

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE
TOWNSHIP
OF WANTAGE, HELD AT THE WANTAGE TOWNSHIP BUILDING, 888 STATE ROUTE 23,
WANTAGE, NJ, HELD AT 6:00 P.M. ON
FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

Mayor Bassani called the special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and requested that the Clerk call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Ron Bassani, Deputy Mayor Jon Morris and Committeeman William Gaechter Also, present: Administrator/Clerk Michael Restel and Chief Financial Officer Ashley Wilson.

Mayor Bassani stated, "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231. It has been properly noticed and certified by the Clerk."

BUDGET 2022

Mr. Restel stated this meeting is being held for the Mayor and Committee to review the 2022 Budget.

Mrs. Wilson stated we will start on the revenues Page.

Mrs. Wilson went over multiple lines on the revenue side of the budget explained we lost some money due to eliminating a few shared services.

Mrs. Wilson stated we are utilizing a higher fund balance \$550,000 in 2022 than in 2021 \$500,000 as we doubled our fund balance for 2021.

Mrs. Wilson stated the fund balance went from \$870,000 in 2020 to \$1,600,000 in 2021.

Mrs. Wilson stated the big change in fund balance was due to careful planning, added health insurance dividends and Covid Relief Fund in of reimbursements to certain line items.

Mrs. Wilson stated Investment interests are down and the cable franchise fee is as well.

Mrs. Wilson stated an extra \$16,000 was added to the Garden State Trust last year but don't expect that this year

Mrs. Wilson stated we Budgeted \$600,000 for delinquents' taxes and we received and received \$904,000.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Wantage Township Anticipated Revenue Budget is \$6,710,460.22

Mrs. Wilson stated we will move on to the appropriations part of the Budget.

Mrs. Wilson stated there were no large increases to the Salary and Wages and Operations Budget.

Mrs. Wilson spoke about each line item in the Budget.

Mrs. Wilson stated Administration Salaries increased but operations were decreased.

Mrs. Wilson stated Clerk Salaries increased and Operations stayed the same.

Mrs. Wilson stated Finance Department Salaries were increased and operations was raised minimally.

Mrs. Wilson stated Audit services were decreased because of last year needed a few items to be taken care of.

Mrs. Wilson stated Tax Collector Salaries shows a decrease but the money from the multiple Share Services offsets the rest of the Salaries.

Mrs. Wilson stated Tax Collector Operations increased slightly due to Postage and supplies.

Mrs. Wilson stated Tax Assessor Salaries show a decrease because of using the Shred Service money to offset it.

Mrs. Wilson stated Assessor Operations were decreased and Sharee Service Money will help offset the cost.

Mrs. Wilson stated under Legal there was a significant decrease to budget this was due to going out the Bond Sale in 2021 and paying Bond Counsel.

Mrs. Wilson stated no Bonding will take place in 2022.

Mrs. Wilson state Engineering stayed the same as 2021 due to a lot of the projects we bonded for included Engineering.

Mrs. Wilson stated Land Use Salaries increased and operations decreased.

Mayor Bassani stated he would like to add more money into the legal portion of Land Use.

Mrs. Wilson stated Code Enforcement Salaries increased and Operations stayed the same.

Mrs. Wilson stated Wantage Townships Insurance was estimated raise of 2% due not getting the solid numbers until June.

Mrs. Wilson stated Health insurance decreased significantly due to employee contributions being larger. Discussion ensued.

Mrs. Wilson stated employees taking the health benefit waiver increased \$4,000 but this saves the Township a lot of Money.

Mrs. Wilson spoke about Wantage Township Fire Department and First Aid Budget Line Items.

Mrs. Wilson stated their Operation Budget remained the same and Aid to Fire Departments and First Aid did not increase. Discussion ensued.

Mrs. Wilson stated Fire Departments OSHA Gear line item remained the same.

Mrs. Wilson stated Department of Public Works Salaries increased in light of Contract negotiations.

Mrs. Wilson stated Public Works Operation did not increase.

Mrs. Wilson stated Public Works Salt Budget remained the same and whatever is leftover will go into the Road Salt trust for future use.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Buildings and Grounds Budget stayed the same.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Vehicle Maintenance did increase \$10,000 due to increase of parts prices.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Animal Control Salaries have decreased significantly due to an employee leaving and the termination of Multiple Shared Service contracts.

Mrs. Wilson stated we added \$5,000 to Animal Control Operations and will add more in the future.

Mrs. Wilson stated Recreation Budget has been increased by \$3,000 for additional requests.

Mrs. Wilson stated Maintenance of Parks Budget has been increased due to increase pricing of certain items.

Mrs. Wilson stated all utilities Budgets have remained the same.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Township Fuel Budget has been increased \$5,000 due to the Township covering the cost of fuel for DPW, First Aid and Fire Department. Discussion ensued.

Mrs. Wilson stated Statutory Contributions of Pensions and Social increased.

Mrs. Wilson stated under the Grant Section we will add them to the Budget once we receive the Monies as a Chapter 159 insertion.

Mrs. Wilson stated in the Hardyston Construction Budget we lowered it \$20,000 from 2021. Mayor Bassani asked what the monies are for if we already have a contract.

Mr. Restel stated if Wantage Township does reach the contracted price then we have to pay the difference.

Mr. Restel stated in 2020 we fell short \$17,000 and in 2021 we did not owe. Discussion Ensued.

Mrs. Wilson stated Municipal Court Salaries on the Budget is decreased significantly due to the Shared Contracts offset the Salary portion.

Mrs. Wilson stated \$100,000 has been added to Wantages Capital Improvement Fund.

Mrs. Wilsons stated we are starting to out money away for future big expense items for Public Works.

Mayor Bassani asked why the money was removed from the 2-line items pertaining to Improvements to Drainage and Upgrade Radio System.

Mr. Restel stated the monies have been set aside and are awaiting construction on the drainage.

Mr. Restel stated the radio upgrades are allowed un the American rescue Plan money. Discussion Ensued.

Mrs. Wilson stated under the Bond line items Wantage Township is up \$65,417 from last year but is down \$109,000 from 2020.

Mrs. Wilson stated the reserve for uncollected taxes is down to \$763,000 from \$920,000 this is due to an .5% increase in Tax Collection.

Mrs. Wilson stated the Overall Budget is \$120,985 below the 2% Cap Limit.

Mrs. Wilson stated Wantage Township net valuation is up \$4,000,000.

Mrs. Wilson stated the tax rate was increased .0016 from .3080 to .3096.

Mrs. Wilson stated the municipal tax increase on the average assessed home in Wantage \$255,466 would be \$4.00 for the year.

Mr. Restel showed the chart on the TV the tax increase for the assessed homes.

Mayor and Committee Thanked Mrs. Wilson for her 2022 Wantage Township Budget presentation.

Mayor Bassani opened the meeting to the public.

Kathy Gorman Fernwood: Mrs. Gorman stated she was not here for the earlier part of the Budget Meeting but would like to know about Lake Neepaulin and the future plans. Discussion ensued.

Mayor Bassani requested a Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Morris and seconded by Mr. Gaechter.

Upon Roll Call:

Ayes: Gaechter, Morris, Bassani Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

Meeting adjourned at 6:50p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael L Restel

Administrator/Acting Clerk

