the insurance proceeds from vehicle 38-8 and the \$15,000 raised by the Mayor, a total of \$30,000 could be allocated towards this purchase. Due to the hail storm there are four vehicles that will be aging out together. A replacement schedule of one vehicle per year for two years and then one year without replacement had been recommended by the mechanic.

Ms. Kaag shared information as to her efforts in obtaining donations towards a police vehicle and noted that a number of local businesses were interested in donating towards a new K9 vehicle. She is also researching the establishment of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Police Foundation organization. An email outlining the current position on these aspects will be shared with the Council President, Borough Manager and Mayor in the near future.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Lincoln. **Motion carried 7-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary