

## **BUDGET MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11, 2006**

Deputy Mayor Weinstein called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski read the following statement of compliance:

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this special meeting of the Borough of Fair Lawn was published in the Record issues of February 3, 2006. Notices were also posted on the bulletin board located on the first floor of the Municipal Building and the Maurice Pine Free Public Library. Copies were mailed to The Community News and posted on the Borough of Fair Lawn Website. The notice identified the time and location of the special meeting.

**PRESENT:** Deputy Mayors Weinstein and McCarthy, Councilmembers Baratta and Trawinski.

**ABSENT:** Mayor Etler.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Acting Manager Metzler, Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski and Chief Financial Officer Eccleston.

Deputy Mayor Weinstein stated that there is a need for an expert to put together the Open Space Application and the master plan amendment.

The consensus was that a planner is needed.

### **AMBULANCE SERVICES:**

Acting Manager Metzler advised that Resolution 86-2006 was sent to the DCA for their approval. Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski received a call from Joe Valenti that the Borough does not need a resolution. The recommendation of the State was that the Borough declare a state of emergency. He continued that Paramus advised him that they will no longer come to Fair Lawn because the Borough is overtaxing its ambulance service. It is his intention to declare an emergency and move ahead with the 90-day trial program. He will be doing a press release to alert residents. He will continue to work with the Fair Lawn volunteer service.

### **BUDGET PRESENTATION:**

Acting Manager Metzler stated that items that belong in the current budget were put back into that portion of the budget. There is an opportunity to improve customer service. The Construction Department has been taking too long to process applications. The budget addresses personnel needs. A number of deficits exist that must be addressed. They do not have a financial crisis but rather an unstable tax situation. Some of the shifting of funds over the years has caused spiking in the property taxes. It is his goal to stabilize the increase in taxes over the years. This budget will create the last spike. The residents should expect an annual increase of five to seven tax points in the future. They have

begun the process of reviewing numerous programs that will help the 2007 budget. He expects to reduce the motorized fleet and to look at the telephone and computer systems. The Recreation Center is a major factor. It is going to be a very vital and important part of the community. He believes there are opportunities to generate revenue. The cost of operating the facility and the debt service is in this budget. Over \$800,000 is due in debt this year. They have budgeted \$124,000 for operating costs. Maintenance will be assigned to Buildings and Grounds. He expects additional personnel will have to be hired in 2007 to properly maintain that facility.

There is a deficit in the workers compensation liability account. Last year there was an emergency appropriation of \$100,000 which must be paid this year. Employee benefits increased 14.7%. Gasoline costs have increased. The Department's operating cost have increased .0005 percent. There is no fat in this budget. He encouraged them not to do a line item review. He thought the capital budget had become a shopping list outside the current budget. All purchases of computer equipment have been deferred to 2007 giving them an opportunity to set standards. If they can get through this process with reasonable adjustments, they can assure the residents that there will be no future spiking and a reasonable increase year to year.

Councilmember Trawinski wanted to know what percentage of the hike is for salaries of that what is attributable to longevity. CFO Eccelston pointed out that the budget includes new staffing. The salary increase represents 4.75% the rest of the figure is for additional staffing.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that Chief Rose has proposed a schedule that would include more civilian dispatchers. There would be no money saved but it will shift uniform personnel to the patrol. The cost for three dispatchers is estimated at \$187,000.

Currently the only things not being serviced within the Borough are ambulances and the mini buses. There is a ratio of motor vehicles to the mechanic which is out of proportion by 28%. He feels the addition of one more mechanic will make the mechanics shop all inclusive although there will still be some items that will have to go out for repairs.

Councilmember Trawinski asked for a benchmark for the new personnel in the Construction Department. Acting Manager Metzler stated by the end of August a simple permit application which is a kitchen or bathroom application where everything is in order, the resident should expect to leave that day with the permit. Larger projects would require two weeks. The Construction Official has been saying since he was hired that the Department was understaffed. Deputy Mayor Weinstein noted that the former Manager Kwasniewski had asked for additional personnel for years.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Superintendent Conte was present. The largest item in the budget is the Recreation Center. He is using the municipal building figures as a basis for supplies. He requested that a HVAC line be added to the budget to track the expenses better. Some of the trucks

must be recertified this year. The budget for Recycling includes money for replacement of concrete around the Recycling Center office. New permit fees were enacted by the State last year. A new line item in Water and Sewer has been added to track them.

CFO Eccelston pointed out that overtime for the mechanics is related to snow. CFO Eccelston pointed out that 86% of the overtime is for emergency response. Councilmember Trawinski wanted a plan from the Department Heads through the Manger how they can manage it. Acting Manager Metzler indicated that they do manage what they can. CFO Eccelston indicated that the overtime averages about 6% to 7% of salaries every year even though various changes have been made to control it. Municipal Clerk Kwasniewski added that one of the things that was done last year was to reduce the number of people called in for such things as the concerts and to use the lower paid laborers when they could. CFO Eccelston indicated that he can track the overtime this year compared to last years.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that Police Chief Rose is doing a study of how they can use more civilians for such things as crossing guards. The Borough provides police protection as part of its contribution to the project. They are developing a program where the officer would be paid based on the construction rate which would reduce overtime and get more officers on the road.

### **CAPITAL BUDGET**

Superintendent Conte indicated that his request included a garbage truck and an aerial tree truck.

Trees - They would like to reduce this item to \$50,000. Last year they only had 35 requests for tree replacements. Acting Manager Metzler indicated that even with the cut they will still plant more trees than they cut down. Councilmember Trawinski wanted to revisit the Borough's tree planting philosophy at some future date. He thought the Council has to say as a public policy that trees are important to the environment and to the beauty of the town. Deputy Mayor Weinstein stated that the property maintenance committee last year initiated the flyers and the articles in the Shopper encouraging people to ask for trees. Superintendent Conte suggested that they pick a section of town and plant trees in that section. The problem is that the homeowners do not take care of the tree if they do not want it. They have increased the varieties of trees available.

Maintenance Garage - Superintendent Conte indicated that they have asked for a mobile heavy duty truck lift. He distributed a picture. He then explained about their request for a

plasma  
cutter. They  
are wasting  
material  
because of  
the way they  
have to cut.  
With the  
plasma  
cutting tool  
they can cut a  
pattern and  
then cut the  
material to  
the pattern.  
With the price  
of materials  
increasing, he  
felt the  
savings  
would justify  
the \$3,500  
cost for the  
tool. Acting  
Manager  
Metzler  
advised that  
Mayor Etlar  
thought they  
should be  
able to do it  
without the  
tool. The  
Supervising  
Mechanic  
stated that  
with the  
cutting torch  
they are only  
able to cut  
two pieces.  
He thought  
they would be  
able to get  
three. After  
using the  
cutting torch,  
it is

necessary to grind it. With the plasma cutting tool grinding is not necessary.  
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Manager Metzler thought it was a necessary piece of equipment. Superintendent Conte thought the time for each job would be reduced. It is a portable unit.

Superintendent Conte indicated presently they send out any vehicle that is having problems with the air condition system. He proposed purchasing a new automotive air-conditioning system that would allow them to fix the problems in-house. It is also a vapor recovery system which would meet the new DEP regulations.

Superintendent Conte assured the Council that having to do without the items not recommended by the Acting Manager Metzler will not impair the Department's function.

### **PARKS AND RECREATION**

George Frey was present. He indicated that they made many improvements to the parks systems. He expects to move into the new facility in the next few months. Maintenance, utilities and security have been reviewed. He proposed a plant manager in the evening that will also provide security. There are three floors, stairwells and elevators that must be protected. He proposed one full time person and two part time people for the weekends and to provide coverage for vacations.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that the members of the Art Association, the Radio Club and the Old Library Theater are not Fair Lawn residents. He believed that they should not charge Fair Lawn residents to use the facility. However, there is an opportunity to offset some of the costs by charging nonresidents if they use the facility.

Superintendent Frey stated that the Art Association has been in Fair Lawn for more than 40 years. They charge a membership fee which pays for supplies. The participants of each class pay the instructor. The instructor gives 10% to the Art Association.

Councilmember Trawinski asked if they were still rotating fields so that they were not overused. Superintendent Frey noted that the use has increased to such an extent they cannot do that anymore. The sprinkler systems are great. He has sent an employee to Rutgers for training so some of the repairs can be done in-house. Councilmember

Trawinski thought that it would be useful for the Open Space Committee to understand the use of the fields. One of the arguments made about Daly field is that no one uses it. Perhaps there is a need for its use. Superintendent Frey noted that they stopped using Daly Field years ago when Dobrow Complex was developed. At that time, they did not need it. Soccer is the dominate sport. They could use more fields for soccer. Cheerleading has skyrocketed. However, in its present condition Daly field is not useable. Archery field may be suitable for soccer. Councilmember Trawinski asked for a needs analysis for the present and the future.

Deputy Mayor McCarthy asked for his opinion on synthetic turf. Superintendent Frey stated that is expensive but within six to seven years the savings in maintenance will make it worthwhile. All Sports and the Football Association will be coming to the Council and the Council and the Page Five Budget Meeting February 11, 2006

Board of Education with a proposal for artificial turf at the Complex.

### **CAPITAL BUDGET**

Superintendent Frey has asked for some vehicles including a jeep, a pick up truck and a tractor. Superintendent Frey assured the Council that his Department could operate under the recommended projects.

Councilmember Baratta wondered if he was aware of anything negative about the rubber mulch. He has been pleased with it. It does cling to socks. The only report he has seen about arsenic related to treated wood. Councilmember Baratta thought she saw something about the steel from the tires being left in the mulch. Superintendent Frey indicated that the steel is extracted from the mulch.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Police Chief Rose was present. His initial proposal included two additional officers. He is going to find it difficult to operate his Department under the present proposed budget. Acting Manager Metzler indicated it was a financial decision not to include the two officers. He is looking at a long term plan. Chief Rose has presented his short term goals. He expected with the programs they are reviewing and the efficiencies they will be able to produce that in the 2007 budget there will be a request for two additional officers and in

2008 another two officers.

Deputy Mayor McCarthy asked if the additional civilian dispatchers will help. Chief Rose indicated that it will put more officers on the road. Acting Manager Metzler indicated that they should not equate the addition of three dispatchers with an addition of three officers. Chief Rose state that there will be additional man hours but it is not a one for one replacement. It will be a money advantage because dispatchers will cost less. If a dispatcher calls in sick, an officer is pulled off the road to replace him. The present policy is that there will be a police officer in the station 24 hours a day.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that they are looking at a number of programs that in the short term will not cost a great deal of money but will allow more officers on the road.

Chief Rose asked if he could plan on having the two additional officers in the first available class in January in 2007. Acting Manager Metzler stated they will have a clear picture of what the 2007 budget will look like once the 2006 budget is approved. CFO Eccelston stated that he would have the raw data in order to make that decision by mid to late December. Chief Rose indicated that he would need to know that in September or October. Acting Manager Metzler felt they would be able to tell by then.

Councilmember Trawinski wanted to understand the budgetary impact of adding two more officers this year. Chief Rose indicated he would need \$1,400 more in equipment, \$8,000 to \$10,000 for uniforms and \$1,400 for medical. CFO Eccelston stated that it would be \$82,000 for salaries and benefits.

Councilmember  
Trawinski noted that  
the Chief made  
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a powerful presentation last year. He wanted to know if the Manager could make it budgetary neutral.

Deputy Mayor Weinstein agreed that the Chief made a very good presentation last year, but he suggested they listen to all the Departments.

Chief Rose stated the number of patrol officers is the same as it was in the 60's. The minimum man power is the same. He would like to reassess patrol posts. Councilmember Trawinski asked what the budgetary impact for the next few years would be if they added two additional officers this year. CFO Eccelston stated that it will impact the 2007 budget because they would be on the next step and in 2008 there would be a big jump for the third step. If they were hired after July 1, the impact of the third step would be delayed until 2009.

Chief Rose indicated that in 2007 two officers will retire in January; in 2008 two officers were eligible; in 2009 no officers were eligible, in 2010 one was eligible and in 2011 seven were eligible. Chief Rose discussed lateral transfers which cost more and he preferred to hire off the DOP list.

### **CAPITAL BUDGET**

Chief Rose asked for \$34,000 for radio equipment which will address the dead zone in the buildings such as Shop Rite and for a back up to the generator at the Gordon Place shed. Acting Manager Metzler indicated that most of the radio equipment has been deferred to 2007 because there is no comprehensive plan on how radio equipment is purchased. There has been a problem with the CAD software. There is an opportunity to look at sharing services through the County. There are still dead zones. He believes they need someone to look at the system as a whole. It had been his goal to keep the entire capital budget to \$2 million.

Deputy Mayor Weinstein asked if the Chief could do a portion of the request. Chief Rose stated that all three parts do not have to be done. He could do a portion but consistent with Acting Manager Metzler's plan, he was willing to wait. Councilmember Trawinski indicated that he is leaning very strongly toward the two additional officers. He is not prepared to support the radios now without the comprehensive plan.

Acting Manager Metzler stated that there is a fundamental difference between how the Chief and he see capital planning. He does not think the Council should see an item appear in the capital budget that has not previously been projected. Chief Rose thought that while that works for most items there are always things that come up unexpectedly. The operating budgets do not allow for additions. He does not want to have to tell one of the officers that an item is worthwhile but he will have to wait three years to get it. Councilmember Trawinski indicated that there has to be a balance.

Councilmember Trawinski wondered if they were including funds in the budget for drug buys. CFO

Eccelston stated that it is not allowed. CFO Eccelston suggested that the Page Seven

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freeholders should set up a fund that municipalities could use. Councilmember Baratta wondered it was legal to get a donation from the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention. Chief Rose presented a gun used in training. The officers spend 60 percent of the time in the dark. The gun has a light so they do not have to hold the flashlight at the same time as they are firing the gun. The light would fit on all the guns for patrol. The price includes the light and holster.

Acting Manager Metzler advised that the Chief provided a suggestion on his own that may result in being able to give the Police Department some additional space in the building which has been forwarded to Engineering to review. Chief Rose stated that the Community Police, the tour commander's office and the locker room for the supervisors are outside of the Police wing. He spoke to an architect who designs police buildings and asked him what would be required. That architect suggested 20,000 to 25,000 square feet which would cost about \$6 million. He thought an addition adjacent to this building would be advantageous.

### **SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING**

CFO Eccelston advised that they have until March 21 to introduce the budget. The Council must be finished by March 14 so that he can prepare the legal documents.

Acting Manager Metzler suggested that if the Council want to schedule a budget discussion for a work session, then they should dedicate an entire meeting to the budget. It was agreed that they would hold a budget meeting at 6:30 p.m. on February 28 and the Regular Meeting would start at 8:00 p.m. The Fire Department, Engineering and Ambulance Corps. will be invited.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Craig Miller, 5 Ramapo Terrace, questioned the emergency declaration for ambulance service. Acting Manager Metzler indicated that without going out for bid they were advised that they had to adopt a resolution and send it to the Division of Community Affairs. They received a call stating that because there is no money being expended by the Borough the DCA does not need to be involved. It is their intention that during the 90-day trial period they will be drafting specifications. They are doing this because there are periods of time that there are no volunteers available or only enough to man one ambulance and two or three are needed.

Mr. Miller wanted to know if all municipal employees are trained in EMS. Acting Manager Metzler replied that there are a few employees who are trained to drive the ambulance or are EMTs. Currently only one is allowed to leave his department once a week and ride on the ambulance.

Harvey Rubinstein, 28 Rutgers Terrace, asked if the Borough would be getting any homeland security money. CFO Eccelston stated that they have been getting \$140,000

a year for the last few years. He attended a budget meeting this week but the Department of Community Affairs did not know if they will continue to fund that grant. He thought they will not cut that grant. Acting Manager Metzler stated that the various agencies have been asked what it is going to take to maximize the benefit of the items past monies have purchased. Fair Lawn has the state of the art EOC which was paid for by Homeland Security funds. No money has ever been allocated for training. The number one priority in the County program is funding to start training to properly utilize the items purchased.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Upon motion by Deputy Mayor McCarthy and second by Councilmember Baretta, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

The undersigned have read and approve the foregoing minutes.

Mayor Martin Etler

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilmember Jeanne Baratta

Deputy Mayor Owen McCarthy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilmember Ed Trawinski

Deputy Mayor Steven Weinstein