

READINGTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
BUDGET MEETING – January 29, 2024

Mayor Mueller *calls the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.* announcing that all laws governing the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting has been duly advertised.

PRESENT: Mayor A. Mueller, Deputy Mayor V. Panico, Mr. J. Albanese, Mr. J Heller

ALSO PRESENT: Administrator R. Sheola, Municipal Clerk K. Parker, Chief Financial Officer Donna Mollineaux

ABSENT: Mr. J. Huelsebusch

2024 BUDGET DISCUSSION

- **Library**

Karen Konn, Whitehouse Station Library, and Jeanne Vitale, Three Bridges Library, reviewed the operations of the library and their proposed budget. Ms. Konn discussed the request for an additional part-time employee, due to the reduction in the hours from part-time employees.

- **Municipal Court**

Julie Kosakowski, Municipal Court Administrator, reviewed the budget and the proposed expenditures in the Municipal Court budget. Ms. Kosakowski also highlighted the summons, criminal cases, and revenue of the prior years.

- **Museums**

Margaret Smith, Museum Director, reviewed the proposed operating expenses for the Museum Department. Ms. Smith spoke of the need for a 12-hour/week Museum Assistant to train for the position of the Museum Director, pending her future retirement. Ms. Smith spoke to the approved grant towards the renovation of the porch at Bouman Stickney and the projected cost over \$100,000.

- **Administration / Municipal Clerk**

Karin Parker, Municipal Clerk, highlighted the operations within the Office of the Clerk as they related to expenditures in the proposed budget, combined with the Administration Office. Ms. Parker addressed the increase in the 2024 budgeted line item for election costs due to the election of the Democratic County Committee.

- **Finance**

Administrator Sheola reviewed the budgets of the three units within the Finance Department, tax collection revenue, property assessment and treasury.

- **Public Works / Recreation**

Gabrielle Bolarakis, Director of Recreation, presented the mission of the Recreation Department, highlighting the participation rates and operating budget versus the expenses. Ms. Bolarakis further explained the funding of the recreation trust account as it relates to revenue and expenses.

Ron Christy, Director of Public Works, reviewed the individual line items for each of the divisions within the department, including Roads, Building and Grounds, Vehicle Maintenance, Parks Maintenance and Sewer Utility. Mr. Christy addressed the request for additional personnel in the Building and Grounds to provide in-house services rather than outsourcing.

Mr. Christy continued his presentation with the proposed capital requests for each of the divisions, highlighting the need to replace aging vehicles and equipment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ken Becker commented on the potential need to raise taxes to keep up with the required expenditures of the township due to overall increased costs and spoke to the need for a long-term plan to be able to purchase the items needed.

Christina Albrecht inquired if the budget meeting processes this year were different than previous years and if employees would be paid for their presentation time outside of the normal working hours.

Andrew Saad inquired about the use of the tax revenue from the Verano facility and whether additional bonding would be necessary to pay for capital projects.

Lisa Routel asked if the slides presented would be posted online and inquired, as a new member of the Recreation Committee, about the details of the recreation budget, the comparison in costs and revenues from previous years and what costs are covered under the Recreation Trust Fund..

Bill Quinn commented as a former member of the Recreation Committee that due to the lack of institutional knowledge, the questions Ms. Routel was asking were ridiculous.

Andrew Roth commented on earmarking the tax revenue from the Verano facility and spoke to a request for the township to include an electromagnetic meter in the budget.

Mayor Mueller announced that the next budget meeting will take place on February 1, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

As there was no further business, **A MOTION** was made at 9:01 p.m. by Mr. Heller to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Panico with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Submitted:

Karin M. Parker, *RMC*
Municipal Clerk