

TOWNSHIP OF MOORESTOWN
TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
BUDGET WORKSHOP
April 3, 2019

The Budget Workshop of the Moorestown Township Council was called to order by Mayor Petriello at Town Hall, Council Chamber, 111 West Second Street, Moorestown at 6:30 p.m. Attendance was as follows:

Lisa Petriello, Mayor	Thomas H. Neff, Township Manager
Brian Donnelly, Councilmember (Absent)	Thomas J. Merchel, Deputy Township Manager/CFO
Nicole Gillespie, Deputy Mayor	Vicki M. Gough, Deputy Township Clerk
Michael Locatell, Councilmember	
Victoria Napolitano, Councilmember	

Staff in Attendance: Joe Galbraith, Library Director;

Mayor Petriello advised that notice of the meeting was given in accordance with law.

DISCUSSION ON 2019 BUDGET:

Mr. Neff gave a narrative of the 2019 Budget that was going to be discussed

Council's Budget

Mr. Neff went over Council's budget stating that their stipends are very low compared to other towns. Ms. Petriello had questions on the Awards and Plaques line item. Mr. Merchel stated that it was for different materials that are used for the Boards and Committees such as Proclamations, etc.

Manager's Budget

Discussion was had on the increase in salaries. It was stated that the reason is that now there is a full time Manager. Mr. Neff explained how he was cutting his budget to reduce spending and is hoping his Directors will follow suit.

Mr. Locatell would like the flowers on Main Street to be removed from Manager's Budget and moved to Public Works. Mr. Merchel said he could move it under the Roads Department of Public Works. Mr. Neff added that it is not just for the flowers on Main Street, it is for the flowers on Lenola Road as well.

Administration Budget

Discussion was had on the salaries line item and the possibility of hiring two part-time employees. After much discussion the hiring of the two part time employees was cut from this budget. It was suggested that Mr. Merchel could possibly work with some of local colleges to acquire an intern to possibly fill the position.

Ms. Petriello had a question on the code amounts. Mr. Merchel explained that it is for the Code Book updates and the amount spent depends on the amount of Ordinances that need to be codified.

Human Resources Budget

There was a discussion on the increase in the Labor Attorney budget line.

Municipal Clerk Budget

Mr. Neff informed Council that there may be an increase in Vote By Mail mailing costs which would affect the Sample Ballots line item.

Library Budget

Discussion was had on the Library budget. The amount in the budget for the library is the minimum amount allowed by law.

Finance Budget

Discussion was had by Mr. Merchel on shared services within his departments.

Computerized Data Processing Budget

Ms. Petriello question the inconsistency with the budget. Mr. Merchel explained the increases.

Tax Collector Budget

No questions or discussion were had.

Tax Assessor Budget

Mr. Locatell questioned the Consulting Services budget line. Mr. Merchel explained that it is used for an outside appraiser who does inspections for the Tax Assessor.

Auditing Services

No questions on this budget item.

Legal Services

Ms. Gillespie had questions regarding which attorneys are being paid out of this line item. Mr. Neff and Mr. Merchel gave explanations.

Engineering Services

Mr. Locatell had questions regarding the Engineering Services line item and would like to see it lowered. Mr. Neff said he would take a look at it again. Mr. Neff would like to have the Engineers more available to the public. He has them coming to the April 8th and April 29th meeting to make a presentation on the status of projects. Mr. Locatell understands wanting them at public meetings but he believes we should use staff to avoid incurring engineering costs. Mr. Neff believes that they Engineers know the projects better and can answer any technical questions. Mr. Locatell said sometimes the Engineers are not good communicators and can over explain where the staff understands the residents and their questions and can better explain things to them.

Economic Development Committee

Mr. Locatell would ask that Mr. Neff take a look at the Classic Towns Membership before cutting the budget. There may be a value to it. He heard with grants that are given out and if you are a member that can help if you are against someone who is not a member. It has more value to it than just having the membership card.

Environmental Advisory Committee

Discussion was held on the Environmental Committees budget. They are adding \$500 for training for the MEAC members. Ms. Ponessa of the Environmental Advisory Committee stated that the Committee will be happy with the \$500.

Discussion was held on the Sustainable Moorestown budget. Ms. Napolitano was going to check on what was spent this year so far. Council is hoping to cut the budget line item to \$1000.

Insurance

Mr. Merchel went over the budget and explained the cut in the Risk Manager because there was no value there.

Mr. Merchel stated that the benefit waiver increased for new employees. Mr. Merchel explained the benefit waiver amounts and how they work.

Municipal Court

The Department's budget was reviewed. There was a discussion on the increase in salary due to having an additional full time person now.

There were questions regarding the increase in the Record and Interpreting Services budget line and Mr. Merchel stated that there is an increase in demand and now you have to have the interpreter physically there instead of on the phone.

Condo Services Act/Apartment Trash Collection

Mr. Merchel explained the Condo Services Act. Discussion was held on this line item.

Unclassified

Ms. Gillespie had questions on the Supplemental Fire Services. Mr. Merchel explained the line item to Ms. Gillespie.

Statutory Expenditures

Mr. Merchel stated that PERS is going down but the PFRS is going up.

Federal and State Grants

Mr. Merchel explained how grants work with budgeting.

Capital Improvements

No questions on capital improvements.

Municipal Debt Service

Mr. Locatell had questions regarding bond payments going down. Mr. Merchel went over the debt spread sheet. Discussion was had.

Judgements

Mr. Merchel explained the Mall Tax Appeal Settlement. He discussed who was included in the settlement and how the settlement works. Much discussion was had.

Reserve for Uncollected Taxes

Mr. Merchel explained that this is a non-spending item of the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Petriello opened the meeting to the public.

Pamela Richards, 304 Colonial Avenue, Dr. Richards stated that Mr. Merchel did outstanding work. She added that Mr. Merchel was pretty much running solo. He has come a long way. She has a couple of questions. She is a strong believer in accountability. She believes that a cost should be charged to the cost center that controls that cost. If Town Council authorizes the flowers on Main Street, it should be charged to Council's cost center. It doesn't matter who manages it. The Township Manager, Tom Neff, doesn't need association fees so you need to be supportive of things he does need. Dr. Richards had questions on long term longevity. Mr. Merchel explained how longevity works. He also mentioned that any employee hired after 2009 does not qualify for it. She believes that when managing expenses, the numbers should be near each other in the budget so that Council doesn't forget it. Dr. Richards feels we lose track of consultants that the town hires if we do not hold these consultants accountable. You should have a proposal attached to the bill when you pay it. They should submit their bills monthly or quarterly or they are not paid. Mr. Merchel stated that the cost centers the Township must follow is the State format which is an encumbrance system. There must be a requisition done and the directors must sign off on it first. Some bills had to be held last year because we were negotiating the bills with the professional. Dr. Richards said she has a concern with the Township having Engineers for the Planning and Zoning Boards making decisions and they have not even visited the property. Dr.

Richards asked if there was anything that could be done with the reserve for uncollected taxes to reduce it. Mr. Merchel said 99 percent is pretty good. He added that they do things including noticing people. Dr. Richards said that she thinks Mr. Merchel did an outstanding job with the package. She said Mr. Merchel is like her son and she is very proud of him. She thanked Council for their time.

Joe Ponessa, 215 Locust Street, he is from STEM. He stated in the budget summary there is no mention of the Esther Yanai parking. There are a great number of open space parks in town. Parking is the key. In the 2017 budget there was an allocation of \$90,000 for parking at Esther Yanai and Susan Stevens Halbe Parks. The parking is problematic. At Susan Halbe Park there is a need for acceleration and deceleration lanes on Creek Road. In the budget summary, there is just a listing of a donation of \$25,000 and no mention of the \$90,000. Is that money recoverable? We would like to see it used at the Susan Stevens Halbe Park. There is a nice pond there that could be used for fishing. It is a very welcoming amenity. Mr. Merchel said that they have been working on several designs for Esther Yanai. They had it break it up into parts. There was a contract to take out the stumps and put the base pad in. It used up the contribution. With the Garwood Road project, we would like to expand the culvert and pave the lot to join the stone. It is going out to bid soon. With the Susan Stevens Halbe Park, the County would need to do the work on Creek Road with the lanes and they are not going to do it. When we put the \$90,000 in the capital budget, it was a plan and there was no money in the budget until a bond ordinance is made. We never had the \$90,000. Mr. Ponessa said we are looking for a commitment because something needs to be done there. Mr. Neff said that the Township has a lot of priorities. He is not saying that we are not going to do it. It has not been presented to Council because it is stuck in Administration. Mr. Neff would like to set up a time to walk the fields with Mr. Ponessa. He will need to take a fresh look at the past intent and plans and eventually bring it back to Council. It can either be a Bond Ordinance or done in house through the Capital Budget. Mr. Neff will have to look at it. It is not an intentional omission. Mr. Ponessa is concerned that it is slipping out of the awareness. The Open Space Assessment is where to look at. Mr. Merchel said that is how we could handle it but we have to get the full cost first. We are going to have to get a full design from the Engineer. Mr. Locatell stated that it will have to go the County Planning Board as well.

Barbara Rich, 37 East Central Avenue, thanked Council for reinstating the dues for MEAC. She wanted to know if the Township is looking at the Pine Street Water Treatment Plan to protect it from flooding. Mr. Locatell believes that there is Engineering in the budget for the plan this year. Ms. Rich said Harry Mayer could do the Swedes Run Field Bridge more cheaply. Mr. Merchel said that prices go up when you have to include Engineers. There will be professional fees, permitting and prevailing wage has to be included. It is something we have to get done because it is a safety issue. Mr. Neff said if we can save money, he doesn't mind talking to anybody.

Edwin Begg, 209 Parry Drive, stated that an increase in a budget isn't necessarily bad and decrease in a budget is not necessarily good. What counts is what the community needs. He would like to ask the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to let Mr. Galbraith know what a wonderful job he does with the handling the library. There are endless activities both day and night. He agrees to reduce the proposed budget but he strongly disagrees with a trivial amount of money being eliminated for the Manager's association dues. It is very valuable and suggests that you reconsider this. It is a measly couple \$1000. It could be used to benefit the employee of the month or department heads by sending them to a convention. They could submit a report when they return. If we want you and others to be the smartest guys in the room, the one way to do it is to attend conventions and

association activities. Mr. Neff said he is not anti-training but they should utilize more free training. Mr. Begg asked what the difference in the current assessment plan is from 2 years ago. Mr. Merchel said up 2 percent. Mr. Begg asked if Sears is the only outstanding major appeal. Mr. Merchel stated yes at the mall. Mr. Begg stated that Mr. Merchel, Mr. Neff and the Department Heads did an outstanding job with the budget. He thanked Council for their time.

Monique Begg, 209 Parry Drive, stated she doesn't know much about budgeting but she disagrees with her husband. She is still active at the library with a book group she started in 2007. She thanked Council for the job they are doing and said everyone needs to be smart.

No one else from the public wishing to be heard so the public comment portion of the meeting was closed.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:53 p.m., there being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn.

MOTIONED BY: Mr. Locatell
SECONDED BY: Ms. Gillespie
VOTE: All in favor

VICKI M. GOUGH
Deputy Township Clerk