

Approved: March 26, 2024

**MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING**

MARCH 07, 2024

MINUTES

Mayor Zitone called the session to order at 4:30 p.m. and stated 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: Municipal Clerk Klinger then called the roll.

Present were: Mr. Innella, Mr. Krumpfer, Mr. LeDonne, Mr. Merusi, and Mayor Zitone. Also present were Municipal Clerk/Finance Clerk Dana Klinger and CFO Sharon Yarosz.

Absent: None

2024 BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Montague Township Chief Financial Officer, Sharon Yarosz advised the Township Committee that she has updated the draft budget with all the changes that were discussed at the last budget meeting. Ms. Yarosz also informed the Committee that they cannot make a donation to the Montague Little League, however, they can put additional funding within the Recreation Budget, and the Township can reimburse the Little League for operating expenses by submitting invoices and/or receipts to the Township.

The Committee briefly discussed the Sprinkler System and how that is going to affect the Township Budget, the bid that was received came in at over \$800,000.00 which is much higher than the Township Committee was expecting. Therefore, they are going to have the Architect re-bid with putting the tank underground, since the original plan was to have the tank above ground but would require a specialized tank that by itself costs about \$200,000. The Committee will discuss this item in further detail at its next Regular Township Committee Meeting.

The Committee then discussed the various other larger budget items for the upcoming year. Ms. Yarosz explained that the remaining American Rescue Plan funds of about \$280,000 will be spent on Roads, Gypsy Moth Spraying, and the Construction of a Salt Shed. She also includes funding in the budget for the Sprinkler System in the Firehouse/Community Center, which would mainly be funded through Capital Funds, not raised through the budget. Lastly, the Cell Tower Lease Sale Income will be used to pay down the Bond/Debt Service on the Firehouse/Community Center while still putting away \$300,000 to use for future projects.

Mayor Zitone then asked if the Committee was willing to reassess the donation to the Montague Seniors. They are looking for an additional \$500 in funding this year. After some discussion, the Committee agreed to increase the funding by \$250 this year and will get an additional \$250 the following year, or \$500 over two years.

Ms. Yarosz will have to send the proposed figures to the Township Auditor/Registered Municipal Accountant, Heidi Wohlleb, to see what kind of tax implication might result.

Municipal Clerk Klinger added that there is also an opportunity for the Township to upgrade its Lighting Equipment in the Municipal Building through the NJ Direct Install funding which is covered by JCP&L at a rate of 50% and then the Township would be responsible for 50% of the costs, which was about \$8,700. This would upgrade all the lighting to more energy-efficient LED Lights, which would replace all the old fluorescent lights. Ms. Yarosz explained that there is already money in Capital – Improvements to Buildings that would cover this upgrade without affecting the budget. The Committee agreed to move forward. Municipal Clerk Klinger will prepare a formal Resolution for approval at the next Regular Township Committee Meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Krumpfer motioned to open to the public. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor.

Tasha DeGeorge – Sleepy Hollow Road – Ms. DeGeorge on behalf of the Recreation Committee, thanked the Township Committee for its approval of their budget request this year. The Recreation Committee makes good use of the funds to host some wonderful events for the Community. Ms. DeGeorge also spoke regarding the possibility of the Township stopping plowing operations within the Country Club. Ms. DeGeorge stated that if this were to happen it would be an absolute mess and the members of that community cannot afford that. Ms. DeGeorge further added that she lived there in the 80s when the Township did not plow in the community, and it was awful. Ms. DeGeorge understands that the roadways are in rough shape, but there are now bus stops in the back of the community, and this would make things very difficult. Mr. Krumpfer added that the Township has no intention of getting rid of plowing, the Township has received complaints about the speed humps and all of that, so it becomes more burdensome for the Township DPW to effectively clear the roads and the wear and tear on the equipment. Ms. Yarosz stated compensation would be given to the Country Club. Mr. Krumpfer added that the Committee is not pushing this, they are just saying that it is an option. Mayor Zitone further added that it is also getting harder and harder for the Township to find personnel who want to do snow plowing as well. Mayor Zitone stated they would never just abandon it, there would be open lines of communication, and all the HPCC has to do is ask the Township is always here, without needing to send letters from Attorneys. Mr. LeDonne added that they had a very brief discussion during a public meeting and are by no means pursuing anything yet.

Ed Zalenski – Shore Drive – Mr. Zalenski stated that he had never been to a budget meeting before, so he wanted to see what was going on, and he appreciates the work that the Township is doing. Mr. Zalenski asked typically how many budget meetings are held before the introduction of the budget. Mayor Zitone stated that there are typically at least two, sometimes three budget meetings. Mr. Zalenski then asked what is necessary to have in the Community Center building to use it. Mayor Zitone stated that if the Township would like to use the building with an occupancy of 150 people and use it as a banquet hall in which you could have food and drink, then the whole building would need to have a sprinkler system. However, if the room size were to be cut down to 900 square feet with an occupancy of 100 people, then a sprinkler system would not be required. Mr. LeDonne added that many uses are not allowed without the Sprinkler System, which was not the original intent when building the space.

There being no further comments from the public, Mr. Krumpfer motioned to close to the public. Mr. LeDonne seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor.

ADJOURN

Mr. Merusi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m. Mr. Krumpfer seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted:

Dana Klinger, RMC
Municipal Clerk