

**APRIL 28, 2021**  
**BUDGET MEETING**

The Budget Meeting of the Hope Township Committee convened at 3:00 P.M. at the Hope Township Municipal Building with the following members present: Mayor Timothy McDonough, Deputy Mayor Christopher John Kruk and Committeeman Terry Urfer; Municipal Clerk, Robin Keggan, RMC; Deputy Clerk, Zondra Belstra; Kathleen Reinalda, CFO and Anthony Ardito, Auditor.

**FLAG SALUTE AND SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Under the provisions of the “Open Public Meetings Act”, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by publishing notice in the New Jersey Herald and the Star Gazette and by posting notices in the Hope Post Office and on the Township Web and Bulletin Boards.

**ELECTRONIC MEETING STATEMENT**

In addition, as a result of the State of Emergency issued by Governor Murphy, the Township has provided the pertinent information for residents to participate in, or listen to, this meeting via Zoom if they do not attend in person. The public will be muted for the meeting but will be able to participate by raising their hand with the use of the appropriate button to do so on their electronic device during the public session portion of the meeting. Questions may also be submitted to the Municipal Clerk by 4 PM up to one day **PRIOR** to the meeting to be read into the record. The public is obligated to disclose their full name, residence address and email address in any question/statement sent to the Municipal Clerk. Any question not meeting the above-described timeframe will be handled at the next available Township Committee meeting.

**Roll call: Mr. Urfer- present                      Mr. Kruk – present                      Mayor McDonough- present**

Discussions were had about the upcoming budget. Some key points:

**Court Budget:**

Discussion was had regarding the court as it pertains to the Township and the loss of money. It was determined that this should be addressed during the course of the year and monitored from month-to-month to see what can be done to help the situation.

**General Budget:**

At the start of budget discussions, and using the information at hand from where the last budget discussion was ended, the tax rate was a 1.5 cent (4.1%) increase – meaning a \$46 annual increase on the average \$300,000 home. Included in this budget were the line items for the contributions to the HVFD, Blairstown Emergency and capital line items (DPW truck and money for backhoe).

Discussion took place centering around the Covid relief money that the municipality is supposed to be receiving in coming months. Mayor McDonough noted that many towns are using the anticipated Covid relief monies for volunteer services such as fire and EMS as these volunteer organizations were impacted by the virus and not able to fundraise as they normally do. Mr. Ardito noted that NO guidance has been given yet with how to spend that money and noted that the Committee needs to introduce their budget in May and adopt in June in order to avoid estimated tax bills as Warren County strikes their tax rate(s) in July. Mr. Ardito stated that the budget needed to be adopted without taking into account the Covid relief monies as there is no indication of when they will be received or how they can be spent. The monies, once received, will be entered into the budget via a Ch. 159.

Discussion took place regarding leasing a backhoe should the Township find they are in need of one before funding can be put in place. Ms. Reinalda noted that a leased backhoe can be done, provided it is

through a co-op. Most of the lease agreements have a term that allows the municipality to purchase the backhoe at the end of the lease agreement.

The Clerk noted that the township is in need of an updated website and phone system. Quotes were obtained and both should be able to be accomplished for around \$10,000. The Township committee agreed that both of these projects are high priority and took the monies needed from surplus in order to have these projects completed in 2021.

The tar and chip monies in the DPW budget were taken out (\$29,000). The hope is that once Covid monies are received, we can use these monies towards that line item. The removal of this line item allowed the Committee to keep the tax rate flat (zero increase) for 2021.

The \$1.25 Open Space tax which is currently in place was discussed. Mr. Urfer suggested he'd like input on that number and would get back to the committee with a number.

Seeing there was no further budget business for tonight, this meeting of the Hope Township Committee was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. on a motion made by Mr. Urfer; seconded by Mr. Kruk. Motion carried. The regular work meeting commenced at 4:00 p.m. via the same Zoom call.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Keggan, RMC  
Municipal Clerk