

March 20, 2024
121 Evergreen Rd
New Egypt, NJ 08533

The Plumsted Township Committee Budget Workshop of March 20, 2024 was called to order by Mayor Cuozzo at 4 pm.

STATEMENT: "This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act." It was presented for publication to the Asbury Park Press and the Trenton Times and posted on the Bulletin Board.

THOSE OFFICIALS PRESENT:

COMMITTEEMAN BOWEN COMMITTEEMAN GRILLETTO COMMITTEEMAN HAMMERSTONE
MAYOR CUOZZO ADMINISTRATOR MYHRE CFO GOWER CLERK WITHAM

Deputy Mayor Marinari was excused. Everyone stood for the flag salute and a moment of silence. The purpose of the meeting was to have a budget workshop.

CFO Gower said the budget is not complete yet, this is for discussion purposes. There will be discussion regarding in-cap appropriations, salary and wages, revenues/deferred school tax, debt service including capital and BAN, the 2024 Open Space Trust and finally the American Rescue Plan Act.

Gower advised she met with the finance committee a few times the last couple of months. We are limited to an increase of 3 1/2%. Gower asked if the committee would like her to discuss each item line-by-line or just the changes that have been made since last time they met. \$110,000 had to be taken out of the budget in order to stay under the cap amount. Grilletto prefers to go line-by-line and then any committee member can ask for further discussion if they would like.

Gower went through every line of the operations inside cap. Grilletto asked about the percentage increases, particularly salaries. Gower said the following worksheet is for salaries that are showing a 3% increase. Gower continued to go through line-by-line. Grilletto asked about the salaries and said that the 3% hadn't been decided upon by the committee, it is flexible. Gower continued. Cuozzo mentioned that the construction department may be switching from Jungle Laser to SDL for online permitting. Jungle Laser hasn't been implemented as of yet. SDL has many modules, including a tax assessment module that may be beneficial. Gower said that we did look at SDL initially but it was a higher cost. Many towns do use SDL. Myhre said that they are still working on the shared services agreement for a tax assessor.

Myhre mentioned that road repairs under Schedule C are a lot more cost effective than an outside contractor. There is a \$270,000 limit with the county under Schedule C but we are nowhere near that amount. The more allocated to that line, we will see a lot more savings with road projects.

Cuozzo asked if the budget was within cap. Gower confirmed with all of the cuts made to the budget, we are within cap.

Gower asked about the celebration of public events line. It is \$2500 for the year. She asked that if anyone has an idea of cost for each of the events, she would appreciate it. As far as the municipal court line, we may be a little light, said Grilletto. Gower has been working with Manchester to better define those expenses.

Gower continued with the operations outside cap. As far as the agreement with New Hanover for construction, there was a meeting recently and they were asked to increase their fees in their ordinance to match ours. There was further discussion about the construction department and their anticipated revenues. Grilletto had estimated higher revenue for 2023 but the amount in the 2023 budget was set lower. The revenues in 2023 ended up being higher than what was put in the budget as Grilletto anticipated.

There was discussion about ARPA funds and how they will be allocated for 2024. Grilletto mentioned the audit findings had to do with the way ARPA was handled.

Cuozzo brought up the police vehicles and their cost. It was \$130,000 but that didn't include the outfitting which is \$13,000 for each vehicle. That line amount should actually be \$156,000.

The discussion moved to salaries. Gower has it at a 3% increase. She needs to know if that is what the committee is looking to do, will it be retroactive or when the budget is adopted. The spreadsheet is a basis for the committee to review. Gower asked if the committee had any questions. The committee will review the salary sheet.

2024 Revenues were discussed next. The committee discussed various revenues as to what certain fees are. State aid was next in revenues. Gower said that if the committee is interested in Deferred School Taxes, we can do that but she does not recommend it. There would be additional work if the committee decided to. She doesn't see that we are in a position to have to do it; we have a healthy surplus. There is a little room in the amount to raise taxes. Our net valuation is higher as well. The rate would be .365 which is a .048 rate increase over last year's rate which equates to about a \$104 increase for the year on the average assessed home. Gower said this is a working budget.

Cuozzo said that there is some available for deferred school taxes if we wanted to use it as a tool. Gower said that we haven't deferred school taxes since maybe 2013 or 2014. It is a last option but it is an option. Grilletto would like to look at costs and make adjustments. Cuozzo asked the total number if we wanted to go to zero increases. Gower said she can work on that figure. She will let them know. Grilletto said we need to look at this and meet again to decide what we want to do. There's an obligation to the employees and the taxpayers.

Gower moved on to the BAN worksheet. The next sale should be in August. The hope is to consolidate them since it's currently two different companies to save on the cost of sale and get a better rate.

Gower reviewed the Open Space Trust budget. The breakdown was changed around a little bit. The amount in playground mulch was increased and an additional amount was put in for improvements to the rec building. Grilletto asked if all of the money was spent in the rec teams' budgets. Gower said that most of it was spent, with the exception of about \$500. This open space money for the rec teams is used for field maintenance.

Grilletto asked about the amount for rec in the current fund, not open space. Was any money left over? Gower said that there was but if we were going to carry any money, it would have had to have been transferred already. So the leftover amount went into surplus.

The final discussion was the ARPA analysis. The total amount we received is just under \$900,000. We used some in the 2022 budget and then in 2023 as well. We did not spend all of the money we budgeted those first two years. The money has to be encumbered by the end of this year and spent by end of 2026.

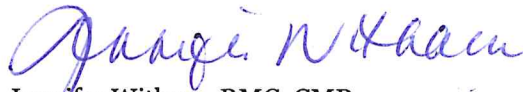
There was discussion about things to consider with the funds: two police vehicles, radios for OEM, Master Plan updates for a few. Grilletto said that we have to see where the tax rate ends up and then we will make a decision. He said we need to work on the budget a little more.

Bowen confirmed that the amount for the JCPL grant HVACs was encumbered in 2023. It won't be in this budget at all. Hammerstone asked if any money was allocated for cameras in this building; it has not been done. It could fall under the municipal building improvements. Cuozzo said that two things need to happen in order to utilize space for the police. One is security cameras and two is a generator. Our grant writer put something together for both LEAP grants for both shared services which could mean some extra money.

The mayor opened up public comment. Bernard Bahnam, 370 E Millstream Road, asked about the Master Plan. He asked how much there was from the American Rescue Plan. Gower said its \$329,000. He said the Master Plan has been discussed since last November. A guess of the numbers was closer to half a million dollars so this would be an awesome jump on getting the Master Plan going. There was no further public comment.

ON MOTION OF COMMITTEEMAN GRILLETTO, SECONDED BY COMMITTEEMAN HAMMERSTONE, THE MARCH 20, 2024 MEETING WAS ADJOURNED. ROLL CALL VOTE: ALL AYES.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Witham, RMC, CMR
Municipal Clerk

*Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Committee meeting is offered by a Chaplain who is expressing private thoughts as governed by his or her own conscience, to and for the benefit of the Township Committee. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Township Committee and do not necessarily represent the religious beliefs or views of the Township Committee in part or as a whole. No member of the community is required to attend or participate in the invocation and such decision will have no impact on their right to participate actively in the business of the Township Committee.

**Please be advised that these minutes are adopted pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act N.J.S.A. 10:4-14. They are not intended to be a verbatim record of the meeting. There is a verbatim recording of the meeting a copy of which may be requested through the Plumsted Township Clerk's Office.*