

**Borough of Palmyra**  
**2023 Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes**  
**8:30 am Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Mayor Tait called the budget workshop meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Mayor Tait requested a roll call:

At the call of the roll:

Present: Dr. Laura Cloud, Ms. Natasha Latimore, Mr. John Liebe, Mrs. Michelle McCann, Ms. Jessica O'Connor, President Timothy Howard, Mayor Gina Ragomo Tait

Absent:

The pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS STATEMENT**

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Public Notice of this meeting been given by the Municipal Clerk in the following manner:

- Posting written notice on the official bulletin board at the Palmyra Borough Hall on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Mailing written notice to the Burlington County Times, and the Courier Post Newspaper on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Notice to All Council Members.

**BUDGET WORKSESSION**

Mr. Gural explained the various documents that council would be working with during the work session. Mr. Gural explained it was dated March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, version 5. Mr. Gural explained the various column headings.

**Mayor & Council Miscellaneous**

Mr. Gural indicated how the sections were separated into two parts, one covering wages and salaries and the other operating expenses. Mr. Gural explained that a 2% across the board increase is included in the wages and salaries however council is free to do however they close.

**General Administration**

Mr. Gural noted this section covers his salary and the Community Center scheduling coordinator's salary. Mr. Gural noted that no members of staff have been noticed so they cannot specifically be spoken about. Mr. Gural explained the various columns, the appropriations and how they affect the general budget and the sewer budget. Mr. Gural stated that for many department heads you will see the salary split between the general budget and the sewer budget.

### **Aid to Volunteer Fire Company**

Mr. Gural explained that he budgeted \$22,500.00. Mr. Gural noted that they request a \$2,500.00 increase each year. Mr. Gural stated the lease agreement to store and take care of our equipment, began at \$15,000.00 it was increased to \$17,500.00 and to \$20,000.00 last year. Mr. Skowronski indicated a lot of work had been done to the building, noting that the utility bills alone are more than \$22,500.00. He noted that the annual fund drive has been down since 2020 and noted that the annual fishing flea market also produced less revenue than in the past. Mr. Skowronski noted that all fundraising events have not produced the funding they have received in the past mostly due to covid and weather conditions, noting that these things contribute to the annual increase request.

### **Fire Department**

Mr. Gural indicated the change in the salaries and wages line item. Mr. Gural noted that last year we put \$31,040.00 into the budget but really did not do a lot with it as we were still getting the program for salaried personnel together. Mr. Gural noted that we currently have the program up and running and the reason you only see the increased amount of \$45,460.00 is because we have the funding from last year still available. Thus, instead of seeing \$76,500.00 calculated by taking \$150.00 times two, per day for 52 weeks per year which is 78,000.00 annually, however because we started a little later in January of this year and missed some shifts, we anticipate that the \$76,500.00 will be ok for this year.

Mr. Stokes indicated that the program is working very well thus far. Mike indicated that there are some days when they are a little short, however the participants are a lot younger and have a lot of experience. Mr. Stokes indicated that he is looking forward to the program growing and contributing to the Borough's safety.

Mr. Gural stated that the operating expenses of the department are \$35,000.00 which is a % increase over last year.

### **Borough Clerk**

Mr. Gural noted the vacant Deputy Clerk position and the need for it. Mr. Gural noted the increase in salaries and wages due to the placement of \$22,500.00 in the budget, noting that it was not the salary but taking into consideration that we are already into the year and currently do not have a prospect, so we built something in anticipation of hiring that individual. Mr. Gural also noted the \$4,500.00 increase due to having to pay all certified registrars. Mr. Gural noted that an upcoming requirement for all registrars to be certified.

Mr. Gural noted the slight reduction in operating expenses for the department.

### **Elections**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

### **Financial Administration**

Mr. Gural noted a slight increase in Financial Admin operating expenses largely due to education expenses, as we educate additional staff members working in the department.

### **Audit Services**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

#### **Collection of Taxes**

Mr. Gural noted that more for salaries is appropriated to the sewer department for this department as they handle all the sewer billings and collections. Mr. Gural noted the slight increase in operating expenses due to lien foreclosure sale proceedings. Mr. Gural explained the process.

#### **Assessment of Taxes**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

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

Mr. Gural indicated legal services were down slightly.

#### **Engineering Services**

Mr. Gural indicated this item was also slightly down approximately \$8,000.00.

#### **Grants & Planning**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section. Mr. Gural spoke about some of the various grants we apply for and how important it is to obtain that additional funding.

#### **Land Use**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

#### **Construction Code Official**

Mr. Gural indicated there are several changes in the construction department. Mr. Gural indicated all the positions are required for that department. Mr. Gural stated the line is up \$3,000.00 largely due to the redevelopment project inspections. Mr. Gural explained the various personnel required in the department.

#### **Code Enforcement**

Mr. Gural noted the additional \$7,500.00 added to the appropriations due to the lead-based paint inspection requirement. Mr. Gural noted having to pay the lead inspectors to do the inspections.

#### **Insurance**

Mr. Gural indicated what we pay the BURL CO JIF. \$180,301.00 is outside CAP. Mr. Gural noted the additional \$159,000.00 to be paid to the state for group insurance premiums. Mr. Gural stated that Ms. Condo looked at various other health insurance companies, however it would cost more or about the same, so for this year we are unable to make those changes.

#### **Unemployment Insurances**

Mr. Gural indicated no significant changes in this section.

Mr. Gural explained budget transfers and the budget process, start to finish.

#### **Police Department**

Mr. Gural noted the three highlighted, explaining that the salaries are for three Class 1 Officers, a Digital Evidence Technician, and a Police Clerk. Mr. Gural stated the total is about \$39,000.00 which is a slight

decrease in the total salary appropriations line from last year. Mr. Gural noted the total appropriation is \$1.5 million. Mr. Gural indicated the budget includes the funding for 18 officers.

Lt. Murphy explained the difference between class 1 and 2 officers.

#### **School Crossing Guards**

Mr. Gural noted the reduction in the crossing guards' salaries, stating that we are shorthand but still actively seeking crossing guards.

#### **Emergency Management**

Mr. Gural noted that this item includes the Emergency Management Coordinator's Salary. Mr. Gural also noted that the operating expenses include \$2,500.00 for potential covid related expenses.

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

Mr. Gural stated aid to volunteer ambulance company is by contract, which expires next year.

#### **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 this is a little more complicated, noting the five new employees, and the new salary guide for public works employees. Mr. Gural noted the three new employees who are CDL license holders. Mr. Gural noted the new section, trash collection salary and wages. Mr. Gural explained the slight reduction in operating expenses mostly due to not having to purchase as much salt.

#### **Solid Waste Collection**

Mr. Gural explained the various changes to this appropriations section. Mr. Gural noted the addition of a salary and wages section. Mr. Gural stated that curbside trash collection went up over \$400,000.00 this year. Mr. Gural also noted the additional \$100,000.00 being charged by Republic for the limited collection of bulk trash.

#### **Public Buildings and Grounds**

Mr. Gural indicated the budget reflects bringing back one employee to help with the scheduling in the Community center and funding to hire an additional employee as needed. Mr. Gural noted that some of their salaries come from the recreation trust fund. Mr. Gural noted the increase in the operating expenses of the section mostly due to the upkeep and repairs to our parks and playgrounds.

#### **Donations**

Includes the \$5,000.00 donation to the War Memorial group.

#### **Shade Tree**

Mr. Gural indicated this category is being structured a little differently than before, salary and wages includes the shade tree secretary and the shade tree officer to come after certification.

#### **Vehicle Maintenance**

Mr. Gural indicated it is up about \$5,500.00, mostly coming from the public works department. Ms. Condo noted the second trash truck will be coming in the middle of May.

#### **Condominium Services Law**

Mr. Gural explained the requirements that we must fulfill for the condominiums, apartments etc. Mr. Gural noted the complexes and the shared services agreement with Maple Shade which is contractual.

#### **Board of Health**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes except that the Board of Health Coordinator has been appointed.

#### **Animal Control**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes, it is contractual; about \$900.00 monthly, which was publicly bid.

#### **Education Functions**

Mr. Gural indicated this is a donation to the Riverton Library in the amount of \$500.00, which is outside CAP. Mr. Gural noted the approximately \$3,900.00 in various donations, to Community Youth Recreation- Post Prom, awards for two high school seniors, etc. Mr. Gural stated we no longer have a Senior program.

#### **Accumulated Sick Leave Compensation**

Mr. Gural indicated the line is used to pay people when they retire for unused sick and vacation time.

#### **Celebration of Public Events**

Mr. Gural explained \$5,000.00 has budgeted here for the community garden.

#### **Utility Expenses & Bulk Purchases**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes.

#### **Gasoline**

There was discussion regarding the rising costs. Mr. Gural noted that currently there is really nothing we can do regarding the costs.

#### **Landfill and Solid Waste Disposal**

Mr. Gural stated Land Fill Fees are stable currently. Mr. Gural noted that we may get a discount once in-house collection begins.

#### **Statutory Expenditures**

Mr. Gural indicated the statutory expenditure for PERS is stable. PFRS is seeing a slight reduction due to police salaries having gone down due to retirements.

#### **LOSAP**

Mr. Gural indicated there are no significant changes. Great program for our volunteer firefighters.

#### **Municipal Court**

Mr. Gural has a pending retirement so some changes will be coming. Mr. Gural also noted that the Municipal Court is required to file their budget with the County.

#### **Public Defender**

Mr. Gural indicated this line item is \$6,000.00.

Mr. Gural noted that the current fund items within CAP are \$6.459 million statutory expenditures are \$696,851.00 total appropriations are \$7,000,156.00. The sewer salaries are \$243,000.00.

Mr. Gural then went on to explain to 5-year Capital Improvement Plan and new requests for capital improvements or projects. There was discussion regarding debt service and future payments

#### **Capital Improvements**

Mr. Gural stated every or so we must refund this line item; noting it is what is used towards the 5% down payment on any capital purchases.

Mr. Gural explained debt service, (BANS) Bond anticipation notes, noting total debt service is \$1.894 million.

Mr. Gural indicated the total budget is \$9.556 million.

Mr. Gural explained surplus, the capital budget, state aid and new category TAC/PAL warehouse #1.

#### **Reserve for uncollected taxes**

Mr. Gural indicated the reserve for uncollected taxes is \$665,189.75 which when added to the budget makes our budget total \$10,221,261.75. Mr. Gural again noted the use of \$1.6 million dollars from surplus to offset the tax levy. Mr. Gural stated the average home is assessed at \$148,656.00 and with that assessment the average homeowner would pay \$49.80 or 2.48%. or 0.0377 cents on the tax rate.

Dr. Cloud requested an additional \$2,000.00 for the Green Team.

Mr. Gural then adjusted the budget to reflect the change requested.

Mr. Gural added the \$2,000.00 to the Green Team public events.

Mr. Gural asked what the new reserve for uncollected taxes is. Mr. Nehilla indicated \$665,256.94 which when added to the budget makes our budget total \$10,223,328.94. Mr. Gural again noted the use of \$1.6 million dollars from surplus to offset the tax levy. Mr. Gural stated the average home is assessed at \$148,656.00 and with that assessment the average homeowner would pay \$50.44 or 2.51%. or 0.03266 cents on the tax rate.

There were comments regarding the 5-year capital improvement plan as presented.

Mr. Liebe asked about the grants we receive. Mr. Gural indicated we do not include them in the budget but go back and add them later as amendments to the budget by resolutions called chapter 159.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open for Public Comment. President Howard made a motion to open the public portion for comments. Dr. Cloud second the motion

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

**Mr. Hawk - Columbia Avenue**

After hearing the fire department this morning, what you give them is not washing what they must pay for. Mr. Hawk indicated that council needs to get together and do an audit of what they have and what they need. Mr. Hawk noted that the police department needed a police chief, the money that is going to be spent hiring people to write tickets, the funds should be used to hire police officers and giving them raises noting that to many officers have left the Borough because there is no money here for them. Mr. Hawk asked when will the trash trucks be running and will that take away our dependency on Republic. Mr. Gural indicated the new contract with Republic does not start until April 1, 2023, and we are required to give Republic 90 days' notice and once we start our in-house trash collection our contract will reduce by the number of homes we will be collecting from. There was some discussion regarding the contract, where the appropriations are being placed for salaries of the new hires, the trash trucks received and coming and taking over the trash collection in-house. Will the bulk be picked up in-house? Mr. Gural indicated no; the bulk trash will still be picked up by Republic in a limited capacity. Mr. Gural explained the contract with Republic. Mr. Hawk asked when the council was going to hire the new officers. Mayor Tait indicated the funding is in the budget. Mayor Tait asked Lt. Murphy what was being done to hire the new officers. Lt. Murphy indicated that he conducted three interviews last week and he is actively working on getting those officers hired. There was additional discussion regarding salaries of officers, retention of officers, the reopening of the negotiated/settled contract. Mr. Hawk asked how it is determined which streets will be repaired. Mayor Tait indicated all road repairs are done in order of need.

**Mrs. Veitenheimer – Rowland Avenue**

Ms. Veitenheimer asked what the final tax rate was. Mr. Gural indicated 1.38496 cents. He noted that that rate multiplied by the assessed value of your home determines how much additional taxes you would pay. Mr. Gural indicated .03.266 cents.

**Mr. Brett – New Jersey Avenue**

Mr. Brett asked if the surplus was \$5 million. Mr. Gural indicated yes. Mr. Brett asked if that was 25% of the total surplus is the total tax levy. Mr. Gural stated not necessarily. Mr. Nehilla indicated that what you want to look at is what amount of surplus you used in relation to what you have. Mr. Nehilla indicated what was used was 1.6 million of the 5 million which is 31.77%. Mr. Nehilla indicated that when rating agencies, when we go out to bond, look at our surplus policy and they see this, they get an idea of what we do and how we manage our surplus, they will rate us pretty high. Mr. Nehilla indicated he audits nine municipalities, and most will use 90% of their surplus. Mr. Nehilla indicated that is like wiping out their savings and hoping they replenish it. Mr. Gural indicated we are using about one third of our surplus to offset the tax levy. There was additional discussion regarding the surplus and how it has been sent over the years to offset the tax levy. Mr. Brett stated it makes sense, noting that we stack up better than most municipalities regarding spending and replacing their surplus. Mr. Brett stated that the expectation is that the surplus will stay where it is at and we will see future growth. Mr. Gural indicated yes with one exception, noting that at this time the redevelopment on Rt. 73, on where house is complete and they are beginning the second warehouse which is expected to be

expanded. The pilot on the second warehouse should yield one million plus so we are tight today but can afford to be tight because we have current warehouse revenue coming in and future warehouse revenue coming in. Mr. Brett indicated that makes sense.

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

### **RESOLUTIONS**

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

**Resolution 2023-97**, Resolution Certifying Compliance of the Governing Body with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

**Resolution 2023-98**, Resolution Authorizing the Introduction of the 2023 Budget of the Borough of Palmyra.

**(Public hearing to be held May 1st, 2023)**

President Howard made a motion to approve Resolutions 2023-97 and Resolution 2023-98. Mr. Liebe seconded the motion.

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

**AYES: Dr. Cloud, Ms. Latimore, Mr. Liebe, Mrs. McCann, Ms. O'Connor, President Howard**

**NAYES: None**

**Resolutions 2023-97 and 2023-98 were approved.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Tait asked for a motion to open for Public Comment. President Howard made a motion to open the public portion for comments. Mr. Liebe second the motion

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

No one from the public wishing to be heard, President Howard made a motion to close the public portion. Ms. Latimore second the motion.

Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Gural for all his efforts in getting the budget and documents prepared for the workshop meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Tait requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. President Howard made a motion to adjourn the Meeting. Mrs. McCann second the motion.

All members present voted in favor of the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 10:27 AM



Doretha R Jackson, RMC  
Municipal Clerk  
Approved: May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023