

**Borough of Palmyra**  
**Virtual 2021 Budget Work Shop Meeting Minutes**  
**8:30 am, Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Mayor Tait called the meeting to order at 8:36 am.

Mayor Tait requested a roll call:

At the call of the roll:

Present: Mr. Brandon Allmond, Dr. Laura Cloud, Mrs. Farrah Jenkins, Mrs. Michelle McCann, Mrs. Bernadette Russell, President Timothy Howard, Mayor Gina Ragomo Tait

Absent: none

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Tait then read the following open public meetings statement into the record:

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT**

Mayor Tait read to following statement into the record:

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., and in consideration of Executive Order No. 103, issued by Governor Murphy on March 9, 2020, declaring a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency in the State of New Jersey and in response to Executive Order No 196 issued by Governor Murphy on November 16, 2020. Please be advised the Borough of Palmyra does hereby notify the public that to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens while ensuring the continued functioning of government, the meeting of the Mayor and Council will be a Virtual Council Meeting. Members of the public are invited to “attend” the Virtual Council Meeting but all members of the public participating in the meeting may be muted and their video image disabled. Notice of this meeting was published in the Burlington County Times on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Notice was posted on the Municipal Door, Official Bulletin Board and electronic signs on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Notice was also posted on the Borough of Palmyra Website on March 24<sup>th</sup> 2021 and notice was given to all Council Members.

**BUDGET WORKSESSION**

Mr. Gural began by speaking about 2020. He indicated we had a remarkable year, given the circumstances and noted we were able to come in at or underbudget on almost all items. Mr. Gural went over the pasts years budgets and explained that with the cuts and changes made in this year’s budget we are about two hundred or so dollars over the amounts appropriated in 2019 noting that with the current requested appropriations in the 2021 budget, the average homeowner increase would be about \$36.02. Mr. Gural indicated to offset the tax levy, we would be using more surplus than in previous years but are confident with other things pending,

redevelopment and the 700,001.00 coming from the American Rescue Plan, it will not present a problem in years coming. Mr. Gural explained the various documents council would be working with during the meeting. Mr. Gural noted the primary document council would be working with, the budget appropriation worksheet; he explained the various columns and how they applied to the current, past and proposed budgets.

Mr. Gural indicated that he sent various merit increase requests to the governing body. Mr. Gural noted that in the past few years in an effort to not have to notice all staff and keep the workshop meeting moving, any across the board increases were discussed, appropriated as were potential merit increases, however the final decision regarding if they were dispersed/given would be decided at a later council meeting or committee meeting by way of recommendation to Borough Council.

Mr. Gural went on to budget appropriations explaining all the various columns labeled and how they affect the 2021 budget, he then began explaining each various category noting if it was the same or if a significant change had been made:

#### **General Administration**

Mr. Gural noted the vacant administrative assistant, and exercise facility coordinator positions, contributing to a 7.01% decrease in General Administration- Salaries & Wages

#### **Mayor & Council Miscellaneous**

Mr. Gural indicated Mayor and Council overall appropriations were up 10.84% mostly due to budgeting for conferences this year that due to covid were not budgeted in 2020.

#### **Borough Clerk**

Mr. Gural noted the vacant Deputy Clerk, and Deputy Registrar positions, contributing to a 2.68% decrease in overall Borough Clerk Appropriations.

#### **Elections**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant change in this section and we pay what the County bills.

#### **Financial Administration**

Mr. Gural noted an increase of 5.19% in Financial Admin- Salaries & Wages.

#### **Collection of Taxes**

Mr. Gural noted a significant overall decrease in this section, mostly due to salaries.

#### **Assessment of Taxes**

Mr. Gural noted there is a significant decrease in appropriations in this category, as the tax map project is substantially complete and where we budgeted money in 2019 and 2020, we do not have to do it this year.

#### **Legal Services & Costs**

Mr. Gural indicated an increase in this category, mostly due to redevelopment and COAH.

#### **Engineering Services**

Mr. Gural indicated the engineering fees are down \$5,000.00.

#### **Grants & Planning**

Mr. Gural indicated this section is down 7%.

### **Land Use**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

### **Construction Code Official**

Mr. Gural indicated there are a number of changes coming in this section. When the redevelopment projects begin additional help may become necessary.

### **Code Enforcement**

Mr. Gural indicated the code enforcement officer and vacant property manager will need to be replaced.

### **Insurance**

Mr. Gural indicated no major changes in this section.

### **Unemployment Insurances**

Mr. Gural stated we needed to build the Unemployment Compensation fund, noting the need to transfer \$20,000.00 to that line item in 2020.

### **Police Department**

Mr. Gural stated this category is a bid complicated; the salary line includes the hiring of two new police officers and a part-time clerk. Mr. Gural noted the Safe & Secure Grant which will reduce the salary line item by \$21,322.00. Mr. Gural noted the budget appropriations for the police department are up 6.52% which is mostly coming from the \$30,000.00 appropriated for Labor Counsel for the Police CBA & personnel matters.

### **School Crossing Guards**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

### **Emergency Management**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section, noting we budgeted \$25,000.00 due to Covid which was spent; and were reimbursed for.

### **Aid to Fire Company**

Mr. Gural explained the lease agreement with the fire company, and how it was handled last year. and how it will be moving forward. Mr. Gural noted the \$2,500.00 increase in their request this year to \$17,500.00 instead of \$15,000.00.

### **Aid to Volunteer Ambulance Company**

Mr. Gural noted we give the same donation to the Ambulance Association every year, as they do not charge our residents fees, they only charge insurance companies, that amount is \$2,500.00. Additional this year and for the next 5 years is \$1,000.00 per the agreement signed in 2019. Amount budgeted is \$3,500.00 annually.

### **Fire Department**

Mr. Gural indicated their budget is down 4% mostly due to less allotted for uniforms.

### **Uniform Fire Safety**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes.

### **Borough Prosecutor**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes.

### **Streets & Roads – Public Works**

Mr. Gural indicated salaries are up due to hiring two new employees especially noting one being a gardener. Mr. Gural noted the expenses are also up \$3,300.00, just the cause of doing business.

### **Solid Waste Collection**

Mr. Gural indicated this is contractual. Mr. Gural stated it is up \$29,500.00 over last year or 11.41%. Mr. Gural stated our recycling grant, which usually offsets some of these expenses is less than expected this year. Mayor Tait asked if the cost expense would increase with the redevelopment. Mr. Gural indicated yes; however, it should not have an impact in 2021.

### **Public Buildings and Grounds**

Mr. Gural indicated the budget reflects bringing back one employee in May to help with the scheduling etc. at Legion Field.

### **Shade Tree**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes.

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

Mr. Gural indicated that there was a need to increase this category a little, as money needed to be transferred into it at the end of last year.

### **Condominium Services Law**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes.

### **Board of Health**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes and the position is currently vacant.

### **Animal Control**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes, it is contractual with a new vendor this year.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Mr. Gural stated there is no donation for the Community Center Program Board as they have disbanded.

### **Education Functions**

Mr. Gural indicated this is a donation to the Riverton Library, which is outside CAP.

### **Community Youth Recreation**

Mr. Gural indicated in the packets is a request from the PHS Post Prom Committee, which is requesting a \$2,000.00 donation for the prom which they intend to have this year. Mr. Gural indicated nothing was budgeted last year as there was no prom due to covid. Mr. Gural indicated the graduation awards to two high school seniors and the donation to Catholic Charities are the usual items done.

### **Contribution to Tri-Boro Senior Citizen**

Mr. Gural indicated that the organization is not officially requesting any donation this year. Mr. Gural indicated there have been some seniors who have indicated a willingness to possibly restart the organization once covid restrictions have lifted. Mayor Tait asked if the \$2,000.00 donation we gave them last year could be placed in the budget just in case they request it at a later date. Mr. Gural placed the amount into the budget.

### Accumulated Sick Leave Compensation

Mr. Gural indicated the line is used to pay people when they retire.

### Celebration of Public Events

Mr. Gural indicated the Halloween Parade Committee is requested a \$5,000.00 donation this year, with the intent of have a parade this year. Mr. Gural noted that Palmyra Day and Downtown Safety Day are not taking place so no funding has been appropriated for those events. Mayor Tait asked if the line for Public Events could be raised to \$4,000.00 instead of \$2,000.00. Mayor Tait explained some things they were hoping to be able to complete towards the end of the year, if the Governor lifts restrictions.

### Utility Expenses & Bulk Purchases

Mr. Gural stated the next series of line items are the utilities and they are what they are. Mr. Gural indicated he did reduce it about \$15,000.00.

### Landfill and Solid Waste Disposal Costs

Mr. Gural indicated were up slightly due to another increase we anticipate.

### Statutory Expenditures

Mr. Gural indicated the next few are statutory and there is a slight reduction in the PERS however PFRS there is a significant increase again; noting it is up \$50,725. Mr. Gural indicated it is the single largest increase in the budget. Mr. Nehila indicated the State reevaluated something which drove the item up in all Municipalities but did not grant any appropriation CAP relief. Mr. Nehila stated many municipalities are struggling with these calculations in their 2021 budget.

### Municipal Court

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes

### Capital Improvements

Mr. Gural stated he was not budgeting any additional funds this year.

### Municipal Debt Service

Mr. Gural indicated because we paid off the BANDS in December, we have no debt service payment for BANDS.

### Reserve for uncollected taxes

Mr. Gural indicated the reserve for uncollected taxes is \$678,287.78, which when added to the budget makes our budget total \$8,824,722.78. Mr. Gural again noted the use of \$1,186,000.00 from surplus to offset the tax levy. Mr. Gural stated the average home is assessed at \$148,025.00 and with that assessment the average homeowner would pay \$37.31 or 1.95%.

At 9:48 Mayor Tait indicated Council would be taking a break and would reconvene the workshop promptly at 10:00 am

### Sewer Utility Budget Appropriations

Mr. Gural stated there have been a number of challenges within the sewer budget. Mr. Gural indicated the sewer surplus dropped \$55,000.00 and there was a revenue decrease of \$74,000.00. Mr. Gural stated water usage is up on the residential side as many are working from home noting that those bills are not calculated based on water usage, they are a flat rate. Mr. Gural stated that meant more water to treat and less revenue to treat it. Mr. Gural stated the commercial customer usage is down as businesses are closed or have less usage as they have significantly reduced their operations, through less revenue. Mr. Gural noted that if residential customers were converted to usage rather than a flat fee the average customer would be paying two-hundred-thirty-seven dollars and 13 cents per semiannual billing. Mr. Gural indicated we were able to get the sewer budget down to \$1,800,801.00. The sewer budget in 2020 was \$1,926,082.00. Mr. Gural stated the increase was absolutely necessary however given where we are currently, due to the funding from the State and the potential sewer connection fees we will receive through redevelopment the possibility exists that we maybe able to have a sewer decrease.

Mr. Gural indicated that biggest expense in the sewer budget was overtime, which required a budget transfer in 2020. Mr. Gural indicated the expenses are standard and have not significantly changed. Mrs. Jenkins asked when we anticipate the funds to come in from the redevelopment. Mr. Gural indicated when the warehouses are complete and the certificate of occupancy have been issued.

Mr. Gural then went on to explain to 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and new requests for capital improvements or projects.

Mr. Gural then explained the 2021 Surplus Worksheet.

Mayor Tait asked if an additional \$25,000.00 could be used from surplus. Mr. Gural went through the numbers and noted that if we used the additional \$25,000.00 the tax increase would be \$29.28 to the average homeowner or 1.53%. Mr. Allmond and President Howard indicated that because things look good moving forward, they were in favor of using the additional \$25,000.00 from surplus.

Mr. Gural indicated we would be using 1.2 million, total from surplus specifically \$1,195,000.00 towards tax relief. Thus, making the tax increase \$29.28 to the average homeowner or 1.53%.

Ms. Condo noted, she was felt we were on solid ground and agreed with everything. Mr. Nehila indicated the total surplus to be used is \$1,211,000.00. Mr. Nehila went over the CAPS set by the State, Mr. Nehila noted that the Borough is \$125,000.00 under what the tax levy CAP could have been raised to. Mr. Nehila stated with the appropriations CAP, the Borough is almost \$300,000.00 under what the State would have allowed the Borough to raise the spending CAP to. Mr. Nehila indicated it was a very fiscally responsible budget.

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to approve the following resolutions,

**Resolution 2021-108** Resolution Certifying Compliance of the Governing Body with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

**Resolution 2021-109** Resolution Authorizing the Introducing of the 2021 Budget of the Borough of Palmyra.  
(Public hearing to be held May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021)

Mrs. Russell made a motion to approve Resolutions 2021-108 and Resolution 2021-109. President Howard seconded the motion.

**At the call of the roll, the vote was:**

**AYES: Mr. Allmond, Dr. Cloud, Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McCann, Mrs. Russell, President Howard**

**NAYES: None**

**Resolutions 2021-108 and 2021-109 were approved**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open for Public Comment. Mrs. Russell made a motion to open the public portion for comments. Mr. Allmond second the motion

All members present voted in favor of the motion

**Mrs. Veitenheimer – Rowland Avenue** – Mrs. Veitenheimer asked if more money could be used from surplus to offset the tax levy.

Mr. Gural stated you never want to use more money from surplus in the current year, than you can replace. Mr. Gural indicated we used twice the amount of surplus to offset our levy this year than what we replaced from last year. Mr. Gural indicated that because of the projects pending he could allow using the additional funding the Mayor requested, however, he could not recommend currently using more than what we have. Ms. Veitenheimer asked why sewer rates can't be adjusted now. Mr. Gural explained why it could not be done this year., noting it will allow us to recover this year.

No one else from the public wishing to be heard, President Howard made a motion to close the public portion, Mrs. Russell second the motion.

**All members present voted in favor of the motion.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Tait requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Russell made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

President Howard second the motion.

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM**

Doretha R Jackson, RMC

Municipal Clerk

approved: May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021