

BUDGET MEETING OF APRIL 3, 2012

Mayor Baratta called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Baratta (Late), Deputy Mayor Cosgrove, Deputy Mayor Trawinski (late) and Councilmembers Peluso and Swain.

ALSO PRESENT: Acting Manager Metzler, Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski and Attorney Mondello.

BUDGET REVIEW

Deputy Mayor Trawinski arrived at 5:42 p.m. and Mayor Baratta arrived at 5:45 p.m.

Acting Manager Metzler explained that the Council had already received the Manager's audit a few weeks ago so instead of doing a line by line review, they will discuss the Operating Budget followed by the Capital Budget.

Ambulance – Mark Zharnest, Vice President and Deputy Chief of the Ambulance Corps., Gloria Schoenfeld and Gail Cebular, Trustees were present.

Operating - There were no questions from the Council

Capital Budget – Acting Manager Metzler recommended uniforms and jackets for \$20,000 and \$5,000 for radio equipment. He spoke with Mr. Furphy about looking at a stock ambulance instead of a custom model. The amount requested reflects that philosophy. Vice President Zharnest stated they would be replacing vehicle #933 which is 11 years old.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated that the contract for the third party ambulance billing required for them to look at average fundraising over a number of years. CFO Palermo stated she did not do the calculations; it was provided by the Ambulance Corps. Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated that he did not have a problem with the number but felt it was important to obtain the backup information to document it.

OEM – Peter Yuskaitis, Rescue Squad Chief and OEM Director Marks were present.

Rescue Squad

Capital - Acting Manager Metzler stated that the Rescue Squad was requesting \$15,000 to replace personal protective equipment, \$12,000 for upgrades to compliance space equipment and \$7,500 for personal safety equipment. Chief

Yuskaitis stated explained that personal protective gear was protective equipment.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that they had requested \$40,000 for pagers, which have been moved into a single line in the Fire Department. This is to bring radio equipment up to compliance with the narrow banding. There was a \$45,000 request for a Chief's truck which has been moved to 2014 and a request for \$45,000 for a replacement of a donated support vehicle, which will not be replaced.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that the pagers and radios last about ten years. Unfortunately, none of their equipment was compatible with the narrow banding that will be required. Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked if the narrow banding would allow them to talk to other municipalities and enforcement agencies. Acting Manager Metzler stated there was the ability through the desk to patch into other units but not talk to other enforcement agencies like a trunking system.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated that if they switched all the radios they were buying at some point in the future, they would have to be replaced with something that could accommodate the trunk system. Acting Manager Metzler stated it would not affect the pagers or the mobile radios, which were accessible for trunking. He was not sure about the base radios but he will find out. Councilmember Swain wondered if they could hold off replacing the equipment. Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated they did not have much time under the Federal regulations. OEM Director Marks stated the requirement will go into effect on January 1, 2013. Chief Yuskaitis said the County agencies would be switching over in August.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that he was on the County Terrorism Task Force when they were looking to acquire the trunking system. There was a breakdown with what the County has and the municipalities have because the original plan called for an acquisition of local frequencies. The revenue generated by the acquisition of those frequencies would pay for the equipment required to do trunking. However they never acquired the frequencies so funding was never generated.

Chief Yuskaitis clarified that the \$12,000 budgeted for compliance space was actually for upgrades to extrication equipment. He inquired if the \$3,500 they requested for chain saws had been deleted. CFO Palermo stated that she forgot to include it. Councilmember Peluso asked if the chain saws were replacing existing ones. Chief Yuskaitis stated that they were replacements.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski inquired about the carry over comment on the support vehicle and Hazmat truck. Acting Manager Metzler explained that they had requested \$400,000 in 2012 but it was pushed to 2013 when it will be reviewed again. The support vehicle has been eliminated in an attempt to downsize the fleet.

Emergency Management

Operating – Councilmember Swain asked about the increase in Telephone Expenses. OEM Director Marks explained that this was the reverse calls to the residents. They had a great deal, but the vendor could no longer continue it since they did not have a contract. The current contract provides emergency calls and other notification calls at a fixed price, regardless of the quantity. Deputy Mayor Cosgrove asked if they texted residents. OEM Director Marks stated that these were voice calls that could be made for the CERT Team, Auxiliary Police and anyone else who needed the service.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that even though they have a contract with Swiftreach, he recommended leaving the \$8,000 in the budget. Swiftreach's ability to contact the public is based on the number of phone lines they have available. In the past, it has taken them 12 hours to get notifications out because the calls are not revenue generating calls. His experience indicates that revenue generating calls coming out of the region get priority from the phone company. He recommended keeping this system as a backup.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked for an explanation of what occurs when a resident dials 9-1-1. He felt there was a misconception that a call automatically goes to the Police Dispatch. Acting Manager Metzler stated that if you call 9-1-1 in Fair Lawn the call goes through the Rockwell switch, which seeks out 9-1-1 terminals in Fair Lawn. If both terminals are busy, it goes to terminals that have been identified by the Fair Lawn Police Department as a backup terminal, such as Elmwood Park or Bergen County. If a resident made a call from a cell phone, the call was routed through the County and the operator had the ability to transfer the call to a local jurisdiction. You can now call on a cell phone in Fair Lawn and the call will come to the Fair Lawn Police Department. Should the switch be overwhelmed, it will seek out an available 9-1-1 terminal anywhere in New Jersey. Fair Lawn does not give pre-arrival medical instruction, so those calls are transferred to the MICOM operator for pre-arrival instruction.

Mayor Baratta asked if this system allows them to send out text messages. OEM Director Marks stated they could add that service if they wanted to. The County Swiftreach program also has that capability, but it depends on what services they sign up for. Mayor Baratta would like to know the cost of adding text message capability. OEM Director Marks will look into this.

Capital – Mayor Baratta noted that requests were made to upgrade the Emergency Siren System and purchase Emergency Shelter Carts. OEM Director Marks stated the sirens needed new batteries and electrical connections must be replaced. A new console and printer is needed for the desk as there are no replacement parts available. The system has been shut off since they last tested it five years ago, when only half the system worked. By allocating the \$12,000 they could have the siren available as a backup if the phone system went down due to a catastrophic event or severe weather. Acting Manager Metzler stated that it made sense to maintain a system in which they invested so much money.

Fire Prevention – Fire Marshall Jay Bender was present.

Operating – There were no questions from the Council.

Capital – There were no Capital requests.

Councilmember Swain stated that Fire Prevention does not request uniforms and clothing that often. Acting Manager Metzler stated that the number of employees has remained the same.

Fire Department – Chief Reamy, Asst. Chief Greco, Deputy Chief Londner, Battalion Chief Wolthouse and Fire Clerk Demeraski were present.

Operating – Councilmember Swain asked about the Miscellaneous Line item which was reduced by \$4,000. CFO Palermo stated the money was put into training. Fire Clerk Demeraski stated that the bottom line stayed the same. They just reallocated the funding to a more appropriate use.

Deputy Mayor Cosgrove asked how many sets of turnout gear were replaced each year. Chief Reamy stated that item was under the Capital budget. They were doing the NFPA requirement for ten years or older. Deputy Mayor Cosgrove stated this was another example of the Government mandating items without the funding.

Capital – Acting Manager Metzler stated that project #20.08 in the amount of \$54,625 is a joint project with Ambulance, Rescue and Fire for pagers to be compliant with narrow banding. Chief Reamy stated there was a change in the requirements from the FCC to make more frequencies available throughout the country. Their older equipment will no longer work. There is no market for the equipment and they cannot obtain parts.

Councilmember Peluso asked about the pagers mentioned in Line Item 20.05. Chief Reamy stated they were the same pagers being requested in the joint

project. Fire Clerk Demeraski explained that Line Item was added in the event the joint pager project was not approved. The Fire Department still needed 61 pagers. The Line Item can be removed if the joint pager project is approved.

Acting Manager Metzler asked the Chief to explain Line Item 20.02 for fire apparatus. Chief Reamy stated that they want to replace Engine 5, which is a 27 year old engine that is a spare out of Company 3. By replacing that, they get the hand-me-down from Company 4, which will become the new Engine 5. Engine 4 is 17 years old. Apparatus is usually replaced after 15 years. The Apparatus Committee from Company 4 has been working hard to obtain an affordable replacement for what they have. Engine 1 is coming up for replacement at 16 years old. He is asking them to purchase two apparatus for what used to be the price of one.

Last year they requested \$675,000 for an Engine 4. That number has decreased to \$625,000, which is reasonable for a modern piece of fire apparatus but that figure may be lower. Engine 4 will be more expensive because it has to be a ten man cab because they have over 30 active members. Company 1 has three pieces: a ladder truck that seats six, the current Engine 1 that seats ten and the squad which seats five. They are willing to buy a watered down engine which would be almost four feet shorter and have smaller water capacity that will be used for car and brush fires.

These are bare boned apparatus designed to get them to the scene and put the fire out. Acting Manager Metzler reassured the Council that the project will go out to bid and be awarded to the lowest bidder. Chief Reamy advised the Council that if they wait until next year the price will increase by at least \$30,000 or more. Additionally, the current Engine 1 can be sold for \$50,000 - \$95,000 to another community.

Deputy Mayor Cosgrove stated that the Risk Manager told them that they no longer have complete replacement on any piece of fire equipment with an engine 15 years or older. Mayor Baratta asked Acting Manager Metzler to obtain the information on the truck that could be sold, as she wanted to obtain some price information. Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski stated that they could sell a fire truck on the online auction they were planning.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked why they needed Line Item 20.07 for a \$67,500 "grant match" for fire apparatus engine 4. Fire Clerk Demeraski stated that the grant was written over a so this is the 10% match from the town. Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked if it was possible to amend the budget if a grant was received. CFO Palermo stated that she could add the amount back in.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked why they didn't keep the engine if it was good enough to sell. Chief Reamy stated that the engine has almost reached the end of its useful life. He wanted the best equipment for their volunteers since their lives depend on it. He reiterated that he was trying to get this done at the best cost possible.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski asked about volunteers. Chief Reamy stated that the number of volunteers has remained steady at 125. Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated that the efforts of the Fire Department are always appreciated.

Councilmember Swain asked how much the total cost would be. Chief Reamy stated that currently they estimate the cost to be \$935,000 but he was hoping to bring the cost down.

There was consensus that the Fire Department be allowed to purchase two trucks at a cost not to exceed \$935,000.

There was consensus that the joint pager purchase for the Ambulance Corps, Rescue Squad and Fire Department be approved.

Chief Reamy distributed ad donations for the 100th Anniversary of the Fire Department. Deputy Mayor Trawinski suggested Ron Lottermann place the information on the website.

BUDGET WRAP UP

CFO Palermo stated that the impact the budget had on the average taxpayer before the reassessment was \$380.00. This same budget with the reassessed value had an impact of \$127.00.

Deputy Mayor Trawinski stated that a couple of years ago the County reduced the Open Space Tax Assessment rate from \$1.00 to \$0.25. He asked Attorney Mondello if they had the authority to make a reduction under the Open Space Tax Referendum and, if so, was this something they wanted to do to provide the taxpayers with some relief.

Acting Manager Metzler asked the Council to review the line that showed the Total Property Taxes – Increase/Decrease for an amount of \$2,994,784.00. Using the calculation of new revenue generated through Third Party Billing, Water Billing and anticipated Court Revenue and the estimated FEMA funds which ended up coming in at around \$154,000, he and CFO Palermo estimate that they are short \$900,000 for next year's budget, including the use of surplus.

There are only three ways to offset that number without having a significant impact: increasing revenue this year to build surplus, cutting services in the amount of \$900,000 or utilizing more surplus next year. If they take \$900,000 from surplus next year they will be like other communities going out for referendums with high tax increases because of depleted surplus. He encouraged the Council to address that number this year. If they are planning on cutting services, he wanted some guidance so he could do a realistic study. They cannot reach the \$900,000 through furloughs and the workforce has already been depleted to the point that additional layoffs will result in a reduction of service. CFO Palermo stressed that this was a financial concern that had to be addressed this year.

Councilmember Swain asked when the garbage contract was up. Acting Manager Metzler stated that the contract ended in 2013. Acting Manager Metzler reiterated the consequences of what occurs when surplus is depleted. He urged the Council to work on this as a united front. Mayor Baratta stated that they should look at the figures before they go to the budget wrap up and see if they have any ideas. Some residents think they have extra money because there weren't any big snowfalls this year. They did, however, have a devastating hurricane so they are still expending money on clean up. Acting Manager Metzler stated that it was important for the residents to know that they looked at every single item in every department.

A budget wrap up meeting was scheduled for Monday, April 16th at 5:00 p.m., with introduction of the budget on April 24th.

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Gotlib, 9-03 Westmoreland Avenue asked if the mini bus schedule was being cut. Acting Manager Metzler stated they are looking into alternatives to the current mini bus schedule. There is no change in the immediate future and he does not expect a report to the Council until late June. If changes were approved they would not take place until the fall. Deputy Mayor Cosgrove explained that the change to the mini bus was an improvement to service, as someone would be able to call and make an appointment for a ride instead of driving the entire route on the bus.

Ruth Gormans, 39-37 Sycamore Drive stated that she thought the proposed change in the mini bus would be better than riding all though town. The bus drivers are wonderful and very helpful. The people who ride the bus are wonderful, too, and help each other. She did not want to see the mini bus be eliminated. The people who use the mini bus are disabled or on a fixed income and could not afford a taxi. She uses the Community Center on a regular basis and thinks it is a great place. She suggested using the town-wide phone system

to let residents know about the various facilities available in town. There are many stores in Fair Lawn and people could utilize the mini bus to get to them.

Councilmember Swain stated that perhaps they could obtain the phone numbers or emails of the people who utilize the mini bus so that they could compile a targeted list of who to alert in the event something happens. Acting Manager Metzler thought that was a good idea. He will look into that.

Howard Mark, 12-23 Ferry Heights thought that students could also use the mini bus. Acting Manager Metzler stated that it was a free bus service for everyone. Mr. Mark wondered if there was a way to expand the service to pick up students. Mayor Baratta stated students already use the service.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Deputy Mayor Trawinski and a second by Councilmember Swain, the Work Session was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Kwasniewski, RMC/CMC/MMC
Municipal Clerk

The undersigned have read and approve the foregoing minutes.

Mayor Jeanne Baratta

Deputy Mayor John Cosgrove

Councilman Kurt Peluso

Councilwoman Lisa Swain

Deputy Mayor Ed Trawinski