

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – March 4, 2024

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on March 4, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the Township Hall, 2600 Bayshore Road, Villas, New Jersey.

The Clerk announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act and that adequate notice of the meeting had been provided according to law.

The following members of Council were present for roll call taken by the Clerk:

- Councilmember Thomas Conrad
- Councilmember Kevin Coombs via phone
- Councilmember Roland Roy, Jr.
- Deputy Mayor David Perry
- Mayor Frank Sippel

Also present: Michael Laffey, Township Manager, David Stefankiewicz, Township Solicitor and Karen Fournier, Deputy Township Clerk

Work Session

Res. #2024-89 Introduction of 2024 Budget

Manager Laffey presented the attached 2024 Budget Message announcing a zero tax increase. He informed that the public hearing is scheduled for April 1st at 5:00 p.m. and the Budget Summary will be published in the Cape May Star & Wave.

Auditor Leon Costello, Ford, Scott & Associates, assured that the introduced 2024 Budget is very stable and well within the legal caps and complimented the Township on a solid Budget.

CFO Lauren Read thanked Leon Costello, Manager Laffey, all department heads and the finance team for their great efforts with the Budget.

Mayor Sippel commented on the large surplus and thanked everyone involved for their efforts with the Budget.

Councilmember Conrad thanked Lauren Read and all department heads on the Budget and voiced favor with the proposed zero tax increase.

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD		X	X				
COOMBS			X				
ROY			X				
PERRY			X				
SIPPEL	X		X				

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes – February 20, 2024

Res. #2024-90 Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$ 812,879.65

Res. #2024-91 Authorization for Refund of Taxes

Res. #2024-92 Issuance of Ice Cream Peddling and Ice Cream Salesman License for the Year 2024

Res. #2024-93 Authorization for the Payout of Accumulated Compensatory Time (S. Gellura \$4,892.04)

Res. #2024-94 A Resolution Authorizing the Bikes & Beer Cape May Brewing Bike Ride Event scheduled for September 21, 2024

Res. #2024-95 Approval for Run the Vineyards Willow Creek 5K Run Scheduled for April 14, 2024

Res. #2024-96 A Resolution Authorizing the Annual Escape the Cape Triathlon Scheduled for June 2, 2024

Res. #2024-97 Award New Jersey ESCNJ Cooperative #65MCESCCPS Bid #20/21-02 For Playground Pour In Place (PIP) Surfacing Materials and Installation for the Recreation Playground (\$149,737.50)

Res. #2024-98 Award New Jersey ESCNJ Cooperative #65MCESCCPS Bid #20/21-06 for Game Time Playground Equipment and Installation for the Recreation Playground (\$247,887.38)

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD	X		X				
COOMBS			X				
ROY		X	X				
PERRY			X				
SIPPEL			X				

Regular Agenda

Res. #2024-99 Approval of An Alcoholic Beverage Control Plenary Retail Consumption License Person To Person Transfer; License #0505-33-008-006; Ford Creek, LLC to Port Marina, Inc. This transfer has been advertised and no objections have been received.

	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD			X				
COOMBS			X				
ROY		X	X				
PERRY	X		X				
SIPPEL			X				

Administrative Reports

Treasurer

Public Comment – no comments

Council Comments

Councilmember Conrad voiced favor with infrastructure and park improvements in addition to a proposed zero tax increase, thanking Manager Laffey and all departments for effective government.

Councilmember Coombs thanked all parties responsible for keeping the taxes down.

Councilmember Roy echoed the above comments in favor of the Budget.

Mayor Sippel announced that Deputy Mayor Perry has decided not to run for re-election and thanked him for his dedicated service to the Township. Mayor Sippel also announced the upcoming Easter Egg Hunt & Spring Fling and the Rabies Clinic.

Deputy Mayor Perry commended all Township employees on a great job.

Closed Session

Res. #2024-100 Resolution Providing for a Meeting Not Open to the Public in Accordance with the Provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12. **Negotiations Update**

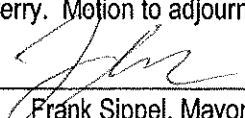
	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	RECUSE	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
CONRAD			X				
COOMBS			X				
ROY			X				
PERRY		X	X				
SIPPEL	X		X				

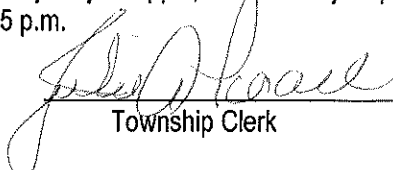
Council adjourned to Closed Session at 5:11 p.m.

Council returned to Open Session at 5:24 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Mayor Sippel, seconded by Deputy Mayor Perry. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.


 Frank Sippel, Mayor


 Township Clerk

Approved: *March 18, 2024*

**MANAGER'S ANNUAL BUDGET MESSAGE
2024 BUDGET INTRODUCTION – MARCH 4, 2024**

Council has received a copy of the proposed municipal budget for 2024 and I'm pleased to announce there is no tax increase. The tax levy is \$23,092,558.98 compared to last years \$23,021,351.43; an increase of \$71,207.55.

Our Assessed Valuation increased by 10,964,159.

We're below the legal Levy Cap by \$510,923.49 and below the legal Spending Cap by \$85,100.

The Township completed 2023 with a surplus of \$9,738,366.44; *the highest year-end surplus balance to date.*

The increase is largely due to new revenues brought in by occupancy taxes and interest earnings. The tax collection rate for 2023 was 99.06% which helped add over \$1.4M to the surplus. All other revenue collections exceeded projections for 2023 and brought in an additional \$1.4M.

Of that balance \$4,858,000 is being applied to this year's budget to help us keep the tax rate level. We feel confident using this amount of surplus because we're well within the parameters of our fund balance policy.

The total Assessed Valuation of Real Property is \$3,737,196,822 so approximately every \$373,719 of the Amount to be Raised by Taxation equals one cent on the tax rate.

This budget uses a 97.75% rate to compute the Reserve for Uncollected Taxes in 2024.

The public hearing is scheduled for April 1st at 5:00 p.m. A budget summary will be published in the Cape May Star & Wave. Copies will be available on the Township website as well as in the Clerk's office at Townhall.