

Mayor and Council Special Budget Meeting – February 7, 2024

The Special Budget Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of North Caldwell was held on Wednesday, February 7, 2024. The meeting began at 5:30p.m. at Borough Hall and virtually via tele/video-conference.

Mayor Raymond called the meeting to order announcing that notice was provided in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 231, P.L. 1975. He provided a statement regarding the conduct of the teleconference which would allow members of the public to participate and be heard during public comment.

Roll Call indicated the following:

Present: Mayor Joshua H. Raymond, Council President Anthony Floria-Callori, Councilman Matthew Atlas, Councilman Robert Kessler, Councilman Arthur Rees, Councilman Kenneth Tilton, Councilman Stephen Weinstein.

Also present were: Glenn Domenick, Borough Administrator; Richard Mondelli, Chief Financial Officer; and Tami Michelotti, Borough Clerk.

Citizens to be Heard

On a motion by Council President Floria-Callori, seconded by Councilman Weinstein, public comment was opened.

Sudhir Patel, 4 Rickland Drive – Mr. Patel described noise from the late-night filming in his neighborhood that was permitted by the Mayor and Council until 2:00am. He noted that noise continued through 3:00am and that the film crew was encroaching on his property to unload and reload equipment into trucks. He requested that no further permission be granted for filming outside of hours stipulated by Borough Ordinance to protect the quality of life of the neighborhood.

Mayor Raymond asked the Borough Clerk to remind the filming crew of the 2:00am stop for all activity to be enforced by police on duty at the location. The police would also enforce no trespassing by the film crew on private property.

On a motion by Council President Floria-Callori, seconded by Councilman Weinstein, public comment was closed.

Items for Discussion – Operating and Capital Budgets

Mayor Raymond thanked Mr. Mondelli for his years of service and annual budget preparation. He thanked Councilman Weinstein for working with Mr. Mondelli and the department heads to prepare for the budget review.

Police Department

Chief Strodthoff noted the increase in dispatcher salaries as per the step program, increase in officer overtime due to the Office of the Attorney General's mandated training, and requests for additional ammunition and radio equipment. Chief Strodthoff and Captain Credico noted the goods and services obtained through grants and from donations from the North Caldwell Police Foundation.

Mr. Mondelli explained the shift in uniform allowances into salaries. He noted a decrease in vehicle lease expenditures due to a delay in vehicle availability.

Chief Strodthoff reviewed the Capital Budget requests including armory items and the lease of one vehicle. He described an option to allow officers to purchase personal weapons for use on duty for which the Borough would fund ammunition.

Municipal Courts

Judge Angelo noted the need to fund shredding services previously paid through the Police Department budget. He also recommended the technology upgrades prepared by Court Administrator Ashely McMillion for the courtroom. Judge Angelo reviewed the assignment of fines and fees and stated that the Municipal Court is not a revenue-generating entity. Chief Strodthoff noted the potential for police officer overtime incurred for in-person court sessions.

Court Administrator Ashely McMillion requested a phased-approach for technology upgrades for the courtroom that would benefit the Municipal Court towns as well as the Mayor and Council, Planning Board and Zoning Board. She estimated the first phase at \$17,500 which could be shared among the towns and entities.

Technology

Captain Credico, Information Technology Director, reviewed contractual and product cost increases impacting the budget. He reviewed the Capital Budget requests for finance software upgrades and repairs to the electronic bulletin board.

Fire Department

Chief Scott Stellfox reviewed the funding requests for clothing and training. Assistant Chief Larry Wefferling noted that the previous year's allocation for training was repurposed for necessary repairs to the ladder truck. Additional funding for emergency reporting software and radio replacements were discussed. The annual allowance provided to qualifying department members would be renamed as an annual allowance instead of a clothing allowance, as the latter was not an accurate description.

Chief Stellfox reviewed the age and required maintenance of the department's aging fleet. He noted the long term need for a new ladder truck, but requested a replacement for an engine truck to replace the 30-year old Engine #5. Financing options were discussed for the least effect on the budget. Chief Stellfox stated that the current "squirt" truck would eventually need to be replaced with a ladder truck.

Chief Stellfox reviewed the overdue apparatus maintenance costs. He reviewed the grant that was received for a turnout gear washer and dryer which would be installed by Public Works. He requested additional thermal imaging cameras. Councilman Tilton suggested that the North Caldwell Police Foundation donate the cameras. Chief Stellfox noted that the Fire Department's success with fundraisers also help purchase equipment and upgrades and fund repairs.

Emergency Management

Emergency Management Coordinator Tim Peterson reviewed the funding for supplies in the event of storms. Chief Strodthoff, Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, announced the Borough's eligibility for grants. Mr. Peterson noted that he would be applying for grants in March.

Administration

Hiring of a new Chief Financial Officer to replace Mr. Mondelli upon his retirement was discussed. Principal and interest payments on bonds and notes were reviewed. Funding for tax map updates were identified as a requirement in the annual budget.

There being no other matters to be addressed by the Governing Body at this time, a motion was made by Council President Floria-Callori, seconded by Councilman Weinstein, that this meeting be adjourned at 8:09p.m. Said motion was carried unanimously with five (5) affirmative votes.

Respectfully submitted,



Tami Michelotti, RMC
Borough Clerk