

**LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS BUDGET WORKSHOP
SEPTEMBER 28, 2022**

Attendance:

- a. The following were in attendance: Supervisors Gary Neights, Cara Coless, Janine Darby, Peter MacFarland, and Jason Sorgini; E.J. Mentry, Township Manager; Susan Law, Accounting Manager; Mike Mrozinski, Community Development Director; Denise Walsh, Community Relations Coordinator; Michael Rohlfing, Fire Marshal & Emergency Management Coordinator; Kristin Maas, Human Resources Director; Joseph Chillano, Public Works Director; Jane Delaney, Parks & Recreation Director; Michael Jackson, Chief of Police; and William Hopkins, Police Lieutenant.
- b. The workshop convened at 4:55 p.m.

1. Budget Discussion

A) 2023 Proposed Budget Overview

- i) Mr. Mentry explained that the various department heads would be presenting their proposed capital projects for 2023 and major highlights from their operating budgets. Following the presentations, Mr. Mentry would lead a further discussion on the overall budget. He noted that the initial draft budget contains no changes in tax rates and includes all reasonable department requests, anticipating deliberation and decision by the Board. He thanked the staff for their work on the budget.

B) Fire Marshal & Emergency Management

- i) Mr. Rohlfing listed his 2023 capital requests which include a 500-gallon potable water container on a trailer (water buffalo); a drone; portable radios; a Continuity of Operations site; and three floodgates. He explained their uses:
 - (1) The water buffalo would be used to provide potable water for residents with wells in the event of a power outage or for others in an emergency affecting the water supply. The drone would be a useful tool in missing person searches, fire investigations, flood events, and damage assessment surveys. In the event of an emergency/disaster affecting the Township Building, the Continuity of Operations site would allow Township operations to relocate and resume with little down time. The alternate site would provide redundant computer backup. The floodgates would be used to close roadways for emergencies, such as flooding, snow/ice or downed trees.
 - (a) It was suggested that the continuity of operations be part of a larger technology plan. Staff was asked for a cost comparison of site options, including a breakout for computer backup costs.
 - (b) There was discussion about appropriate locations for the floodgates.
- ii) Mr. Rohlfing noted that his operating budget included expenses for a proposed deputy fire marshal position.

C) Parks and Recreation

- i) Ms. Delaney provided a summary of projects which had been deferred that are now completed or are moving forward: Park fence repairs, walking path repairs, upgraded water fountain installation, tree planting and footbridge replacement. She noted that the Parks

and Recreation Board amended the Capital Budget to support projects recommended in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plan. County funding assistance will be sought for some of the projects.

- ii) Parks and Recreation Capital project requests include a woods mower; utility vehicle (gator); towable light tower; and plantings for stormwater basin management.
- iii) Ms. Delaney noted fee schedule increases are recommended to offset higher salaries needed to retain and attract camp counselors and increased supplies and maintenance costs.

D) Community Development

- i) Mr. Mrozinski noted that with the anticipated adoption of the Township's Comprehensive Plan, a next step will be the revision of the Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances. This will be a multi-year process requiring significant staff, legal and engineering resources.
- ii) Department capital requests include a replacement vehicle for the Code Enforcement Officer in 2027; an electric vehicle is recommended.
 - (1) There was discussion on the installation and availability of electric vehicle chargers.
- iii) He reviewed anticipated new construction.
- iv) A change to the fee schedule for plumbing permits based on cost of construction was recommended, as was an increase to the annual business license fee.

E) Public Works

- i) Mr. Chillano outlined his 2023 capital requests: Replacement of a 1995 dump truck with plow, spreader and anti-icing unit; Bonnell replacement plow; corrugated metal pipe (CMP) lining using an innovative epoxy resin liner; gunite work; and road reconstruction.
 - (1) It was suggested to include a contingency to complete more CMP repairs using Rescue Act funds.
- ii) Notable increases to the operating budget are vehicle repair, supplies, road salt, traffic light repairs, and fuel costs

F) Police

- i) Chief Jackson presented the Police Department 2023 capital and operating budgets and personnel requests.
- ii) Capital requests include replacement of two police vehicles; an SUV hybrid for training/surveillance; and two license plate readers.
- iii) Personnel requests include an additional police officer and a civilian crisis intervention/social services liaison.
 - (1) Chief Jackson said grant funding is being sought for the license plate readers and liaison position.
 - (2) There was discussion regarding the role and responsibilities of the liaison.
- iv) Due to costs associated with inflation, proposed operating budget increases include the uniform and clothing, ammunition and supplies, contracted services and minor equipment. An additional cost will be the utilization of the county's DNA testing of evidence.

G) General Discussion

- i) Mr. Mentry presented the 2023 technology budget which includes software increases and computer, laptop, and printer replacements in accordance with the capital equipment replacement schedule. Also included are new laptops/tablets for the Board of Supervisors, and an estimated replacement cost for a new digital marquee at the entrance to the municipal complex. The budget also includes an allocation for new HR/Accounting software, with the first year rollout to be covered by rescue plan funds.

- ii) Mr. Mentry presented an overview of the projected benefits, insurance, and staffing costs in 2023. He noted that we have received renewal rates for Workmen's Compensation and Property/Liability insurance, but are still awaiting renewal rates for health, dental, disability, life, and unemployment insurances.
 - iii) Mr. Mentry reviewed current staffing levels in all departments and proposed changes for 2023, which include the addition of a part-time administrative assistant/receptionist; a full-time technology specialist to be shared with the Police and Administration departments; addition of a part-time employee to the Finance Department; replacement of the Special Projects Coordinator position, which could be upgraded to an Assistant Township Manager position; replacement of the Permit Coordinator position while retaining the retiring Permit Coordinator for the first half of the year on a part-time basis; addition of a contracted Deputy Fire Marshal; addition of a full-time Park & Recreation Coordinator position; and the additions to the Police Department already presented by Chief Jackson. No changes proposed for the Public Works Department. The total staffing changes result in the addition of four full-time employees and a total of 5.5 FTE for the first half of the year, reducing to 5.0 for the second half of the year.
 - (1) Brief discussion ensued regarding the staffing changes with the Board requesting additional information detailing the total cost of the staffing changes inclusive of wages and benefits. The Board also suggested converting the part-time administrative assistant/receptionist position to a full-time position.
 - iv) Mr. Mentry reviewed additional highlights of the General Fund operating budget, including an increase in the training budget; increases in legal fees for the ordinance updates and union contract negotiations; other consulting increases for HR consulting and a contracted grant writer; fuel increases; storm damage repair increases; tree maintenance increases; and a budgeted item for open space preservation.
 - v) Mr. Mentry provided an overview of all remaining funds and the overall fund balance summary, including budgeted interfund transfers and the projected deficit. He also provided a summary of the 2022 year-end projections resulting in an anticipated surplus of approximately \$623,000. Brief discussion ensued regarding a potential tax increase and the impact on the average property in the Township.
 - vi) After discussion, the Board directed the Township Manager to make the requested updates to the budget in advance of the next workshop, which would include discussion on the proposed staffing changes, increase in Fire Department funding, library funding, American Rescue Plan Funding, and capital requests.
- H) Public Comment – None.
- I) Adjournment
- i) The budget workshop was adjourned at 10:30 PM. The next workshop is scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 4:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

E.J. Mentry, Secretary