

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **February 10, 2024** at 8:33 a.m.in Room 108.

THIS MEETING IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE “OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT” AS ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY E-MAILING THE ANNUAL SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS TO THE WESTFIELD LEADER, THE UNION COUNTY LOCAL SOURCE, THE STAR LEDGER, AND TAP INTO CRANFORD, BY POSTING SUCH ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE ON A BULLETIN BOARD IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING RESERVED FOR SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE FILING OF SAID NOTICE WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK OF CRANFORD. FORMAL ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AT THIS MEETING.

Present: Mayor Brian Andrews
Deputy Mayor Terrence Curran
Commissioner Paul A. Gallo
Commissioner Kathleen Miller Prunty
Commissioner Gina Black

Absent: None

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson, Assistant CFO Jaimie Haynes, Township Consulting Attorney Sherri Orenberg-Ruggieri and Township Clerk Patricia Donahue were present.

Public Comments

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing no comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson thanked the members of the Township Committee for meeting with the Department Heads on a Saturday to discuss budget matters. She stated that the Municipal Budget was expected to be introduced at the Township Committee Official Meeting on March 19th and considered for adoption at the Official Meeting on April 23, 2024.

Building Department

Construction Code Official Frank Genova spoke about the proposed Building Department’s budget. He reviewed the “Salaries & Wages” budget lines for the Building Department staff. Mr. Genova spoke about the use of backup inspectors to comply with new State of New Jersey regulations regarding the timeliness of inspections (i.e., inspections should be processed in three (3) days). Discussion ensued. Mr. Genova then reviewed the “Maintenance & Repairs” (for the department’s copier) budget line, the “Property Maintenance” (for landscaping) budget line, the increase in the “Postage & Printing” budget line, the increase in the “Office Supplies” (for computers) and the “Purchase of Equipment” budget line (for vehicles and SDL seats and tablets).

Park and Recreation/Swim Pool Utility

Recreation and Parks Director Steve Robertazzi spoke about the proposed Recreation Department’s budget. He reviewed the “Salaries and Wages” budget lines for the Recreation Department staff. Mr. Robertazzi reviewed the budget lines associated with Cranford West, the Senior Bus, “Community Center: Utilities”, the 375 Centennial Avenue “Salaries and Wages” budget line and 375 Centennial Avenue expected (increase) revenues.

Ms. Patterson provided an overview of the Swim Pool Utility’s 2023 revenue and expenses. Commissioner Black inquired about the YMCA’s role in the provision of staff. Mr. Robertazzi spoke about the increase for the “Pool: Outside Professional Expenses” budget line. He noted that the “Pool Building and Grounds” budget line had been decreased. Mr. Robertazzi spoke

about the increase in Pool “Chemical Supplies” budget line from \$40,000 to \$100,000. Discussion ensued. Mr. Robertazzi noted that the Swim Pool “Office Supplies” and “Safety Supplies” budget lines had been decreased. A brief discussion ensued regarding expected further determination between the YMCA and the Township for the payment of various Pool items. Further discussion ensued about high utility costs, expected 2024 lifeguard availability, expected 2024 bond fees (interest payment), Pool spending outweighing Pool revenues in 2023, the expected increase in use at the Cranford Indoor Pool & Fitness Center, the shortage of Outdoor Pool membership revenue and moving to separate the budgets of the Indoor and Outdoor Pools.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding a new HVAC system request for the Recreation Center at 375 Centennial Avenue, including discussion about the timing of going out to bid if the Capital request was approved. Discussion then ensued regarding a repair of Hillside Avenue Tennis Courts, including discussion pertaining to a larger Hillside Avenue Tennis Courts repair expected in 2025 and the Orange Avenue Tennis Courts. Deputy Mayor Curran proposed capital spending at Cranford West. Discussion ensued, including discussion about bathroom improvements.

Public Works

Department of Public Works (DPW) Superintendent Ryan Elliot spoke about the proposed DPW Budget. He spoke about DPW’s “Salaries and Wages” budget lines and terminal pay. Mr. Elliot reviewed the DPW budget lines and noted the increases in the “Printing and Postage”, “Chemical Supplies”, “Office Supplies”, “Vehicle Supplies” and “Clothing Allowance” budget lines and the decrease in the “Outside Professional Expenses” budget line.

Discussion ensued regarding the new street sweeper, snow removal and tree plantings. Further discussion ensued regarding the “Recycling” budget line, “Outside Professional Expenses” for the Municipal Building, Roundhouse expenses, Hanson House expenses and the Pump Station budget lines. Further discussion ensued regarding the Bulk Waste program and whether the Township should re-institute this program.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding a new Mounted Single Engine Combination Sewer Cleaner Truck request including discussion regarding the current practice of borrowing a similar truck from other municipalities, the cost of repairs to the current truck, the frequency of cleaning storm sewer lines and the expected arrival date of such truck if the Capital Budget request is approved.

Clerk’s Office

Township Clerk Patricia Donahue spoke about the proposed Clerk’s Office Budget. She reviewed the Clerk’s Office’s “Salaries and Wages” and “Outside Professional Expenses” budget lines. Discussion ensued regarding uploading the ordinances on a more frequent basis to the Township website (Commissioner Black), election assistance (poll workers versus Department of Public works staff (Commissioner Miller Prunty)) and the consideration of an acquisition of the Minutes preparation software.

Shade Tree Commission

Shade Tree Commission Superintendent Erik Hastrup spoke about the proposed Shade Tree Commission Budget. He reviewed the “Salaries and Wages” and “Outside Professional Expenses” budget lines. Discussion ensued regarding the proper placement of tree acquisition costs in the Township budget, watering trees, increasing the allowance for tree purchases in the Department of Public Works budget (Deputy Mayor Curran) and staffing for the Shade Tree Commission.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Dan Czeh spoke about the proposed Fire Department Budget, specifically by reading from a Budget Script (attached) and a Staffing Presentation Power Point presentation (attached). Discussion ensued regarding the level of staffing, (i.e., two (2) Firefighters in and two (2) Firefighters out (Deputy Mayor Curran)), Call Volume figures as it pertained to two (2)

Firefighters in and two (2) Firefighters out (Mayor Andrews), how the traffic on the Garden State Parkway affected the call volume (Commissioner Miller Prunty), call breakdown analysis (Commissioner Gallo), motor vehicle accident cost recovery (Mayor Andrews), mutual aid assistance (Deputy Mayor Curran), a request for a new Fire Engine and the financing of truck purchases.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding requests for the replacement of Fire Apparatus, a Power Load Stretcher and Load System Purchase, a LUCAS Device Chest Compression System, Underground Fuel Storage Tank Removal and a Murphy Bed Replacement (attached Fire Script - 2024 Capital Budget), including discussion regarding alternate fuel tank costs, grant work, sleep beds for women, EMS stretchers, a projected 2025 discussion regarding the Fire House, the dimensions of the Fire House, the three (3) different functions served by the Fire House (bays, living space and administrative space), the space constraints of the Fire House, financing and the need for the Fire Apparatus purchase.

Municipal Court

Court Administrator Lori Powell and Municipal Judge Rothman spoke about the proposed Municipal Court Budget, including the increased budget line for “Outside Professional Expenses”. Discussion ensued regarding the need for various language interpreters, the requirement that Judge Rothman cannot preside over cases he was previously associated with, the increased caseload, the State of New Jersey virtual session mandates and the need for an armed officer during Municipal Court sessions.

DMC

Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) Director Caren Demyen spoke about the proposed DMC Budget. Discussion ensued about Special Improvement District (SID) plantings and area cleanup expenses. Commissioner Black inquired if the expected increase in expenses would be covered by the Special Improvement District (SID) Tax Rate increase. Mayor Andrews inquired about the financing of the area cleanup and the parking lot(s) cleanup. Deputy Mayor inquired about landscaping costs.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding 2024 Capital Budget requests, specifically a Topographic Survey, an overall schematic design, project website and the PS+E Clock Plaza as well as various 2025 and 2026 Capital Budget requests. Specific discussion ensued regarding pavers, the Parking Study, hard and soft costs associated with the Capital Budget requests, sidewalk extensions, pocket parks, bike racks, plantings, benches, alley improvements, public space, natural light, connecting the Post Office and Eastman Street, the New Jersey Department of Transportation Village grant and cost sharing. Commissioner Miller Prunty stated that investing in the SID was investing in the economic engine of the Township and elaborated.

Library

Library Director Kathryn Cannarozzi spoke about the proposed Cranford Public Library (Library) Budget. Mr. Matt Jackson of the Library Board was present. Ms. Cannarozzi spoke about back pay owed to the Library staff and the Information Technology (I.T.) (“Purchase of Equipment”) budget line. Discussion ensued regarding a sustainable initiative, possible second floor renovations, lighting, the HVAC system, staff benefits and interest in language learning services such as Mango Languages.

Tax Assessor’s Office

Tax Assessor Bryan Flynn reviewed the budget associated with the Tax Assessors’ Office. Discussion ensued regarding the “Outside Professional Expense” budget line and the revaluations occurring throughout Union County municipalities. Further discussion ensued regarding planning for a revaluation and an expected revaluation in Cranford within the next five

(5) years. Mr. Flynn noted that the Township collected approximately \$500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) for added assessments in 2023.

Planning and Zoning

Zoning Officer Kathleen Nemeth spoke about the proposed Planning and Zoning Budget. She noted that the Department's budget had been stable since her arrival. She elaborated about the work roles for the Planning and Zoning Department and the consultants. Discussion ensued regarding the level of workflow activity in the Planning and Zoning Office, expected sidewalk café permit work, Ms. Nemeth's interest in hiring a part-time employee and the Zoning Board's move to in-person Meetings in March.

TV35

TV35 Studio Manager Don Smith spoke about the proposed TV35 Budget. He spoke about the "Salaries and Wages" budget lines and noted that the TV35 Operating Budget was very similar to last year's Budget. Further discussion ensued regarding the fees associated with WIFI hot spots and installing a camera at the High School football field which would assist in filming events.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

While there were not any 2024 Capital Budget requests for TV35, discussion ensued regarding future Capital Budget requests such as upgrades to Live U units, a new truck and the upgrade of cameras in the Municipal Building. A brief discussion ensued regarding the status of the TV35 Studio.

Health

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about the proposed Health Department Budget. Discussion ensued regarding going out to "bid" for Local Public Health Services during 2024 as the shared services agreement with the Township of Bloomfield was scheduled to end in 2024. A brief discussion ensued regarding the Township's agreement with Animal Control Solutions.

Finance

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about the proposed Finance Department Budget. She provided information about the "Salaries and Wages" and the "Outside Professional Expenses" budget lines. Ms. Patterson then reviewed the Tax Collector's Budget. She noted that the tax collection rate was outstanding and there were no municipal liens.

Administration

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about the proposed Administration Department Budget. She provided information about the "Salaries and Wages", "Professional Development" and the "O/S Prof Exp-IT Information Tech" budget lines. Discussion ensued regarding the role of Topology with the Township for 2024 (Mayor Andrews), grant writing (Ms. Patterson and Commissioner Miller Prunty) and employee health benefits (Deputy Mayor Curran and Ms. Patterson).

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding 2024 Capital Budget requests, specifically IT Server Hardware and Virtualization Software and IT Switch Hardware and Virtualization Software (i.e., server upgrades)

Engineering

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson and Township Consulting Engineer Kevin Boyer spoke about the proposed Engineering Department Budget. Ms. Patterson noted that the total operating budget request was for \$190,000 (one hundred ninety thousand dollars).

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson stated that the Capital Budget had been edited. Township Consulting Engineer Kevin Boyer reviewed the proposed Roadway projects, the Drainage/Curbing projects and the Pedestrian Improvements projects. A brief discussion ensued regarding pedestrian safety in the Township and grant work. Discussion then ensued regarding 2024 NJDOT Partially Funded Road projects, Stormwater projects and the Eastman Avenue 2023 NJDOT Transit Village project. Deputy Mayor Curran inquired about the drainage project rating systems. Commissioner Black inquired about the number of new projects which could be completed this year. Discussion ensued regarding the status of various project work.

Police Department

Police Chief Ryan Greco spoke about the proposed Police Department Budget. He reviewed the “Salaries & Wages” budget lines for the Police Department staff and provided information about the overtime expenses, Crossing Guard hourly pay and a proposed increase in such pay, the temporary and seasonal staff and terminal pay. Chief Greco provided information about the “Outside Professional Expenses” budget line, specifically the effectiveness of Automated License Plate Readers. He then provided information about the “Maintenance and Repair”, “Vehicle Supplies”, “Ins Claims/Traffic Lights-Vehicles-Etc” and “Purchase of Equipment” budget lines.

Chief Greco spoke about the Communications Budget, specifically the “Salaries and Wages” budget line. Discussion then ensued regarding the Township’s agreement with Union County for 911 services (Budget line – “Miscellaneous – 911 Radio Service”) and notification services offered to residents such as Nixle alerts.

Chief Greco reviewed the Parking System Budget. Discussion ensued regarding the partnership with the Department of Public Works for some of the Parking System costs, meters and the Parking Garage.

Chief Greco reviewed the Traffic Signals Budget. He noted that the Police Department would be tasked during the year with testing all of the Traffic Signal push buttons.

2024 Capital Budget Requests

Discussion ensued regarding two (2) SpeedAlert 24 Radar Message Signs and Eight (8) Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon Systems. Further discussion ensued regarding the expected Parking Meter upgrade in 2025 and whether activity in the Parking Garage could be viewed in the Municipal Building (Mayor Andrews). Commissioner Black inquired about a parking lot at Orange Avenue and Pacific Avenue. Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about the consideration of a parking meter fee increase.

Office of Emergency Management

Police Captain Matthew Nazzaro spoke about the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) “Other Expenses” budget line (a \$15,000 request) and noted that it would be expended for water and rescue equipment. Further discussion ensued regarding OEM’s two (2) crisis centers, the utilization of FirstNet as well as the Township’s Auxiliary Police, the need for training, the replacement of a footbridge on Riverside Drive, the River staff’s gauge replacement (and its implications) and the importance of Water Rescue.

Later Starter – Overview of the 2024 Operating Budget and Capital Budget

Business Administrator/CFO Lavona Patterson spoke about the Township’s financials at year-end and noted that the Township had a solid finish. She stated that the Township would face financial challenges in 2024 with expected RVSA, terminal pay, health care insurance and insurance costs. Ms. Patterson spoke about the size of the Township’s debt and total appropriations. Commissioner Black inquired about the expected tax increase. Mayor Andrews inquired about the amount that should be eliminated from the proposed Budgets. Ms. Patterson spoke about the annual question of how much surplus should be used to keep the taxes affordable. Ms. Patterson spoke about additional challenges that the Township would face through Recycling costs. She spoke about an increase in parking fees and noted that future-year PILOT fees would be more favorable to the Township. Mayor Andrews requested that members

of the Township Committee review the Capital Budget and recommend ways it could be reduced. Ms. Patterson suggested that the Municipal Budget be introduced at the Township Committee Meeting on March 19th. Deputy Mayor Curran requested various scenarios of surplus utilization and property tax levies.

Public Comments

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing no comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

On motion of Commissioner Gallo, seconded by Deputy Mayor Curran and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Donahue
Township Clerk

Dated: February 10, 2024