Jim Thorpe Borough Council
November 13, 2024
Budget Work Session Meeting

Meeting called to order at 6:37 p.m. by President Gregory Strubinger with the pledge of allegiance and moment of silence for the armed forces, first responders and their families.

Roll Call of Members

Police Chief Schatz-absent	Mayor Cinicola-absent	Mike Yeastedt
Borough Manager Sterner	Connor Rodgers-absent	Ted LaRizzio
Borough Secretary Klotz	Tom Chapman-absent	Sydney Wernett
Solicitor Nanovic-absent	Joanne Klitsch	Greg Strubinger

Public Comment
None, no one was present.

Proposed 2025 Budget
Water Fund – Manager Sterner explained Borough Council was issued updated draft Budgets. The Borough received the 2025 Premiums for the insurance policy. Health Insurance was reduced from 13% in Draft 1 to 10% in Draft 2. Salaries have been updated to reflect this change as well. Greg Strubinger asked where the Administrative salaries come from. Manager Sterner explained the Utilities Secretary's salary comes from Water, Sewer, and Sanitation. The remaining staff's salary comes from General, Water, Sewer, and Sanitation. A percentage comes out of each fund.
Manager Sterner explained the ESRI GIS software mapping has to be added. It takes three years to complete each Utility. It's currently budgeted in Sewer and needs to be removed. The insurances were adjusted in this Draft. Once the mapping is added into the budget, the fund will still be ok. The cash balance estimates on the cover page have been updated. The DRBC Water Allocation Permit, which is being voted on at tomorrow night's meeting, is due in 2025. Entities must apply a year in advance for this permit. The grand total is about $19,000.00.
Greg Strubinger asked if the Mapping could be paid from the Capital Reserve Fund. Manager Sterner explained it could be paid from there, but whenever any equipment breaks, funds are needed for that. When that happens, it comes from the Capital Reserve Fund.
Greg Strubinger asked about the status of the new Water Meters. Manager Sterner explained the Borough is applying for funding through the LSA Statewide Grant for new customer meters and new generators. The Borough will apply for Federal Funding for a new water tank.
Mike Yeastedt asked if the CBDG Grant is an expense. Manager Sterner explained that money is budgeted for the Borough to pay the contractor to install the equipment that is not covered by the grant. Mike Yeastedt said the Grant money is not being shown as an income. Manager Sterner explained the County pays directly.

Sewer Fund – Manager Sterner explained she did not change the cover sheet for Draft 2. Removing the ESRI GIS mapping from the Sewer Fund, it will increase the remaining funds by $10,111.00. Ted LaRizzio asked based on what is presented, would there be an increase in Sewage billing. Manager Ster explained yes, billing would increase unless Borough Council is able to find anything additional to pull out of the current draft. Greg Strubinger explained the Borough is supposed to be looking into ensuring the funds are available to repay the Pennvest Loan.
Manager Sterner explained operating expenses increase every year. Mike Yeastedt said he would like to see billing be raised no higher than 5%. Manager Sterner explained, under 427.610 General Construction Contracts, manhole and main spot repairs can be reduced to

$65,000.00. Under 492.038 the SCADA computer system can be reduced. 427.703 New Equipment can be reduced as well.
Greg Strubinger asked about the Center Avenue Water Main Project. Manager Sterner explained it is targeted to start next year and has already been budgeted for.

Liquid Fuels – Manager Sterner explained some of the road paving projects have been taken out of Liquid Fuels and have been put into the General Fund for the roads that don't qualify for Liquid Fuels. Greg Strubinger asked how much has been budgeted for paving. Manager Sterner explained $150,000.00 from the Liquid Fuels Fund and $25,000.00 from the General Fund. There are more roads listed than funds available to complete each project.

Asa Packer Mansion – Manager Sterner explained the insurance is all included in the Mansion Fund and none in the General Fund. Secretary Klotz explained she increased the supplies on the budget by $1,000.00. Payroll was fixed for the lead guide position. Under repair & Inspections, lawn care was increased for the entire operating season, rather than have the Borough workers maintain lawn care. Secretary Klotz asked if Borough Council would be interested in raising ticket prices. Adult prices would be raised to $15.00 and Senior prices would be raised to $13.00. This would increase budgeted ticket sales by 15% and would have the mansion come out with a positive rather than be in a deficit. Greg Strubinger asked how much money would the full-time position cost. Secretary Klotz explained 60% comes from Mansion funds (about $22,000.00) and 40% comes from the General Fund (about $14,000.00). Greg Strubinger expressed his concerns over adding an additional Full-Time position. He felt it shouldn't be added until the Facilities Projects are completed. Manager Sterner explained the Administrative staff is stretched thin. Having this position filled will help with event support and take much of the daily operations off of Secretary Klotz. Mike Yeastedt explained he has been helping out with the Facilities Projects and other projects going on throughout the Borough. Manager Sterner explained the Borough has numerous grants and the paperwork that comes with it.

Greg Strubinger asked about the proposed new/expanded items sheet for the General Fund. He explained he is against proactive code enforcement, especially when it could be a potential tax increase. Mike Yeastedt explained there have been numerous instances where property owners are completing work without getting proper permits and it continues to increase. Having code enforcement increased would help prevent this. Manager Sterner asked how the rest of Borough Council felt about having a proactive Code Enforcement Officer versus reactive. Joanne Klitsch said she sees the importance of having someone being proactive, but does not want to see the taxes increase. Mike Yeastedt discussed the benefits of having a proactive Code Enforcement Officer and Greg Strubinger discussed the benefits of having a reactive Code Enforcement Officer. Greg Strubinger asked about the Events Planning position. Manager Sterner explained this position would help assist with the various Borough events, as well as the downtown events. This person would also assist Chief Schatz with the downtown events as well. Manager Sterner asked Borough Council what they would like to do with the proactive Code Enforcement. She reminded them that this would help prevent blight throughout the Borough. The part-time police and part-time code enforcement position is only budgeted for six months. This is because the current Parking/Code Enforcement Officer will be going into the Academy and upon completion, would be coming back to fill this dual role. Before the current Parking & Code Enforcement office leaves, another individual would be trained an brought on full-time to assist with both Parking and Code Enforcement. Currently, the Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer works 12 hours a week. Manager Sterner asked Borough Council if they would be ok with having her work 15 hours a week, with those 3 extra hours a week going towards Code Enforcement.

Manager Sterner then asked borough Council what their thoughts were on budgeting the 101 East 10th Street building. Once Memorial Hall is completed and the Administrative Staff and Police Department moved over there, the building would need minor renovations. Manager Sterner explained currently the Administrative side of the building does not have an emergency exit. It also would need new paint and minor repairs prior to new tenants moving in. Ted LaRizzio recommended cutting the budgeted amount in half. Greg Strubinger recommended cutting it entirely from the budget until there is an interest in renting the building before making any improvements.

Sanitation Fund – Manager Sterner asked if Council saw anything in the Sanitation Fund or General Fund that could come out of be reduced. She explained that many items in the General Fund, Sanitation Fund, and Liquid Fuels Fund coordinate with the Streets Department. Mike Yeastedt asked about handicap curb cuts and if the Borough intends to do any. Manager Sterner said she wasn't sure. Mike Yeastedt asked how much is being looked to be cut. Manager Sterner explained anywhere between $300,000.00 to $400,000.00. She said currently, 436.450 Storm System Contracted Services is budgeted for $134,200.00. Mike Yeastedt explained the projects listed under that line item are important and need to be done. Manager Sterner asked about new equipment and rented equipment; could anything be reduced or cut. It was determined to remove the paver rental, remove handicap curb cuts, reduce the South Avenue Stormwater Project strictly to engineering in 2025 and construction in the following years, reduce street sweeping, reduce tree trimming, reduce the amount for the 9th Street Garage Roof Project, and reduce the amount budgeted to transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund.

General Fund – Manager Sterner asked if Borough Council felt 409.303 Project Legal Services should be lowered. Greg Strubinger said he doesn't recommend lowering it. The money budgeted for 101 East 10th Street is in 409.373 Maintenance and Repairs, 409.450 Contracted services, and 409.720 Capital Improvements was decided to be removed. Manager Sterner said line painting enforcement assist under 410.310 Professional Services could be removed. The Borough workers did it this past year. Greg Strubinger asked if 410.311 Fire Police Traffic Control was truly needed. Manager Sterner explained the PMVB grant covered it, and she doesn't recommend removing it. Greg Strubinger said he doesn't think the tax payers should have to pay for it. Manager Sterner explained it is a safety concern to not have them. Greg Strubinger again said the tax payers should not have to pay for this service and asked if the railroad would help contribute. Manager Sterner explained the railroad was contacted and never responded. Mike Yeastedt asked what ½ Fire Workstation was under 411.270. Manager Sterner explained that is a new computer for the fire chief's office in Memorial Hall. Mike Yeastedt said the South Avenue Stormwater 436.371 Contracted Services could be reduced based on earlier discussions. Manager Sterner said the planting project under 454.246 Shade Tree can be removed since the Borough still does not have a Shade Tree Committee. Secretary Klotz suggested removing what was budgeted for the Orchestrion under 492.031 General Capital Reserve Fund. She said she would look into grant funding to help offset the cost. Manager Sterner asked Mike Yeastedt if the Fire Department was Planning on applying for the digitalization of radios. He explained the Fire Department will be applying for grants and will need more than what is being budgeted for. Manager Sterner asked if Borough Council would like to pull what's budgeted to be transferred into the Capital Reserve Fund (492.010 Transfer to Capital Projects Fund). Mike Yeastedt asked if it could be reduced. Manager Sterner said what's budgeted for Comprehensive Plan/Ordinance Update could be removed.

Adjourn

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Sydney Wernett to **adjourn the meeting.** There were no comments. Motion carries 5-0. The meeting ended at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke Klotz
Borough Secretary