



CITY OF ABSECON
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CITY COUNCIL

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

BUDGET MEETING - 5:30 PM

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Council President Pro Tem, Betty Howell at 5:30 pm.

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Butch Burroughs, Sandy Cain, Caleb Cavileer, Betty Howell, Nick Larotonda, Steve Light,

ABSENT: Keith Bennett

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Horton, Jessica Thompson, Carie Crone, Ed Dennis

STATEMENT OF THE SUNSHINE LAW

NOTIFICATION THAT THIS MEETING IS ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

Eddie Dennis – he explained the list of projects that is put together every year with cost estimates. Some items get completed and others stay on the list and work their way up. The first two are routine and done every year and they are the 2021 and 2022 road programs; we've always budgeted about \$800,000 for the year except for 2020 when we took a break. The creek dredging is project 3 and it's for our portion from the boat ramp towards Route 30 and the estimated the costs are \$55,000. A survey has been done and permit documents and plans would be needed to be done.

Kim – hopes this stays in the budget

Steve – asked about the costs for phasing the project. Will we come up to Turner Cove? Will there be any pushback from the boaters?

Eddie – it would be nice to get it all done in one time, but he explained the process and the benefits of phasing for financial reasons and you may not be able to do the project all at one time. The State gives you the parameters. This is a long process and it's good we started it.

Nick – have we researched for any grants and have other towns received anything?

Eddie – there is no funding for dredging. It's a major demand down here. The State is doing its own and we've been looking. This would also be done during the off season.

Items 4, 5 and 6 (phase 4 of the Streetscape improvements; Shore Road flood mitigation and Faunce Landing Road shared use path) already have grant applications applied for and he explained what could be done until we find out if we receive the grants. He then explained each one. He believes 5 is very important to get going. Item 6 is a large one and it came out of the study that was done. A shared use path was suggested to be created from Shore Road down to the boat ramp. If we don't get a grant you don't want to do this project, since it's a very expensive project. The design and permitting was put into the budget for now until we see if we receive the grant. Item 7 is a major sub-division on New York Avenue creating about 16 generous size single-family lots. The market is trending and it might be a good time to resurrect this project. Items 8 and 9 are general engineering costs for infrastructure assessment and mapping updates for the sewer and drainage systems. They are very old and need to be updated. We need to wait until we see what funding is going to be available.

Jessica – explained the capital budget and the projects that would go have to be in it. We don't need a decision now. There is another budget meeting coming up.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Laughlin – we met last Friday and they would like \$2,000 more than last year, which would be from \$68,000 to \$70,000. Some of the maintenance costs will go up because in the past they were able to do some things themselves, but with warranties on the new building, some they can't do and some of them are new and not able to do. Outside contractors will need to be brought in. Oxygen tanks are going to be needed, since they are expiring, so an amount is going to be needed for those too. It was mentioned putting \$10,000 in the budget. JR feels what they presented to him was reasonable and will make sure the money that they asked for to get tanks gets used for that. He told them that once the budget is passed, they need to purchase the items asked for and not to wait. They have applied for a grant to be able to purchase certain equipment. A number was submitted for a new pumper truck and his recommendation is not to purchase that, but to spend a little bit more and get maybe a dual-purpose truck and not a full aerial. His fear is that the aerial they have now is 33 years old and the fact is if something happens to that one in a year or down the road and it's inoperable, then we won't be able to provide the public safety that the town needs. It's that simple. We are not buying a Cadillac of trucks, but something that we could use more. A committee on the fire department will be made to look into it and he suggests that Nick be put on that committee as well. He really stressed that a dual-purpose truck should be purchased, especially after talking to people in the community. He thinks the city should budget each year; plan to buy one now and then in a couple of years buy another one. This way it's not so much a burden. A truck's life is 25 years.

Jessica – she received a request from Ed Vincent from Fire Safety. Their budget is \$3,000 for the last several years, but he asked for \$7,500 this year to get some furniture. She didn't recommend making it higher.

Steve – questioned why all the lights are out at the Ambulance Squad building and asked JR to look into it. He'd like to see them fixed.

POLICE DEPT

Chief Laughlin – asked for \$9,000 for his regular budget and most of it is for training. For the last 20 years, there has not been put enough in the police training budget line, so he went from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The other items that went up were: were medical supplies and firearms costs. They plan on selling the military vehicles once the weather gets warmer. He wants to purchase one new police car and one new pickup. We have flooding issues and it's getting worse so we need it to

carry cones and barriers for when we have to close streets off. Research was done and they came up with a Ford. It will be a traffic safety vehicle looking like a police car. It would be a solid color, which will be better for resale value. He's looking at a crew cab type of truck. The cost of the vehicles is \$100,000. The body worn cameras are five years old and are warrantied until June. The bad thing is they're expensive, but the technology has come a long way and it is cloud based now, so there is no burning of discs and man power to do it. He wants to stay with the same company. The cost of that is \$100,000. The State is allocating money for cameras, but he doesn't know how much the city will be getting.

Jessica – explained the vehicles can go in the capital budget. We were able to use the funds from the State and has a little bit left over from the capital budget for cars last year and that can go towards police equipment. Not knowing about the cameras and grants going to be received, it is wiser to put the full \$100,000 into the capital budget for them and then depending on the grant funding, if we don't have to spend it all, it can stay in that account and use in 2022 for a police car or something else. She suggested putting the \$100,000 in the budget for cameras and a little less for the vehicles, maybe \$80-90,000.

Steve – asked about the tag readers

J.R. – we have two and he thinks that's fine for now

Eddie – some of these items are in the temporary budget. One is the 2019 road program change order. One is the Opti-com, which is a GPS preemptive system for the fire department to go through signalized intersections at NJ Avenue and Rt. 9; NJ Avenue and Mill Road; Route 30 & Mill and Route 30 & Rt. 9. It includes equipment to go into their vehicles and installation for the traffic signals. This comes to \$95,000. In the future, the police can outfit their vehicles as well. Another item is for the firehouse contractor and the extra time he was out there to finish the job for reasons out of his control, which are called general conditions and that comes to \$36,000. The Pitney Road sidewalk change order and the final change order for the bulkhead work is in the year's budget at \$6,700 for the bulkhead. The last one is to close the firehouse out, so we estimated \$10,000.

Jessica – went over a sheet that was supplied by the auditor. We had a shortage of revenues of over \$156,000. Most years we have an excess, but we aren't the only towns this happened to. The State will allow a three-year average, but we shouldn't take full advantage of it. 2021 may not be much better either. We haven't received any increase in state aid either. We can only raise money three ways: tax dollars, surplus (if we are fortunate) and general revenue that comes in. She then went over the budget proposal with all departments shown and explained some of the changes.

AMBULANCE

Their budget will be the same as last year.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn – Councilwoman Cain– second – Councilman Larotonda
All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 3-4-2021