CITY OF ABSECON
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CITY COUNCIL

BUDGET MEETING

FEBRUARY 12TH, 2026 6:00 PM

MINUTES

FLAG SALUTE – Mayor

ROLL CALL
PRESENT: Councilmembers Alex Clark, Linda Evans, Nick LaRotonda, Mike Sykes, and Council President Richard DeRose
ABSENT: Councilmembers Steve Light and Christine Parker
ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Marrone, and City Clerk Carie Crone, Administrator Jessica Snyder, Chief Laughlin, Captain Mazer and Lt. Huenke.

STATEMENT OF THE SUNSHINE LAW & NOTIFICATION THAT THIS MEETING IS ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED

WORK MEETING AGENDA

2026 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Council President DeRose: This is a working meeting. We have been going through all the departments budgets, meeting with the Auditor and discussing in Finance Meetings. We'll start with the City Engineer to give an update on Capital Projects for 2026, then Councilman Clark will review each of the individual budgets.

ENGINEERING
Nick DiCosmo: Engineering Capital Projects is a working list of potential projects for 2026. There are some projects that were looked at in the past and then some new ones added. The material provided to Council details each project with a brief description.

1. *2026 General Engineering:* $50,000 – same as last year. Annual engineering budget for miscellaneous tasks, reviews, meetings, grant applications, etc.

2. *2026 Road Program:* Projected budget of $260,000. Took about what the City budgeted last year and split it up between some additional funding that would go towards Franklin Blvd. This would be to cover engineering design cost, construction and inspection cost for various

roadway and drainage improvements for the road that are decided.

3. *Roadway Improvements to Franklin Blvd.*: We received $231,023 NJDOT Funding and have $50,000 left over from the 2025 Budget, then an additional $140,000 in this year's budget will be $421,023.
Councilman Clark – Would the $140,000 be to finish, I know we got the grant to cover half of it, but what is the $140,00 for?
N. DiCosmo – With the $140,000 making the total project budget $421,023, that wouldn't get us to the end, it would get us to three or four blocks of Franklin Blvd. if we do a mill and pave.
Mayor Marrone – My thoughts and I've said in meetings is, and I know we have grants – we can always go back out for those – for $140,000 in a budget we really don't have to only get 3 blocks done isn't going to fix the problem on Franklin Blvd.
N. DiCosmo – We can retool that too, to see prioritize using the $231,023 NJDOT funding and the $50,000 from last year's budget – you don't want to lose that funding.

4. *Highland Blvd. Pedestrian Safety Improvements:* Took the estimate of constructing sidewalk over the whole length of Highland Blvd. and then factored in some additional cost to do the island, along with engineering cost. Total came to $823,000, we received NJDOT Funding of $663,000 so would require an additional $160,000 to complete that project, which would consist of sidewalk from New Jersey Avenue all the way up to Morton and includes engineering and inspection.

5. *2027 Road Program:* What we've been typically doing in the recent years is to budget $50,000 for the Road Program so we can get started on it early. We didn't do that this year, the money got budgeted but we didn't get started.

6. *Municipal Building Parking Lot Improvements:* $190,000. Lloyd had requested and we agree the parking lot is in poor condition. This would cover engineering design cost and construction and inspections costs for repaving.

7. *Shore Rd. Flood Mitigation Roadway Improvements:* $85,000, that money was budgeted last year, so that will get us through the end of construction engineering support.

8. *Absecon Estates Drainage Improvements:* IBank funding, no money needed from the 2026 Budget. $225,000 grant money for design and $2,000,000 of principle forgiveness money for the remaining cost.

9. *Hobart Avenue Drainage Improvements:* IBank Funding - $235,000 received. We'll get started on design and construction money will come later.

10. *City-Wide Sanitary Sewer:* $1,540,000 IBank Funding to do cleaning, televising and design of pump station improvements.

11. *Multi-Use Sports Facility Pole Barn Structure:* $470,000, submitting grant so NJDOT funding still to be determined. Received $80,000 in grant funding last year. Total project budget $275,000, that would be everything including inspections.
Councilman Sykes – Does that $275,000 also include electric or just the structure?
N. DiCosmo – It's the structure, concrete and the turf.

12. *Crestview Ave. Resurfacing & Traffic Calming Improvements:* Milling and Paving for the full length and installing speed humps. $470,000, Grant to be determined, estimated $70,000 for engineering and inspection in case we do get the grant money then we would be able to

move forward with the design this year.

13. *Shore Road and Church Street Pedestrian Safety Crosswalk:* There is a cost share with DOT, they'll cover design and construction and then they require a 25% match. For a contract that may cost about $60,000 you would have to contribute $15,000 and that would be to install high visibility crosswalk markings and the flashing beacons at the intersection of Shore and Church.

14. *Pedestrian Crosswalk Safety Improvements:* Budgeted previously, $550,460 from NJDOT funding and $55,000 from 2025 budget.

15. *Crestview Avenue Drainage Easement:* $10,000 budgeted in 2025, we just never got to it.

N. DiCosmo – The other items on the list have been on there for quite some time, so I just left them on.

16. *Faunce Landing Road Shared Use Path:* Pedestrian and Bicycle safety improvements.

17. *Heritage Park Restroom Building:* Construction of ADA-Compliant restroom building in Heritage Park.

18. *City Hall Restroom Renovations:* Eligible for CDBG grant funding, we applied for it this past year, but didn't receive the grant funding.

19. *City Hall Rear Entrance Improvements:* Started with that but switched over to the front entrance improvements. Eligible for CDBG grant funding.

20. *Crestview Avenue Parking Improvements:* Repaving of the parking lot off Crestview Ave. and to remove the trees that are disturbing the parking lot.

21. & 22. – *Sanitary Sewer Improvements* – We don't really need to focus on those because we have the NJ IBank funding for those.

Council President DeRose – Five of these projects are costing the City nothing. #'s 7-10 and #14.

COUNCILMAN CLARK – FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Councilman Clark: Shared that he, Council President DeRose and CFO Kristen met with each Office to get an idea of their budget requests.

- *Admin.:* Budget for 2025 - $65,000. Spent $54,000. 2026 budget requesting $75,000. Cause for increase is updating the Website. **J. Snyder** – We're pricing out right now, but $10,000 would probably be appropriate, received a quote last year for $8,000.

- *Mayor & Council:* Budget for 2025 - $3,000. Spent $1,534. We left that budget the same at $3,000.

- *Clerk's Office:* Budget for 2025 - $8,500. Spent $4,693. 2026 Budget brought down to $6,500. However, the budget for Elections is increasing $2,500 so the money is basically just getting moved there.

- *CFO – Finance:* Budget for 2025 - $14,500. Spent $11,512, a lot of that has to do with contracts. 2026 – going to keep the $14,500.

- *IT Tech:* Came in asking for $110,000, last year spent $96,565. Decided to raise her up to $118,000 because with quotes that she received, with this budget we can get the cameras put up in Heritage Park, another camera over at Faunce Landing and a camera down New Jersey Ave. And with these new capabilities these cameras will have, it will save the Police Department a lot of time.
  Chief Laughlin – Might also be able to ad LPR and facial recognition to the cameras on New Jersey Avenue and Faunce Landing.

- *Tax Collector:* Spent $4,844 in 2025. Requesting $8,000 for this year. **J. Snyder** – I need to stay at the $8,000 this year since last year with the no spending, even though it says I bought supplies – it was the paper we print the bills – regular office supplies I didn't put in for this year. And some of our contractual things we have we never know, like our tax sale cost could increase depending on how many get sent to tax sale.

- *Tax Assessor:* Budget for 2025 $7,000. Spent $5,592. Staying the same for 2026.

- *Professional Services:* Annual Audit - $25,000. Legal Services - $100,000 last year only spent $52,000. 2026 Budget - $75,000. Prosecutor was brought down a thousand making that budget $25,000. Public Defender – stays flat. For Professional Services were cutting $28,600.00

- *Municipal Court:* 2025 Budget - $11,500. Spent - $5,543. Budget is down in 2026 due to the assistant getting paid through salaries.

- *Planning Board:* 2025 Budget - $20,000. Spent - $11,402.93. 2026 Budget - $24,500. Increased in 2025 due to work needed to be done on Affordable Housing Plan by the Professional Consultant. 2026 increase is due to $20,000 for Master Plan and $1,500 for Affordable Housing Professional Consultant.

- *Zoning Board:* 2026 Budget consistent with past years at $1,000.

- *Construction:* 2026 Budget - $32,500, increased due to Professional Consulting going up to $25,00, due to using third-parties.

- *Fire Dept.*: Chief comes in every year asking for two things – a Tahoe or Suburban, claiming the vehicle he has now is too small, and $1.1 million for a fire truck. He understands we don't have the money for a fire truck, but do need to start coming up with a plan because at some point that truck is not going to be compliant. Only asking for and $8,000 increase to the budget, most of it being maintenance for the building and for new members, education, training and gear.

- *Public Works:* Increased the budget from 2025 to 2026 by $10,000 due to adding some recreation equipment – slides that were broken and rusted. And now Lloyd lines all the fields, which is easier, but with that comes a cost.

- *Recreation* – No increases, everyone is staying the same. Budget pays for insurance and uniforms.

- *Public Events* – 2026 Budget - $53,500. Didn't meet with any of the groups, just went off of last year.

- *Uniform Fire Safety* - $3,500 – covers office supplies, computer supplies and fire prevention equipment.

- *Maintenance of Vehicles* - $125,000. Prices are going up and vehicles are getting older.

Police Department – 2025 Budget - $117.000. Spent $109,896.19. 2026 Budget - $119,000. Requesting two cars. In 2024 we didn't order any cars. In 2025 ordered two cars, but cars didn't come till 2026. If ordered for 2026 will probably come around November. Prices change fast every year, $52,000 for cars and $20,000 for the uplift kits. **Chief Laughlin** - $75,000 a car. Some stuff from the older cars can be re-used, but some that have already been re-used several times can't be used. I haven't used my whole budget since I've been Chief. Haven't gone over on my over-time budget. Pedestrian crashes take up a lot of manpower and we had a few of those at the end of the year, so it was cut a little closer then normal. **A. Clark** – With the hiring of the new Officers should now lower overtime. **Lt. Huenke** – Attorney General every year required mandatory training, which also contributes to having overtime. **Chief Laughlin**– We have also brought training in-house. **R. DeRose** – In 2024 $8,000 in other equipment, which was in-line to what is always budgeted, but in 2025 $10,000 increase was requested, but only $7,000 was spent. What is the other equipment line item? **Captain Mazer** – I believe the was a request from Retiree Ray Adams, so not quite sure. **A. Clark** – Two big request, two new cars - $150,000. What is the game plan for the older cars, spoke about possibly starting to let some Officers take them home. **Chief Laughlin** – Detective Bureau cars, 3 Detective sharing 2 cars and they're 2008 and 2010, we're going to cycle those out. By the time the budget passes, the window to order cars will be closed so we'll order in October when it reopens and see those cars in 2027. **A. Clark** – And the other ask is a package that contains a new drone and tasers. **Chief Laughlin** – The Attorney General lifted all the rules on taser last year so it's friendlier for us to carry them. Believes we need to move into giving the Officers taser. **A. Clark** – Is it something that has to get done in 2026 or can it wait till 2027 – like what's on your priority list. **Chief Laughlin** – the drone and taser are from the same company and we got a package deal. Next round of body worn cameras will come from that company and then everything will integrate together. Taser are $7,000 and have expirations, this would be a 5-year plan with drone and tasers. The company will replace the taser once in those five years and the cartridge use is also included. **M. Sykes** – Once used is the taser done or just the cartridge? **Chief Laughlin** – Just need to replace the cartridge. **M. Sykes** – and what do they cost? **Captain** – The didn't break it down quite that way, but definitely an additional cost. Chief Laughlin – Same program with the drone, they will replace that sometime during the 5-year period also. We're get to keep the one we have and we'll get another drone. Our current drone was entry level and is out of warranty. Looking to get 12 tasers and 1 drone. **A. Clark** – would you be able to stretch a car and do one car this year and package? It's $165,000 over 5 years**. Chief Laughlin** – its $40,000 a year.

ADJOURNMENT

Motioned to adjourn: Councilman Clark; Seconded: Councilman Sykes
All in Favor, None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Carie A. Crone, RMC
Carie A. Crone, City Clerk

Approved: 3-19-26