

**MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING**

March 4, 2021

MINUTES

Mayor Innella called the session to order at 4:30 p.m. and indicated that adequate notice has been provided to the New Jersey Herald and The Sunday New Jersey Herald for publication in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda of meetings in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, P. L. 1975, c. 231.

FLAG SALUTE: All present were asked to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: The CFO, Sharon Yarosz, was asked to call the roll.

Present: Ms. Crawford, Ms. Martin, Mr. Merusi, Mr. Zitone and Mayor Innella. Also present were, CFO Sharon Yarosz, and Municipal Auditor/Accountant Heidi Wohlleb.

Absent: None

2021 BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Registered Municipal Auditor, Ms. Heidi Wohlleb commented that she looked at the budget worksheet that Ms. Yarosz provided and entered the revenues and appropriations. There are two different caps in the budget, which include the appropriation cap and the tax levy cap. The tax levy cap was fine, but the appropriation cap came in very close and the way that it stands right now is at \$7,400 under. Ms. Wohlleb commented that they were able to get it to work this year, but it could be a concern in the future.

Using \$462,500 in surplus or fund balance and entering the appropriations provided, Ms. Wohlleb said they came up with a flat tax rate, which was the same as last year of .412. There is a small increase in rateables of 1.4 million so taxes are up a little less than \$5,000, but it is the same tax rate because the rateable increased, so essentially the impact will be similar to last year's increase for local taxes only.

Ms. Wohlleb commented that she was very conservative when factoring in the surplus because it is very difficult to do a projection this year. Maybe once we get out of this Covid period later in the year some of the revenues will come back. The tax collection rate went from 96.24 in 2019 to 96.00 in 2020 and part of the situation is there are a pretty large amount of tax appeals, and there is a certain amount of taxes that get transferred to liens each year.

The Committee discussed a few other line items that they felt they could cut from. The Committee also discussed adding \$20,000 to capital to put money aside for the Fire Department to purchase any big-ticket equipment that they may need in the future. They decided that they would not like to take any money out of surplus, so this would need funding by increasing the taxes. After calculating these changes, Ms. Wohlleb explained that the local tax would be \$1,486,026 and the tax rate would be .4176, which is a 1.358 percent increase, and the effect on the average home would be a little less than \$9 for the year. Ms. Crawford made a motion to move forward with these figures for the introduction of the 2021 Municipal Budget. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

The Committee then discussed salaries and wages for employees, and the Committee agreed on a 2% increase in salaries and wages for the Montague Township employees excluding buildings and grounds maintenance, emergency management, and public safety (constable). The CFO, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor and the Municipal Clerk will all receive a 3% increase. The salary resolution and ordinance will be presented at the next regular township committee meeting.

Formal introduction of the Montague Township FY 2021 Budget will be on April 13, 2021.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Crawford made a motion to open to public. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

There was no public participation

Approved: March 23, 2021

Mr. Zitone motioned to close public. Mr. Merusi seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

ADJOURN

Ms. Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:21 p.m. Ms. Crawford seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted:

**Eileen DeFabiis, RMC
Municipal Clerk**