

The Minutes of the **Workshop Meeting** of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **February 11, 2023** at 8:04 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 Jason Gareis\*  
Commissioner Terrence Curran  
Commissioner Kathleen Miller Prunty  
Commissioner Gina Black

Absent: None

\*Deputy Mayor Gareis was present virtually via teleconference.

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper, Interim Administrator Ryan Greco, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Lavona Patterson, 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.

Ms. Brenda Hynes of 127 Columbia Avenue – stated that she was a member of the Aquanutz. Ms. Hynes reviewed the current morning schedule at the Indoor Pool. She inquired about expected Indoor Pool operations such as the proposed schedule, whether there would be enough room at the Westfield YMCA and whether the current instructor (Beth) would be able to teach.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

### **Closed Session**

On motion of Commissioner Black, seconded by Commissioner Miller Prunty and passed, the following resolution was adopted by roll call vote:

### **Resolution No. 2023-94.5**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Township Committee will go into closed session to discuss the following, the minutes of which will be released at some time in the future at the discretion of the Township Committee:

### **Contractual**

- Westfield YMCA and Cranford Pool & Fitness Center

### **Recorded Vote:**

Aye: Mayor Brian Andrews, Deputy Mayor Gareis, Commissioners Curran, Miller Prunty and Black  
Nay: None  
Abstained: None  
Absent: None

On motion of Commissioner Miller Prunty, seconded by Commissioner Black and passed, the Township Committee returned to open session at 8:40 a.m.

Township Attorney Ryan Cooper left the Workshop Meeting at approximately 8:40 a.m.

Mayor Andrews stated that the Department Budget presentations would now begin.

### **Park and Recreation/Swim Pool Utility**

Recreation and Parks Director Steve Robertazzi spoke about the increased "Salaries and Wages" budget lines for Recreation Full-Time Personnel and referenced the salary increases associated with the opening of the 375 Centennial Avenue Recreation Facility. Mr. Robertazzi stated that the budgets associated with Cranford West and the Public Events budget lines would remain flat. He spoke about the increases in the Youth Salaries and Wages and Senior Bus budget lines. Commissioner Miller Prunty inquired about the age of the buses.

Mr. Robertazzi noted that the budget for the 375 Centennial Avenue Recreation Facility was new and briefly elaborated. Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Patterson spoke about expected 2023 expected revenues from the facility's use.

Mr. Robertazzi spoke about Pool staffing and noted that the Full-Time Personnel budget was decreased. Ms. Patterson stated that appropriations were being utilized to assist with Pool operations.

### **Late Starter – Overview of 2023 Municipal Budget**

Mayor Andrews asked CFO Patterson to discuss the 2023 Municipal Budget and why it was expected to be a difficult year. Ms. Patterson stated that the budget for calendar year 2022 had been closed with positive results. She spoke about Township's surplus and its increased net value. Ms. Patterson stated that despite Storm Ida and the Coronavirus public health crisis, the Township had fared better than expected.

In regards to calendar year 2023, Ms. Patterson spoke about the expected RVSA (Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority) fee increases and increased health insurance and pension costs. Ms. Patterson spoke about the Township's debt, bonding and Bond Anticipation Notes (BAN's). Mayor Andrews stated that 2023 would be a tough budget year and suggested that the Township control what it could.

### **Building Department**

Construction Code Official Frank Genova spoke about the proposed Building Department's budget. He reviewed that Full Time Personnel, Regular Part Time and the Property Maintenance Inspector Salaries and Wages budget lines as well as the Professional Development budget line. Discussion ensued regarding the Purchase of Equipment budget line, specifically in regards to Building Department vehicles. Further discussion ensued regarding property maintenance, office supplies and the Temporary/Seasonal Salaries & Wages budget lines, the size and use of the Building Department vehicles and Building department revenues.

### **Public Works**

Department of Public Works Superintendent Erik Hastrup spoke about the Department's Salaries and Wages budget lines and elaborated about seasonal hires, overtime pay and the expected upcoming retirement of two (2) employees. Mr. Hastrup spoke about the Professional Development budget line. Mr. Hastrup stated that the request for the Outside Professional Expenses line was larger than last year's appropriations. Mr. Hastrup spoke about the Maintenance and Repair, Safety Supplies and Vehicle Supplies budget lines and what types of items were covered under these budget lines. He stated that the Clothing Allowance budget line request had increased as the headcount of the department rose from twenty (20) employees to twenty-two (22) employees.

Mr. Hastrup stated that the request for the Miscellaneous Materials and Supplies had increased by \$5,000 over the previous year. He noted that the Miscellaneous budget line covered drug screenings costs. Mr. Hastrup spoke about the Tree Planting budget line and noted that there was a Township tree order with Dreyer Farms for thirty (30) trees. CFO Patterson stated that the snow removal budget line was zero dollars as the Township had enough funding in a Snow Trust account.

Commission Curran inquired about drug screening. Mr. Hastrup responded that due to employee CDL's (Commercial Driving Licenses), drug screening was necessary. Mayor Andrews inquired if the Salaries and Wages Temporary/Seasonal budget line request should be reduced. Ms. Patterson suggested that the request remain. Mr. Hastrup spoke about staffing at the Conservation Center and the associated Regular Part Time Salaries and Wages budget line. He spoke about the Outside Professional Expenses budget line and what it encompassed. Mayor Andrews inquired about Clean Energy. A brief discussion ensued regarding the Bulky Curbside Pick-up budget line. Mr. Hastrup discussed the Conservation Center's Vehicle Supplies budget line. Ms. Patterson spoke about the Conservation Center's 2022 Revenue total.

Mr. Hastrup spoke about the Recycling budget lines. Ms. Patterson spoke about the increase in recycling fees compared to calendar years 2018 and 2019 (i.e., large increases). Mr. Hastrup then discussed the Building and Grounds budget lines and discussed repairs, supplies, the purchase of bollards for the Community Center and the Roundhouse maintenance and repairs. He discussed the increase in a utility budget line request as certain utility costs were previously charged elsewhere. Commissioner Black inquired about Hanson House repairs. Ms. Patterson responded that those expenses would be charged to the Capital Budget. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Hastrup discussed the Outside Professional Expenses budget line. Discussion ensued regarding the Building & Grounds Pump Station and Parking System budget lines. Further discussion ensued regarding the Building & Grounds Street Light budget lines, including a discussion about street light outages, including outages on Centennial Avenue. Mr. Hastrup then discussed the Building and Grounds Grass Cutting budget lines.

## **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Dan Czeh stated that he had provided detailed budget line notes in Edmunds. He stated that over eighty (80) per cent of his operating budget's increase was due to Fire and EMS employee salary increases. Chief Czeh spoke about Fire Expense budget lines and noted that these budget lines remained flat except for one budget line which had increased by \$3,000 (Maintenance & Repair). Chief Czeh then spoke about the Fire Prevention budget lines. A brief discussion ensued regarding water hydrants. Chief Czeh discussed the Uniform Fire Code budget line as it related to the Fire Prevention Bureau. He spoke about the Firehouse Building and Grounds budget lines and noted they remained flat. Discussion then ensued regarding use of the gasoline and diesel tanks and the possible decommissioning of the gas and fuel systems in the future. Chief Czeh spoke about the EMS full-time and part-time staff, EMS' revenue and EMS billing rates.

## **Office of Emergency Management**

Police Chief Ryan Greco spoke about the Office of Emergency Management Other Expenses budget line (a \$15,000 request) and noted that it would be expended for water rescue goods (i.e., a generator or pump).

## **Municipal Court**

Court Administrator Lori Powell and Municipal Judge Cassidy spoke about the management of work and staff in light of a recent-year decreased staff count and specifically spoke about the per-diem hire of experienced Court personnel. A brief discussion ensued regarding the Municipal Court's increased use of a language line service for members of the public and the transition in the Prosecutor position.

## **Library**

Ms. Patricia Pavlak and Mr. Matthew Jackson of the Cranford Library Board of Trustees were present.

Ms. Pavlak stated that the Library Director had left his position and the Assistant Director was serving as the Library's Acting Director. Ms. Pavlak spoke about the role that the State of New Jersey played in the Library's Budget. Discussion ensued regarding the increase in Outside Professional Expenses due to the joining of a Library Consortium, the cost benefits for Library expenses expected with the Consortium membership and expected 2023 contract negotiations for Library staff and associated legal costs.

In regards to the municipal fee, Ms. Pavlak stated that the Library was willing to pay the fee but was interested in what the fee encompassed, i.e., an outline. Discussion then ensued regarding Shared Services with the Library, contract negotiations, the hiring of a new Library Director, State of New Jersey rules regarding Library budgets, the State of New Jersey construction grant and the expansion of a Children's Room at the Library. Mayor Andrews stated that he was committed to the Children's Room expansion and had turned to federal partners regarding this matter. Ms. Patterson spoke about the money set aside in the Township's budget for the Children's Room expansion.

## **Clerk's Office**

Commissioner Black inquired about the Clerk's Office Salaries and Wages budget lines. Township Clerk Patricia Donahue spoke about the reduction in headcount from three and half (3.5) staff to three (3) staff (which occurred in 2021). Ms. Donahue spoke about expected 2023 expenses including Professional Development fees for the Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for three (3) employees with Registered Municipal Clerk (RMC) licenses, a new computer, software purchases, the updating of the Township Code through General Code and the Advertising Legal budget line.

The Township Committee took a Workshop Meeting break at 10:13 a.m. and returned to the Workshop Meeting at 10:20 a.m.

## **Tax Assessor's Office**

Tax Assessor Bryan Flynn reviewed the budget associated with the Tax Assessors' Office. A brief discussion ensued including discussion regarding the Salaries and Wages and Postage & Printing budget lines as well as revenues brought into the Township in 2022 by the Department as added assessments.

## **Planning and Zoning**

Zoning Officer Kathleen Nemeth spoke about the Planning and Zoning Board's "Salaries and Wages" budget line and noted that she would like to hire a part-time employee. She elaborated about the work roles of the Planning and Zoning employees. Ms. Nemeth spoke about the Professional Development budget line and the need for Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for the two (2) full-time employees. Ms. Nemeth spoke about

Board member training. Discussion ensued about the utilization of Topology NJ and what budgets covered those professional services expenses (Mayor Andrews, Ms. Patterson and Interim Administrator Greco.)

### **TV35**

Mayor Andrews thanked TV35 Studio Manager Ed Davenport for televising the Budget Workshop Meeting. Mr. Davenport and Ms. Patterson spoke about the TV35 Studio's history of utilizing volunteer personnel and the current personnel situation. Mr. Davenport spoke about the Purchase of Equipment, Maintenance & Repair and Miscellaneous Other Expenses budget lines. He provided an update on needed equipment and tools (i.e., switcher, Adobe editing system and monitors).

### **Finance**

CFO Patterson provided an overview of the "Salaries and Wages" budget line for the Finance Department. She stated that the Finance Department needed a part-time employee. Ms. Patterson spoke about the Professional Development and Outside Professional Expenses budget lines. She noted that the Finance Department was the only municipality in Union County to prepare the municipal Annual Financial Statement and Annual Debt Statement. Ms. Patterson spoke about the Chase Credit Cards budget line and the revenue collection it supported. Ms. Patterson then spoke about the Tax Collector's Department. She noted that the Tax Collector's Department had once been staffed with three and half (3.5) employees and was now staffed with two (2) employees. Ms. Patterson spoke about impressive Tax Sale statistics and noted that the Department's Tax Collection rate was 98.5 per cent (%). She then discussed the Outside Professional Expenses and Postage & Printing budget lines.

### **Health**

Health Officer Amy Monaco and Ms. Patterson spoke about the Animal Control budget line and trust account. Ms. Monaco reviewed the Health Salaries and Wages, Advertising Legal, Professional Development budget, Outside Professional Expenses lines. Mayor Andrews inquired about the turnover in the Township of Bloomfield Health Department and whether it affected the level of service to Cranford. Ms. Monaco responded. Ms. Patterson spoke about Inspector fees. A brief discussion ensued regarding Health Department reporting (Commissioner Curran and Ms. Monaco).

### **Engineering**

Township Consulting Engineer Jacqueline Dirmann was present virtually via teleconference.

Township Consulting Engineer Jacqueline Dirmann spoke about the Salaries and Wages budget line. She spoke about the work of the Engineers including work with permits, the RVSA, sewers, the pedestrian crosswalk project and special projects. Commissioner Black commented about utilization and oversight of the Engineering team and their work. Discussion ensued.

### **Police Department**

Police Chief Ryan Greco provided an overview of the Police Department's "Salaries and Wages" budget matters including discussion about Collective Bargaining, comp time and overtime, Crossing Guard staff and pay, terminal pay and retirements expected in 2023 and 2024. Chief Greco provided background on the Professional Development, Outside Professional Expenses, Vehicle Supplies, Clothing Allowance, Miscellaneous Material & Supplies and Insurance Claims/Traffic Lights budget lines. Discussion ensued regarding Police Department staffing in light of the expected retirements.

Chief Greco discussed the Communications budget lines and specifically discussed training for staff, the Nixle budget and the upgrade to a 1G Verizon Internet line. He then reviewed the Office Supplies, Clothing Allowance and the Purchase of Equipment budget lines. A brief discussion ensued regarding the 911 Shared Services partnership with the County.

Discussion then ensued regarding the Parking System budget lines. Chief Greco spoke about the Outside Professional Expenses budget line, the expected timing of the replacement of the parking meters and the Supplies budget line. Further discussion ensued regarding traffic lights, parking permits and parking fees. Ms. Patterson and Chief Greco spoke about the decline in revenues experienced by the Court and Police departments.

Township Attorney Cooper returned to the Budget Workshop Meeting at approximately 11:10 a.m.

### **Administration**

Interim Administrator Ryan Greco spoke about the Salaries and Wages budget lines. He then reviewed the Professional Development line and the request for an increase in the Information Technology budget line.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of professional services and associated fees with the Topology NJ firm. Interim Administrator Greco reviewed the Postage and Printing, Office Supplies, Miscellaneous Other Expenses and Purchase of Equipment budget lines which included an overview of certain 2022 expenses. Commissioner Black inquired about the Administration Part-time Salaries and Wages budget line. Interim Administrator Greco responded.

### **Late Starter - Legal**

Mr. Cooper requested an increase in the Township's Legal budget from \$500,000 to \$600,000. He noted that the Township's legal budget had remained flat for the last six (6) years. Mr. Cooper stated that he expected the largest portion of the Township's legal budget would be for the Cell Tower litigation. Commissioner Andrews inquired about expected 2022 legal work including the Cell Tower litigation. Mr. Cooper provided an overview of legal work and costs expected during 2023. Discussion ensued.

### **Late Starter - Overview of 2023 Capital Budget (continued)**

Mayor Andrews stated that the Department Budget presentations were completed and requested that Ms. Patterson provide Budget feedback. Ms. Patterson spoke about expected increases. Mayor Andrews inquired about the next Budget steps. Ms. Patterson stated that the Township Budget would be introduced for the Township Committee's consideration at the last Township Committee Official Meeting in March. Interim Administrator Greco spoke about Ms. Patterson's work in keeping the Budget lean. Commissioner Curran inquired about the State Health Benefits program and the State of New Jersey. Mayor Andrews asked Township Clerk Patricia Donahue to place a RVSA presentation in the Agenda "tickler" file. Ms. Patterson provided an overview of the Revenues and Liabilities in the 2023 Budget

Discussion occurred regarding the Birchwood PILOT agreement with the Township. Commissioner Curran spoke about replenishing trees, considering the purchase of electric cars and hiring more Crossing Guards. Commissioner Miller Prunty spoke about a recent inquiry pertaining to the Gill Apartments and a PILOT agreement.

### **Public Comments**

Mayor Andrews opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Ms. Deborah Brooks of 1 Buchanan Street – inquired if a survey would be conducted regarding the Pool's utilization. Commissioner Curran responded.

A member of the public named Carol - inquired if a decision had been made regarding the use of the Pool during construction. Mayor Andrews, Commissioner Curran and Commissioner Black responded.

Mr. Will Thilly of 22 Bloomingdale Avenue – inquired about the following: whether the Workshop Meeting was a meeting for Department Head requests, the percentage increase for the Township's Budget and taxes, the Library Budget, the proposed Township and Westfield YMCA partnership, whether the members of the public would be able to inquire regarding the future of the Pool's operations before the Township Committee had deliberated and what department's operations encompassed Affordable Housing. Members of the Township Committee, Mr. Cooper and Ms. Patterson responded.

Mr. Ed Stankiewicz of 225 Birchwood Avenue – requested an increase of equipment and salaries for Crossing Guards. He stated that the Police Department and residents were wonderful to Crossing Guards.

Ms. Brenda Hynes of 127 Columbia Avenue – inquired about the release date of the next Pool Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) document and how one could learn the meeting dates for the Swim Pool Utility. Commissioner Curran and Commissioner Miller Prunty responded.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Andrews closed the public comments portion of the meeting.

On motion of Commissioner Black, seconded by Commissioner Curran and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Donahue  
Township Clerk

Dated: February 11, 2023