

BOROUGH OF OAKLAND

Municipal Court/Council Chambers
10 Lawlor Drive
Oakland, N.J. 07436

BUDGET MEETING 2 OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY MARCH 6, 2024

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: By Mayor Kulmala 6:30 PM

ROLL CALL: Mayor Kulmala called the meeting to order and the Acting Clerk Wendi Seelin called the roll.

Present: Mayor Kulmala, Councilmembers Goffredo, McCann, Pignatelli, Saliani, Slasinski, Talamini

Also Present: Wendi Seelin, Acting Borough Clerk; Richard Kunze, Borough Administrator; David Young, Chief Financial Officer

SALUTE TO THE FLAG:

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT Acting Borough Clerk Wendi Seelin announced this meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Law, duly announced, submitted to the newspaper and advertised more than 48 hours in advance of the meeting and notice posted in the Municipal Building and on the Borough website.

OPENED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

On motion of Councilman Talamini, seconded by Councilman Saliani, this portion of the meeting be opened for public comment.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Goffredo, McCann, Pignatelli, Saliani, Slasinski, Talamini.

ALL IN FAVOR

No Comments Made. No Public Present.

CLOSED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

On motion of Councilman Slasinski, seconded by Councilman Talamini, this portion of the meeting be closed to public comment.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Goffredo, McCann, Pignatelli, Saliani Slasinski, Talamini.

ALL IN FAVOR

Dave CFO stated that Scott Holzhauer the Tax Assessor gave the most recent assessment rate update as 65.94 from 67.94.

Police Department Overview: Chief Sanzari, Captain Keenan

The police department is structured with an administrative command, patrol division, detective bureau, traffic bureau, communications division, records bureau, and information technology.

- The administrative command includes the chief, captain, and two lieutenants with various responsibilities.
- The patrol division is the backbone of the department, with 28 total officers.
- The detective bureau handles criminal investigations, firearms background checks, and other duties.
- The traffic bureau deals with traffic-related issues.
- The communications division dispatches police, fire, and first aid.
- The records bureau maintains and secures police records.
- The information technology division manages the department's technology and equipment.

Goals and Priorities:

Accreditation - The department is accredited and going through an evaluation this month to ensure they are meeting standards and reducing liability.

- Law Enforcement Surplus (1033) Program - The department has obtained equipment like a Humvee, vehicles, and storage containers through this federal program.
- Succession Planning - Several officers are eligible to retire this year, so the department is focused on training and transitioning new leadership.
- Captain Keenan involved in succession planning and budget process, exploring County and other police academies for new hires
- Looking to hire 1-2 Class 3 (special law enforcement) officers
- Oakland residents get preference, then Bergen County, then statewide
- Other police department responsibilities:
 - Enforce criminal, motor vehicle, and municipal laws
 - Manage case load and investigations
 - Dispatch for police, fire, and first aid
 - Work with OEM, Narcan program, active shooter training

- Maintain good relationships with schools
- Megan's Law, background checks, Safety Town, juvenile matters

Police Department Budget:

Salaries and wages make up the largest portion of the budget, with a 2.7% increase.

- This accounts for expected retirements and new hires, including IGS and recruits.
- Clothing allowance is increased due to the additional officers.
- School guards (crossing guards) budget is up 8.6%.
- Overtime has decreased over the past few years due to improved scheduling and staffing.

Contracted Services:

Contracted services have increased significantly due to the rising costs of IT security, software subscriptions, and training.

- The department uses various vendors and services to protect sensitive data and train officers.
- Subscriptions have also increased to provide necessary materials and software for new officers.
- Professional development budget has increased to provide more training for younger, less experienced officers

Fire Department Overview:

- The fire department has 55 volunteers and 13 life members.
- Key goals include becoming accredited, retaining and recruiting members, and starting a rapid intervention team.
- The department is responsible for fire suppression, emergency medical response, community events, and other duties.
- Volunteers are encouraged to attend Monday night drills and get involved in the department.

Fire Department Budget:

- Administrative support has increased to potentially hire part-time administrative assistance.
- The fire department's clothing allowance line item has been consistently below the budgeted amount, so \$5,000 from that line item has been reallocated to the administrative support.
- Contracted services have increased significantly due to the accreditation process in the first year.
- The accreditation process is a significant jump in the proposed budget, costing around \$50,000 in the first year.

- The process involves sending 3-5 policies per week to an outside firm (Lexipol) for review, revision, and approval.
- Lexipol is the same firm used by the police department for their accreditation.
- There is a potential financial benefit from the state's GIF (Governmental Insurance Fund) for completing the accreditation process.

Fire Department Equipment Needs:

- Other increases are seen in equipment replacements like self-contained breathing apparatus, hydraulic tools, and fire hose.
- The department has an annual \$200,000 allocation for apparatus replacement, which may need to be- Repainting and refurbishing an existing fire department boat
- Purchasing an electric combination tool (Jaws of Life) to replace the current hydraulic unit
- Replacing worn fire hoses, especially the 5-inch supply lines
- Purchasing 2 new SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) units per year to fully outfit the department
- Acquiring a 24.9-ton air-powered lift bag for large vehicle extrication increased in the future due to rising costs.

Fire Apparatus Replacement Funding:

- The department follows NFPA guidelines for apparatus replacement (engines at 20 years, trucks at 25 years)
- Currently, the department has \$746,000 in a reserve fund for apparatus replacement
- The next apparatus scheduled for replacement is a 2003 Pierce engine, estimated to cost \$700,000 to \$1.1 million
- The department is considering increasing the annual apparatus funding from \$200,000 to \$250,000 or \$300,000 to keep up with rising costs
- The department will re-evaluate the replacement schedule and costs in the coming months to determine the appropriate funding level

Vehicle Maintenance

- The vehicle maintenance division is staffed by 2 mechanics, Craig Oberheim and Mike Faulk
- They are responsible for maintaining and repairing all the department's vehicles and equipment, including police cars, fire trucks, and DPW machinery
- The department has approximately 250 pieces of equipment that require regular servicing and maintenance

- The mechanics work diligently to keep the fleet in good condition, often eating lunch while working on vehicles
- Retaining and recruiting new members is a key priority for the fire department, as they need to maintain a sufficient number of trained and active volunteers to effectively serve the community.
- The department's Junior program has been successful in engaging younger individuals and providing them with a pathway to becoming full-fledged firefighters.
- Keeping these younger members engaged and transitioning them to active duty is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the department.
- The establishment of a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) is another important goal for the fire department.
- The RIT is a specialized team trained to rescue firefighters who may become trapped or in distress during a fire, which is a critical safety measure for the department and the community.
- Implementing the RIT will require additional training and equipment, but it will enhance the department's ability to respond to emergencies and ensure the safety of its personnel.

DPW Overview:

- The DPW has 20 employees across 7 divisions: roads, storm water management, buildings and grounds, water, vehicle maintenance, snow removal, and solid waste.
- Responsibilities include maintaining roads, storm drains, municipal buildings, the water system, and managing solid waste and recycling.
- Storm water management involves inspecting and cleaning catch basins to comply with regulations.
- The buildings and grounds division maintains 9 baseball fields, 6 tennis courts, and various municipal buildings.

DPW Budget:

- Storm water management budget includes funding for street sweeping and sewer line jetting.
- Solid waste costs have increased significantly due to rising disposal and recycling fees.
- Snow removal budget is based on average needs, with surplus funds going into a trust for equipment and other expenses.
- Building and grounds costs have increased due to inflation in areas like park maintenance and HVAC repairs.
- Vehicle maintenance faces rising parts and labor costs to keep the fleet operational.
- Utility budgets are impacted by the water treatment plant upgrades and sewer system decommissioning project.

- Capital projects include rec complex improvements, road resurfacing, storm sewer replacements, and facility upgrades.

Storm Water Management

- The department is responsible for managing the borough's storm water system, including 2,500 catch basins
- They inspect and clean the catch basins annually, with about 100-150 requiring physical cleaning each year
- The department has implemented measures to improve storm water management, such as installing smaller storm drain grates to prevent debris from entering the system
- Maintaining the storm water system is crucial for compliance with state regulations and preventing flooding Water System Operations
- The department operates 7 wells, 3 booster stations, and 4 water treatment plants
- Two of the treatment plants are currently in service, with the third (Well 9) undergoing upgrades and repairs
- The department is responsible for flushing 600 fire hydrants annually and exercising street valves to maintain the water distribution system
- Regulatory water sampling and testing is also a key responsibility of the water division
- Solid waste collection is a contracted service, with the current contract expiring at the end of 2025.
- The city receives around 25 calls per day related to solid waste and recycling.
- Recycling has become more expensive, as the city now has to pay to have it processed, rather than receiving revenue from it.
- The city has applied for a \$50,000 state grant to study regional approaches to solid waste management, including the possibility of outsourcing or bringing the service in-house.
- The study will take around 6 months and is being led by a consulting firm specializing in solid waste.
- One challenge is that the surrounding towns have contracts that expire at different times, making a regional approach more difficult to coordinate.
- The city is considering including an opt-out clause in its next contract to allow for more flexibility if a regional approach is pursued.

Snow Removal Operations

The discussion covers the city's snow removal operations, including the process of deploying resources and the timeline for clearing streets and sidewalks.

- Snow removal is an "all hands on deck" operation, with the first step being the salting of roads by the public works department.
- The decision is then made to bring in drivers and contractors to plow the streets.
- It typically takes around 6 hours to clear the streets after a snowstorm has stopped.
- The city then focuses on clearing sidewalks, with the goal of having them cleared within 24 hours as required by local ordinance.
- The snow removal process can be challenging, with crews sometimes working through the night and early morning hours to ensure the city is cleared.

Wastewater Treatment Transition

The discussion covers the city's recent transition from operating its own wastewater treatment plants to pumping all wastewater to a regional treatment facility.

- The city has decommissioned three of its own wastewater treatment plants and is now pumping all wastewater to the NBCUA regional treatment facility.
- The decommissioning process is still ongoing, with the contractor currently working on demolishing the old treatment plants.
- The city is exploring the possibility of converting the site of one of the former treatment plants into a parking lot, which could provide an additional 6 parking spaces.
- The transition to the regional treatment facility has eliminated the need for the city to operate its own wastewater treatment plants.

Fleet Replacement and Maintenance

The discussion covers the city's efforts to replace and maintain its fleet of vehicles, including the challenges faced during a period of limited funding and the current status of the fleet.

- The city went through a period of 8 years without replacing any vehicles due to budget constraints related to a building renovation project.
- This led to the fleet falling into disrepair, with some vehicles having street signs as floorboards.
- The city has since implemented an aggressive fleet replacement program, with a schedule in place to replace vehicles on a regular basis.
- The city aims to keep salt trucks and large trucks in service for at least 20 years, while pickup trucks and other frontline vehicles are replaced every 10-15 years.
- The harsh conditions of winter operations, including the use of salt, can take a significant toll on the vehicles, requiring frequent maintenance and replacement.
- The city is currently in a good position with its fleet, but acknowledges the need for ongoing replacement and maintenance to keep the fleet in good condition

Consideration of Electric Vehicles

The discussion covers the city's consideration of transitioning to electric vehicles, including the challenges and limitations of the current technology.

- The city has previously explored the use of hybrid and electric vehicles, but the return on investment was not favorable, with a payback period of around 20 years.
- The current electric vehicle technology is not yet mature enough for the city's needs, particularly in terms of range and performance in cold weather conditions.
- There have been reports of issues with electric police vehicles, such as battery packs not lasting a full shift.
- Transitioning to electric vehicles would also require significant investment in charging infrastructure, potentially doubling the size of the city's fleet to account for charging times.
- The city is open to exploring electric vehicles in the future, particularly for the police fleet, but the current technology and operational requirements make it challenging to justify the investment.

Garbage and Recycling Budget

This section discusses the budget for garbage and recycling services in the town.

- Pressure on incoming people politically to address the garbage and recycling issues
- A company from New York saved the town a million dollars, but they need permission to operate in New Jersey
- The town's garbage and recycling costs have increased significantly over the past few years, with some towns seeing over 100% increases
- The budget includes:
 - Reclassifying a position to maintain the compost facility
 - Separating out the recycling costs from the overall garbage removal contract
- A \$3 per ton increase in disposal tipping fees
- A \$189 per ton fee imposed by the BCUA, which the town is trying to work out with the disposal company

Snow Removal Budget

This section discusses the snow removal budget, including:

- The snow removal trust fund, which is used to purchase capital equipment and cover snow removal costs
- The town has had a couple of light snow years, allowing them to replenish the trust fund without needing to budget as much for salt and other supplies

- However, the town still needs to budget for potential heavy snow years, as winter weather can be unpredictable

Buildings and Grounds Budget

This section covers the buildings and grounds budget, including:

- Increases driven by rising costs for maintenance items like park maintenance, HVAC repairs, and other facility upkeep
- The town leases land for parking and other infrastructure, with the costs for these leases increasing over time
- The town is working to get more accurate information on the lease costs, as the amounts can fluctuate
- There are significant capital needs for the town's buildings and facilities, which are addressed in the capital budget

Vehicle Maintenance Budget

This section discusses the vehicle maintenance budget, including:

- Increases driven by inflation and rising costs for parts and supplies, such as \$600 for brakes and rotors on a Ford Explorer and \$230 per tire for police vehicles
- The need to regularly replace and maintain the town's vehicle fleet to ensure safe and reliable operation

Utility Budget

This section covers the utility budget, focusing on:

- The sewer project, including the installation of new filters, booster stations, and the closure of the sewer package plant
- The \$4.7 million note the town has taken out to finance the sewer project, which will result in significant interest and principal payments going forward
- The town is working to secure financing through the I-Bank to try to get some principal relief on the sewer project costs
- The combined impact of the water and sewer utility increases is expected to result in a \$48 increase in the average resident's utility bill

Capital Budget

The capital budget section covers the following:

Rec Complex Improvements:

- Irrigation system for Field

- Replacement of old bleachers
- Purchase of two new pickup trucks and a new bucket truck for the DPW Street and Road Improvements:
- Annual road resurfacing program
- Storm sewer repairs and replacements, including a project on Birch Street
- Sidewalk maintenance and repairs Other Capital Projects:
- Window treatments and bathroom upgrades at the Senior Center
- Fuel tank upgrades at the DPW facility
- HVAC system replacement at the Police/Court building

Funding sources for these projects include capital funds, the storm removal trust, and potential grant money.

- This detailed budget presentation was beneficial for both the council and residents to understand the operations and needs of the various municipal departments.

On motion of Councilman Pignatelli, seconded by Councilman Saliani, the meeting be adjourned.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Goffredo, McCann, Pignatelli, Saliani, Slasinski, Talamini

ALL IN FAVOR

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:39 pm.

Wendi Seelin

Wendi Seelin, Acting Borough Clerk

March 6, 2024

Eric Kulmala

Mayor Eric Kulmala

Date Approved 4/30/24