

**MARCH 24, 2021**  
**BUDGET MEETING**

The Budget Meeting of the Hope Township Committee convened at 2:30 P.M. at the Hope Township Municipal Building with the following members present: Mayor Timothy McDonough, Committeeman Christopher John Kruk (via Zoom) and Deputy Mayor Terry. Also present were DPW Foreman Donald Whitmore (Zoom); Municipal Clerk, Robin Keggan, RMC; Deputy Clerk, Zondra Belstra; Kathleen Reinalda, CFO and Anthony Ardito, Auditor (Zoom).

**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. 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:

General Budget:

Mayor McDonough touched on the American Rescue Plan (Covid Relief) package and how the aid that the Township is expected to receive may play a role in the budget. As told to him by a member of the US Treasury in a conversation, the money can be put toward the annual donations made to the Township’s Fire Department and Blairstown Rescue Squad. Guidance is to arrive in New Jersey by May 10 (60 days from the date the President signed the bill). The State has 60 days to issue half of the funds. Second half of funds received t/b/d. This is all preliminary information. Mr. Ardito cautioned that taking these monies out of the “regular” budget may make it hard to re-institute them into the budget the following year due to the CAP.

Mr. Ardito noted that the \$14,000 over our appropriations CAP needed to be addressed.

Initial numbers for the budget – If the capital line items for the purchase of new DPW equipment in the amount of \$170,000 was taken out of the budget as well as the aid contributions to the HVFD and the Blairstown Emergency Squad, it would lead to a reduction in taxes of \$73 annually per average household. If you keep \$70,000 in the capital line item (to put toward the purchase of new DPW equipment), it would lead to a \$24 annual increase per average household. Mr. Kruk made note that perhaps the American Rescue Plan aid monies could be used towards the purchase of a new DPW pick-up truck since it is used for OEM purposes. Mayor McDonough made note to look into this further.

The amount needed to oil and stone Hissim, Foundry and Swayze Mill Park is \$21,700 per Mr. Whitmore’s quoted estimate.

Discussion took place regarding the purchase of a backhoe (DPW request). Mr. Urfer suggested using some of the \$105,000 earmarked to be put into the capital line to purchase the pick-up truck, and then apply the balance left over to additional monies put into next year's budget for the purchase of one. He suggested purchasing one in January 2022. Ms. Reinalda noted that this could not be accomplished in January 2022 as it would need to go through the entire budget process before the purchase could be started as the purchase would not yet be funded.

Discussion took place regarding the FEMA funds to be received from Storm Orlena. Not sure of anything regarding this money at this point. Ms. Reinalda noted that any monies received will more than likely need to be put back into the appropriate line item for which the expense was submitted (i.e., payroll and DPW).

Mr. Ardito's audit fee will be split with the NW Municipal Court.

The monies that the Township is responsible for towards the Community Center grant (\$37,500) will be taken from the Open Space account. Mr. Urfer stated he would speak to the Agricultural Advisory Board to ascertain their thoughts on this and the Open Space tax rate this year.

At the end of the budget discussion, Mr. Ardito noted that leaving in the HVFD and BES donations and putting \$105,000 into the capital line for the DPW requested purchases would raise the tax rate 1.5 cents (4.1%) which would equate to an average tax increase of \$46/year for the average household. Mr. Kruk noted he'd like to come in at flat – to 2%.

Seeing there was no further budget business for this afternoon, at 3:45 p.m. Mayor McDonough asked for a 15 minute adjournment and let the public in attendance know that they could re-join the Zoom meeting at 4 p.m. for the work session portion. A motion made by Mr. Urfer; seconded by Mr. Kruk. Motion carried to adjourn until 4 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin L. Keggan, RMC  
Municipal Clerk