

BOROUGH OF PITMAN
WORK SESSION MINUTES
September 9, 2024
6:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Time: 6:05 p.m.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement – Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, I hereby announce that adequate notice of the time and date of this meeting was published in the South Jersey Times and the Courier Post, posted on the Borough Hall bulletin board, and advertised on the Borough of Pitman website.

Roll Call

Council President Fitzpatrick: present
Councilman Bially: present
Councilwoman Milward: present
Mayor Razze: present
Clerk McCafferty: present

Councilperson James: present
Councilman Mazzola: present
Councilman Uyehara: present
Borough Solicitor Vigilante: present
Borough CFO Bachich: present

Budget Discussion

Councilman Mazzola mentioned the recent special meeting held on September 4th to introduce the 2024 Municipal Budget and introduced Borough CFO, Colette Bachich, to answer any questions Council might have.

Council President Fitzpatrick asked for clarification on the levy bank. CFO Bachich stated that there are two levy banks – one is a cap for appropriations, and one is a cap for the tax levy. The appropriation cap is set by the State every year and ranges from 1% - 2.5%, with an allowance for municipalities to go up to 3.5%, but no more. This bank is able to be used within 3 years before it expires. The tax levy can only be raised up to 2%. The Borough will be under 2%.

Council President Fitzpatrick continued with questions regarding bank interest rates, administration salary increases for certification, insurance waiver payments, and Finance salary increases, and suggested some areas that could be reduced. Administrator McCafferty described the extensive work that still needs to be done by the Finance department to update and close out 2024.

Council President Fitzpatrick made inquiries about salaries for Construction, and various secretary positions. Administrator McCafferty stated that solutions were being considered, however, could not be discussed publicly due to Rice notices not being sent.

Councilwoman Milward presented suggested cuts for the Police Department salaries, postage, and copies supplies.

Councilman Mazzola suggested conserving discussion time for items of debate, rather than cuts that were already approved by department heads and their liaison.

Council President asked about other items such as NJ Transit, Library salaries. Mayor Razze asked about statutory requirements regarding library increases. Councilperson James stated there were no known increases needed for the library.

Councilwoman Milward had questions regarding and increase in the Deputy Clerk's salary. Administrator McCafferty explained that this included added duties as Deputy Registrar as well as an increase for upcoming RMC certification.

Councilwoman Milward questioned vacation and sick buy back, Administration and Finance materials and supplies, and computer upgrades and repairs.

Councilwoman Milward suggested cutting the budget for legal services and engineering costs. Councilman Mazzola stated he would not recommend cuts to legal services considering current redevelopment projects. Administrator McCafferty explained that old ordinance money has been used to offset legal costs throughout 2024, however, the old ordinance money is waning, so she would not recommend cutting this area of the budget since there are still many projects in play. Additionally, it was not recommended to cut engineering costs considering current projects at Sunset Auditorium, Lakeside Ave, and other paving, road, and crosswalk projects.

Councilman Mazzola also noted that with the delay in budget, there has been a spending hold within the Borough. Once the budget is approved, there will be a backlog of bills that need to be paid.

Councilwoman Milward questioned the need for certain training costs. Administrator McCafferty advised that the amount for Planning and Zoning Board training had increased due to mandatory training in order to serve as a member.

Councilwoman Milward questioned changes to the JIF premiums and unemployment costs. CFO Bachich stated that JIF premiums and worker's compensation costs cannot change. They are set by the JIF and have already been paid. CFO Bachich also commented on retiree medical insurance, health insurance opt-outs, and how unemployment costs can't be changed and are part of payroll tax.

Councilwoman stated there would be cuts to amounts budgeted for computer upgrades in the Police Department. Police Chief McAteer mentioned the need for these upgrades and expressed his concerns about cutting the budget due to maintenance required over the next few years. CFO Bachich stated that computer upgrades could not be placed in capital ordinances due to their low "period of usefulness", and she recommended including these upgrade costs in the budget rather than trying to come up with these costs from whatever money was leftover at the end of the year. The suggested cut would not be sufficient to complete these upgrades requiring money to be pulled from a line designated for another expense.

Councilwoman Milward also recommended changes to Police maintenance contracts, vehicles, and body worn cameras.

Councilwoman Milward spoke about Fire Company #1 apparatus repairs.

Councilwoman Milward commented on Streets and Roads salaries and the costs for equipment and clothing.

Councilwoman Milward asked for clarification about leaf machine repair. Administrator McCafferty stated that old capital ordinance monies could help with the purchase of a new street sweeper, but not repairs. Administrator McCafferty also noted some municipal building repairs that could be covered by old capital ordinance monies.

Councilwoman Milward inquired about a budget item for environmental assessments. Administrator McCafferty clarified that this budget line included the removal and disposal of an invasive species cleanup in the wildflower meadow at Alcyon Park earlier in the year.

Councilwoman Milward questioned the amounts for Recreation salaries. Administrator McCafferty explained that this included part-time wages and seasonal summer help.

Councilwoman Milward asked for clarification on an increase to Parks and Recreation maintenance/repairs. Administrator McCafferty noted that funds were to rebuild an engine in one of their work trucks. The repairs would be handled in house.

Councilwoman inquired about an increase to Parks salaries. Administrator McCafferty mentioned that Parks was looking to hire another full-time employee.

Councilwoman Milward asked to cut gasoline costs. Administrator McCafferty explained that she would not recommend making cuts to gasoline due to fluctuating prices and varied use by departments.

Councilwoman Milward asked for cuts in Road Improvement. Administrator McCafferty mentioned that the Borough is preparing to begin new road projects soon, so changes should not be made.

CFO Bachich recommended that any further questions from Council be sent to her before the next meeting. This will allow time to prepare answers and make any necessary adjustments.

Administrator McCafferty stated that Council needs to agree upon the final version of the budget by September 23rd so there is enough time to prepare the necessary paperwork before adoption on October 2nd. It was suggested to hold another meeting before September 23rd to answer any final questions.

Rotary Work

Councilman Uyehara mentioned the Rotary's interest in refurbishing the retaining wall on Mt. Vernon Ave that runs along the new playground. Mayor Razze suggested a first step of contacting the Construction office to better understand the codes regarding retaining walls.

Film Ordinance

Councilman Bially shared the Economic Development Committee's interest in implementing a film ordinance, which some other towns have already done. This could potentially bring an economic boost, tourism, job creation, general enjoyment of the community. Discussions have focused on the permitting and approvals process, fee structures, insurance requirements, and more. Mayor Razze noted that there has been a desire to film in the Borough, and the ordinance would help to expedite and streamline the process for potential filmmakers. Solicitor Vigilante presented a draft modified from the NJ Motion Picture & Television Commission sample ordinance. Mayor Razze offered to reach out to some other towns to compare fee structures.

Administrator Updates

Administrator McCafferty provided the September Engineer's report, and the July Construction report for Council review.

Administrator McCafferty shared that Councilman Bially would be resigning from the Recreation Commission due to his current role on Council.

Administrator McCafferty mentioned new OPRA Request that went into effect September 4th. The new forms are available on the website and in the Clerk's office.

Public Portion

Motion to open to the public: Mazzola

Second: Milward

Time: 7:45 p.m.

Ayes all.

Kathy & Clinton Carter, owners of 165 W. Jersey Ave discussed some recent difficulties obtaining zoning approval for a tenant to open a charcuterie business, “Gather to Graze” on the property. During the approval process the Carters discovered that their business zoning had been changed from a C-1 to TRC-2. The Carters have owned the property for decades and were unaware of the change. This new designation has created limitations on how they can lease the building. Mrs. Carter would like to know when this zoning changed, and when and why some other businesses along W. Jersey Ave were able to change back to the C-1 designation. Mrs. Carter emphasized the need for these answers quickly as their inability to lease is impacting their financial situation. Mayor Razze will find some information and get back to the Carters.

Motion to close public portion: Mazzola
Time: 7:53 p.m.
Ayes all.

Second: Milward

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: James
Time: 7:54 p.m.
Ayes all.

Second: Uyehara

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra McCafferty, Borough Clerk