

The Budget Hearing of the Township Council of the Township of Franklin, County of Somerset, New Jersey, was called to order by the Mayor at 7:05 p.m.

Mayor Levine read the following statement: "In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, be advised that adequate notice of this Budget Hearing of the Township Council of the Township of Franklin, County of Somerset was made by the posting on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex and by faxing to the officially designated newspapers, a notice indicating that the Budget Hearing would take place in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building at 7:00 p.m. on August 1, 2005. "

Everyone present participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Township Clerk called the roll.

Present: Ms. Ashley-Williams, Ms. Danile, Ms. Eberle, Mr. Levine, Mr. McKenzie, Ms. Ritchie (arrived at 7:17 p.m.), Mr. Vassanella.

Absent: Mr. Regan; Mr. Sumter

Also present: Kenneth W. Daly, Township Manager, Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Motion was made by Ms. Danile and seconded by Deputy Mayor McKenzie to open the meeting for public discussion. Said motion carried unanimously upon voice vote.

Edith Wilsing, 20 Crescent Drive, asked why the recreation buildings in developments are not assessed. She asked why the tax rate keeps increasing and not decreasing. She stated that many of those who voted for open space did not vote for open space funds to be used on a skate park.

Harry Weber, Culver Street, asked for five years of historical data regarding police calls. Mr. Daly replied this information would be included in the Police Budget presentation to take place later in the meeting. He asked if the State recommended 114 or 124 police officers for Franklin. Mr. Daly replied that the FBI recommended 2.2 per 1000 in population. He stated that he did not understand why the Township needs an additional ten (10) police officers.

Alex Mansaray, 208 Corrington Tree Lane, commended the Police Department and asked that Council give the Police Department what is needed to protect the Township.

Mustatha Mansaray, 244 Bennetts Lane, stated that the Township is one of the fastest growing towns in New Jersey and the Police Department needs the community to stand behind them. He asked Council to give Council what they need to protect the Township.

John McConville, 5 Stone Leigh Way, asked if all the tax bills were mailed out. Mr. Daly replied yes. He commented on the tax bills and senior tax rebates.

Mr. Daly stated he would confirm as to how recreational facilities are assessed. He stated that tax rates are down approximately 20% and assessments are up approximately 30%. He stated that the FBI's recommendation is used as a benchmark. He stated that the proposed ten police officers were recommended after reviewing the needs to the community and listening to concerns from residents from different sections of the Township.

There being no further comments from the public, a motion was made by Deputy Mayor McKenzie to close the meeting for public discussion. Said motion was seconded by Ms. Ashley-Williams and carried unanimously upon voice vote.

Ms. Danile asked that Mr. Hobbs make a presentation at a Council meeting to explain tax assessment.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

Community Services

Community Services Budget presentation - Diane Leach-Thompson, Community Services Director.

Mr. Daly stated that the Community Services Department continues in breaking cycle of poverty and getting those off welfare. He referenced her January 25, 2005 memorandum regarding the Summer Youth Employment Program for 2005/2006. It asks for an additional \$10,000 in seasonal salaries as a result of the extension of the summer break due to the opening of the High School. Classes are expected to open on September 15th and it will have an impact on the Summer Childcare program and the Youth Employment Program.

Ms. Leach-Thompson stated that the remainder of her budget is constant and asked if there were any questions from Council.

Ms. Ashley-Williams asked why there was an increase in salaries for a clerical position. Mr. Daly replied that LaVern Staten-Sanders transferred from the Clerk's Office to the Community Services Department without a loss in salary. Ms. Vieiro added that she did lose some of her salary, but is at the top of the range for her new position. She stated that this position is temporary due to an employee being out on disability. If the employee returns, Ms. Staten-Sanders would retire.

Ms. Ritchie asked why education was eliminated. Ms. Leach-Thompson replied that she has attained her Masters in Social Work. Ms. Ashley-Williams asked if she would be continuing with further education and training. Ms. Leach-Thompson replied that continuing education credits are free.

Municipal Court

Municipal Court Budget presentation – Maryann Nishimura, Court Administrator.

Mr. Daly noted that Franklin has the busiest court in the State and is handling it with less staff than other Courts. He noted a correction that the Municipal Magistrate's salary is proposed to increase by three percent (3%). He stated that the medical insurance is no longer included in their budget because municipal court is no longer outside the CAPS and medical insurance is now outside the CAPS.

Ms. Nishimura stated that Court Administrators are now required to be State certified. She stated that it is a pleasure to work with the Police Department. She concurred that Franklin is the busiest and has full sessions on Thursdays. She noted that revenues have decreased because there are less Police Officers writing summonses because they are drawn to other incidents. She reviewed the savings in her department that includes time payments and video conferencing. Council asked routine questions regarding her budget that included on-line electronic tickets, staff security and mediation program that were capably answered by Ms. Nishimura.

Police Department

Police Department Budget presentation – Police Chief Craig Novick with Captain Lombardo, Captain Roberts and Sergeant Vornlocker.

Mr. Daly reviewed the proposed increase in police officers, increase in overtime and the major changes in the other expenses portion of the Police budget. He noted the decrease in school crossing guards as a result in the new bussing routes used by the schools. He stated there is a request for an additional clerical person as a result of falling behind in clerical functions. He noted that three (3) clerical positions have been previously eliminated. He stated the original request was for three (3) and he is recommending only one (1).

Chief Novick reviewed the basic function of the Franklin Township Police Department as to protecting the quality of life of its residents. He stated that the Police Department is at a crossroads as a result of being the fifth largest growing community in New Jersey. He stated that when the population was in the low 40,000s it was hard but possible to be a pro-active department. Now that the population is growing over 60,000, they are under the recommended number of police officers and have become a reactive police department. He stated that it has become increasingly difficult to protect and service its residents. He noted that the Parkside section of the Township is pleading for more police officers.

Chief Novick reviewed the 2004 crime statistics. He noted that even though crime has decreased, violent crimes increased. He reviewed the crime statistics for 1991 through 2004, noting that police events have increased from 29,920 in 1991 to 52,012 in 2004. Mayor Levine asked what a “police event” was. Chief Novick replied it is any call that an officer is engaged.

Chief Novick reported that the total number of arrests in 2004 was 1,284 – 882 adults and 402 juveniles. He reviewed the motor vehicle summons activity for 1999 through 2004. He reported that in 1999 there were a total of 6,175 motor vehicle summons issued and in 2004 there were a total of 9,072 motor vehicle summons issued.

Ms. Ritchie asked questions regarding gang activity and how it is being addressed. Chief Novick replied that the Police Department is trying to be proactive in addressing gang activity in the Township. He stated that there are four (4) officers slated for organized crime, but at full strength it should be six (6) officers.

Ms. Danile stated that the Township has received grants for vests and equipment. She asked what the need for military ballistic helmets was for. Chief Novick stated that the Police Department faces domestic terrorists every week. He explained one incident where helmets should have been used at the Waterfest.

A question and answer period regarding the Police Department’s budget reports and their 2004 Report ensued between Council and Chief Novick and his staff. At the conclusion of Council’s questions, Council gave their support to the Police Department.

Personnel/Assistant Township Manager/Information Technology

Personnel/Assistant Township Manager/Information Technology Budget presentations – Donna Vieiro, Assistant Township Manager.

Mr. Daly reported that the major function of the Personnel/Assistant Township Manager Office is Human Resources and filling in for the Township Manager. He also reported that the Assistant Township Manager will be in-charge of reorganizing the IT Department.

Ms. Vieiro reported that her budget is flat, with the exception of a slight increase in the Employee Assistance Program because of change of the program.

Ms. Ashley-Williams asked questions regarding the 2006 priorities. Ms. Vieiro replied that her priorities include a policy manual and a binder for new employees; performance reviews to hold senior management more accountable; compliance with OSHA and PEOSH and continuance of training through the JIF/MEL.

A brief discussion ensued regarding job descriptions; code of ethics; background checks and health and medical benefits.

Mr. Daly reported that Donna Vieiro has been charged to supervise the IT Department. This will allow a reorganization of the department. Michael Gallagher will be charged with the following functions: Station Manager; GIS System; Document Imaging and the Phone System. Ms. Vieiro stated that she has met with Justin and Krista of the IT Department to identify technology priorities and construct a maintenance schedule. A brief discussion ensued regarding the reorganization of the IT Department; core functions; their budget; GIS System and the Trunked Radio System.

Township Clerk/Election/Mayor and Council

Township Clerk/Election/Mayor and Council budget presentations – Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk.

Ms. McCarthy reported that the Township Clerk budget has decreased as a result of the Code Book not being codified this year. Maintenance and Supplements are included in the budget. Ms. McCarthy expressed the need of revamping the filing system, using the State retention schedule and document imaging. She explained there is not enough room to store all the paper files and document imaging is need to address this problem. She also explained that the code book will be available on the website early next year.

Ms. McCarthy reported that the election budget has increased by \$200. She also reported that there was a increase in the Mayor and Council Conference line item to cover the costs of attendance of the NJ State League of Municipalities Convention by Council members.

Township Manager

Mr. Daly reported that there is no change in his budget this year. He reviewed all the miscellaneous budgets and the revenues for FY06 which included the following: Auditor; Prosecutor; CSA; Shade Tree Commission; Accumulated Leave; Tax Appeal Refunds; Salary Adjustments; Tax Title Liens and Foreclosures; Environmental Commission; Historic Preservation Commission; Utilities; Contingent; Social Security; Library; Grants; Interlocal Service Agreements; Insurance; Capital Improvements; Municipal Debt Service; Deferred Charges and Reserve for Uncollected Taxes.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion made by Ms. Ashley-Williams, seconded by Deputy Mayor McKenzie and unanimously approved, meeting was adjourned at 10:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie McCarthy
Township Clerk