

## Mayor and Council Special Budget Meeting – February 26, 2022

The Special Budget Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of North Caldwell was held on Saturday, February 26, 2022. The meeting began at 8:06am at Borough Hall and was simultaneously held via tele/video-conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mayor Alessi called the meeting to order announcing that notice was provided in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

Mayor Alessi asked Council President Astorino to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call indicated the following:

Present: Mayor Joseph H. Alessi, Council President Francis Astorino, Councilman Matthew Atlas, Councilman Anthony Floria-Callori, Councilman Robert Kessler, Councilman Arthur Rees and Councilman Kenneth Tilton.

Also present were: Kevin O'Sullivan, Borough Administrator; Mark Semeraro, Borough Attorney; Rich Mondelli, CFO; Mark Deuer, Police Chief; and Tami Michelotti, Municipal Clerk. Department Heads joined as needed during the meeting.

### **Executive Session**

Resolution R-57-2022 A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor and Council of the Borough of North Caldwell to Hold a Closed Session Meeting for Certain Specified Purposes: Personnel – Employee Compensation. Motion was made by Council President Astorino, seconded by Councilman Atlas. Said motion was carried unanimously with six votes.

The meeting was re-opened to Public at 8:49am.

Council President Astorino addressed the stimulus funds from the COVID-19 pandemic and the infrastructure demands of the Borough. He asked the sub-committee chair persons to categorize needs for financial prioritization.

### **Citizens to be Heard**

No one from the public came forward.

### **Operating Budget**

#### **Pool Utility**

Mr. Mondelli noted that an anticipated increase in pool memberships is factored into the budget. He stated that operating the snack bar in-house resulted in a break-even year. The proposed improvements would be funded through a bond ordinance and would not affect the 2022 Budget.

#### **Water Utility**

Mr. Mondelli reviewed the water utility which saw an increase in revenue. He noted that the prior year's emergency appropriation of \$80,000 would increase the current year's budget to \$100,000. Additional increases were anticipated due to water rate increases, a moratorium on water penalties and interest and an increased frequency in water main breaks. The efficiency of water billing with the new remote meters was discussed.

The Council agreed to increase the water rate to \$6.85 per thousand gallons which reflects a 1.5% increase.

#### **Current Fund**

Legal and Ordinance – Councilman Atlas anticipated a decrease in legal expenses in 2022; \$125,000 was budgeted.

Technology – Councilman Floria-Callori agreed to a budget of \$45,300 for the year.

Grant writer – Mr. O'Sullivan reviewed the grants received and open grants which were pending from 2021. The Council agreed to review the benefit of the professional services expenses.

Codification Updates – Ms. Michelotti noted the increase in ordinances that require codification and rate increases that necessitate a \$3,000 increase for 2022. The Council approved the increase.

Engineering – Mr. Mondelli suggested a reduction in budget as escrows are now required to cover many engineering reviews.

Insurance – Mr. Mondelli stated that premiums rose 4%. Mr. O'Sullivan noted that the Risk Manager runs an analysis to ensure that the State Health Benefits Program provides the best rates for the Borough.

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Police Department/Emergency Management – Chief Deuer reviewed the department's needs for vehicle maintenance and computer updates/services. An annual cost of living increase was approved for crossing guards.

First Aid Squad – An increase in training expenses of NCFD staff was discussed.

Animal Control/Dog Regulation – Recovery of expenses for animal control services was discussed. Councilman Rees expressed interest in finding an alternative to the current shelter agreement.

Photocopy Services – Sgt. Credico noted that the service provider is working on a cost reduction analysis for our machine inventory.

Fire Department – Chief Peterson Tim requested a 2-½% increase for apparatus maintenance, communication and technology equipment. The Clothing Allowance formula was discussed as a reward for officers who attend training and meetings. Mayor Alessi stated that any change in the formula must be requested and substantiated in advance of the annual payment to FD members.

### Public Works:

Roads – Mr. Stickles requested a promotion of one employee to Senior Maintenance Worker, one new employee to replace an employee who resigned in January and one new additional maintenance worker.

Tree service – Mr. O'Sullivan noted that PSE&G's tree removal contractor has provided tree trimming and removal services in exchange for use of parking facilities within the Borough.

Animal Control – Mr. Stickles agreed to a decrease in uniforms.

Snow Removal – A reduction of \$10,000 was agreed upon based on funds in the Snow Removal Trust.

Condominium Reimbursement – Mr. O'Sullivan reviewed the formulas used to determine Borough reimbursement of HOA costs for snow removal. Mr. Stickles noted that the line item should not be reduced as expenditures of \$26,600 were already incurred this year.

Trash Collection – Mr. Mondelli noted that contract costs are fixed and that tipping fees dropped slightly. Mr. O'Sullivan noted that actual loading tickets are submitted to the Borough for grant reimbursement.

Buildings and Grounds – Mr. Stickles requested that cleaning services be outsourced. Sgt. Credico reviewed the RingCentral expenses which include virtual meeting services.

Board of Health – No changes were requested.

Recreation – Mr. Maranz requested funding for Summer Fun Camp for increased pool time, additional counselors and more supplies. He also requested additional tennis funds for the security of the courts and line-painting for pickleball. Mr. Stickles noted an increase in mowing and trimming of Borough fields. Walker's Pond funding can be sourced from the Open Space Trust Fund. Mr. Maranz requested a budget allocation for DPW overtime for Recreation purposes.

Stormwater/Sanitary Sewer – Mr. Stickles requested a line item for Sewer Maintenance. He noted the need for increased catch basin cleaning and maintenance. Additional funding for mailings was discussed.

Municipal Court – Mr. Mondelli noted the salary increase requested for the Court Administrator which would be split with Essex Fells.

Sewer Rental – Mr. Mondelli reviewed rental costs and fluctuating annual bills from Fairfield. Potential sewer connection fee increases were discussed in light of the Caldwell Sewer Utility moratorium. LOSAP – Mr. Mondelli noted a sizable increase in the Cost of Living Adjustment for 2022.

Capital Improvement Fund – Mr. Mondelli noted the fund can be used for capital bond ordinance down-payments. He added that the American Rescue Plan revenue could be anticipated as revenue to increase the Capital Improvement Fund.

**Operating Budget Summary:** Mr. Mondelli stated that an estimated 22 tax point increase would result in \$173.00 property tax increase per year for the average property assessed at \$790,000.

**Capital Budget**

Police Dispatch – Chief Deuer anticipated an \$85,000 renovation of the Dispatch Department if a shared services contract was finalized in 2022. A renovation of the Police Headquarters was also discussed as well as facilities improvements for the Fire Department and Department of Public Works. Architectural proposals would be obtained.

Chief Deuer departed the meeting at 11:20am.

Recreation – Councilman Kessler requested the resurfacing of the tennis and pickleball courts. The Council approved the filling of cracks for an additional year to determine funding for a larger project as part of the Recreation Department Five Year Plan. Mr. Maranz requested a portable, temporary ice skating rink for placement on Mountain Avenue Field. He also requested the construction of Gaga Ball pits for Summer Fun between the basketball court and batting cages.

Firemen's Field – Improvements to the field and potential sources of donations were discussed. The need for safety and drainage improvements were reviewed. Mr. Semeraro advised the Council on designing bid specs and bidding requirements. Options between turf and sod and their costs were reviewed.

Liberty Field Pavilion/Storage Shed – Mr. Maranz reviewed the need for a storage shed for DPW to store field-grooming equipment. He added that the small shed near the grove is damaged and must be removed. He suggested building a second pavilion for use by the Summer Fun camp. Mr. Stickles reviewed the staffing and supplies needed for construction of both structures. The new pavilion was tabled for re-consideration next year. Expansion of services at the Liberty Field Snack Stand was discussed for future consideration.

Pool Utility Capital – The Council approved the construction of a miniature golf course at the Municipal Pool. Mr. Maranz would attempt to secure sponsorships for the 9-hole course. He also requested a second Gaga Ball pit at the pool.

Fire Department – Chief Peterson requested a vehicle for the Fire Prevention Official to use for inspections and software for inspection recordings. He noted the need for a ladder truck in light of potential multi-floor residential structures if the Green Brook Country Club property is developed. He also requested updated turnout gear and a rechargeable camera. The turnout gear was approved. The vehicle, ladder truck and camera were not approved for the 2022 budget.

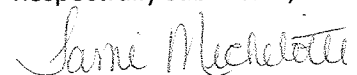
Public Works – Mr. Stickles reviewed the installation of an electric vehicle charging station which may be eligible for grant reimbursement. He reviewed the need to replace the stairs at Mountain Avenue field. He reviewed the need to extend a retaining wall at Liberty Field to prevent dirt from washing down the hill onto the turf. Mr. Stickles revisited a request for a leaf blower, a utility vehicle for maintaining ballfields and a street saw. He stated the need to patch the roof at Police Headquarters. A security system for the Skyline Drive water tank and additional speed table installation were discussed. Road Paving projects were reviewed with Fox Run, Sleepy Hollow and Jasmine Court identified for NJDOT grants. Additional vehicles including a new loader, a multi-purpose 4wd dump truck and an electric vehicle for the Borough Administrator were considered.

Technology – Sgt. Credico reviewed the request for social media archiving software, access control replacement at the tennis courts, a license plate reading system, additional cameras at Liberty Park and additional server capacity for longer retention of video as required for mail-in ballot box. Mr. Mondelli suggested the creation of a Technology Budget which would encompass all departments' technology needs.

Mr. Mondelli provided a summary of discussions for each budget fund and utility category. He would prepare a written summary for review at the next meeting.

There being no other matters to be addressed by the Governing Body at this time, a motion was made by Councilman Atlas, seconded by the Council, that this meeting be adjourned at 1:19pm. This motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Tami Michelotti  
Borough Clerk