

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – March 7, 2022

The meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey was held on March 7, 2022 at 7:00 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
Councilmember Roland Roy, Jr.
Deputy Mayor David Perry
Mayor Frank Sippel – via Polycom

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

Work Session

Manager Laffey presented the 2022 budget message (attached) which includes a zero tax increase.

Manager Laffey announced that the budget summary will be published in the Cape May Star & Wave and copies will be available on the Township website as well as in the Clerk's office at Townhall. The public hearing is scheduled for April 4, 2022 at 7 p.m.

Councilmember Conrad thanked CFO, Lauren Read, and the entire team for their efforts, and asked if the budget is sustainable in her opinion. Ms. Read confirmed that the proposed 2022 budget is a responsible budget.

Mayor Sippel thanked everyone for their hard work on the budget and reminded that Lower Twp. is ranked 19 in the State for the lowest tax rate.

Deputy Mayor Perry commended Lauren Read for a great job.

Lauren Read thanked Manager Laffey and all department heads and staff for their help with the budget.

Res. #2022-97 Introduction of 2022 Budget

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

Engineer Jim Orris – Update on Paving Project

Jim Orris, Remington & Vernick Engineers, gave Council an update on the 2021 Road Improvement Program that includes the Reconstruction of Sherriff Taylor Blvd – from Sandman Blvd to Townbank Rd- and Cresse Lane – from Route 9 to the pavement end.

Councilmember Conrad inquired about the timeframe for demolition and reconstruction. Mr. Orris informed that the process takes about 2 weeks.

Councilmember Roy asked if both roads will be done simultaneously.

Mr. Orris informed that Sherriff Taylor Blvd will likely be done first.

Consent Agenda

Approval of Minutes- Feb 23, 2022

Res. #2022-98 Authorization for the Payment of Vouchers \$501,472.72

Res. #2022-99 A Resolution Requesting Release of Revegetation and Restoration Guarantee for Dune Site Plan; Block 287, Lot 3, Escrow #P11-03-06

Res. #2022-100 Authorization for the Payout of Accumulated Compensatory Time (T. Shough \$4,233.85)

- Res. #2022-101 Authorization for the Payout of Accumulated Compensatory Time (A. Parker \$4,892.04)
- Res. #2022 102 A Resolution of the Township of Lower Canceling Certain Taxes per Agreement/Resolution #2020-272
- Res. #2022-103 Authorizing the Sale of Township of Lower Surplus No Longer Needed for Public Use on GOVDEALS Online Auction Website
- Res. #2022-104 A Resolution Amending Resolutions #2020-162 and #2020-288 Approving a Professional Service Contract with Marcus Karavan as Special Tax Counsel for the Morrell & Hansen Tax Appeal Case without Public Bidding
- Res. #2022-105 Authorization for Refund of Taxes
- Res. #2022-106 Bid Acceptance and Contract Award of Reconstruction of Wilson Drive, 1st Avenue, 2nd Avenue, 3rd Avenue Project (LT-C-014) to Fred M Schiavone Construction Inc.
- Res. #2022-107 Bid Acceptance and Award of Fertilizing Services for Various Locations for 2022, Option for 2023, to J&D Services LLC, D/B/A Spring Green
- Res. #2022-108 Bid Acceptance and Award of Landscaping Services for Various Locations for 2022, Option for 2023, to Bayshore Landscaping Inc.
- Res. #2022-109 Resolution to accept 335 E Pacific Avenue Block; 409, Lot 24.04 as Suitably Improved for Development
- Res. #2022-110 Authorizing the Application to the NJ Clean Energy Program; Community Energy Planning Grant Program

Ordinance #2022-02 – An Ordinance Adopting a Redevelopment Plan for the Fulling Mill Road Project as an Area In Need of Redevelopment' Identified as Block 410.01; Lots 82,83,84 & 87.01 in the Township of Lower, State of New Jersey and Amending the Zoning Map Accordingly. This is the first reading of this Ordinance. The second reading and public hearing has been scheduled for April 4, 2022.

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

Regular Agenda

- Res. #2022-111 Approval of an Alcoholic Beverage Control Plenary Retail Consumption License – Person to Person License Transfer and Place to Pocket Transfer – License #0505-33-012-011, from JEL Liquor LLC to PM Cape May, LLC
This transfer has been published and no objections have been received.

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

Manager's Report

Manager Laffey thanked Lauren Read and all department heads for their efforts with the budget.

Public Comment

Mike Rosenberg, Villas, voiced concerns about surfacing, fencing and security at Clem Mulligan Sports Complex. Councilmember Conrad addressed Mr. Rosenberg's concerns.

Council Comments

Councilmember Conrad thanked everyone again for a zero tax increase.

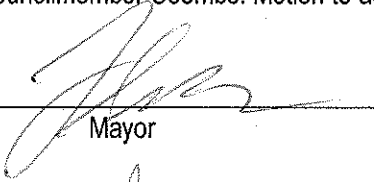
Councilmember Coombs thanked the budget team for a zero tax increase and voiced favor with the lifting of the mask mandate at school. He also reminded residents to vote at the Special Election.

Councilmember Roy expressed his appreciation to the budget team and reminded about Daylight Savings and replacing batteries in smoke detectors.

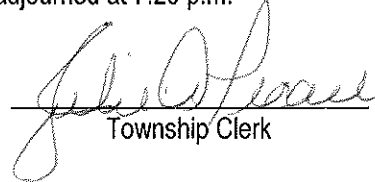
Deputy Mayor Perry reiterated his appreciation for a zero tax increase and gave a brief update on Bayshore Road.

Adjourn

There being no further business to address, motion to adjourn moved by Councilmember Roy, seconded by Councilmember Coombs. Motion to adjourn was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.



Mayor



Township Clerk

Approved: 

**MANAGER'S ANNUAL BUDGET MESSAGE
2022 BUDGET INTRODUCTION – MARCH 7, 2022**

Council has received a copy of the proposed municipal budget for 2022 and I'm pleased to announce there is no tax increase. The tax levy is (\$22,019,629.97) Twenty-Two Million, Nineteen Thousand, Six Hundred Twenty-Nine Dollars and Ninety-Seven Cents, compared to last years (\$21,825,787.53) Twenty-One Million, Eight Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand, Seven Hundred Eighty-Seven Dollars and Fifty-Three Cents, an increase of (\$193,842.44) One Hundred Ninety-Three Thousand, Eight Hundred Forty-Two Dollars and Forty-Four Cents. Our Assessed Valuation increased by (\$26,290,209) Twenty-Six Million, Two Hundred Ninety Thousand, Two Hundred Nine Dollars, allowing the increase in our tax levy without raising taxes. We are below the legal Levy Cap by (\$190,678) One Hundred Ninety Thousand, Six Hundred Seventy-Eight Dollars and below the legal spending Cap by (\$1,543,507) One Million, Five Hundred Forty-Three Thousand, Five Hundred Seven Dollars.

The Township completed 2021 with a surplus of (\$8,641,586.47) Eight Million, Six Hundred Forty-One Thousand, Five Hundred Eighty-Six Dollars and Forty-Seven Cents; *the highest year-end balance to date.* Of that balance (\$4,550,000) Four Million, Five Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars is being applied to this year's budget, leaving a balance of (\$4,091,586.47) Four Million, Ninety-One Thousand, Five Hundred Eighty-Six Dollars and Forty-Seven Cents. We feel confident using this amount of surplus because monies received from the American Rescue allocation in 2021 have restored the losses sustained from 2020. We're expected to receive the second allocation of (\$1,116,761.15) One Million, One Hundred Sixteen Thousand, Seven Hundred Sixty-One Dollars and Fifteen Cents this year which will be used to address drainage issues throughout the Township.

The tax collection rate for 2021 was 99.38% compared with 98.99% in 2020. This collection rated added over \$1.9M to the surplus and represents the highest collection rate to date. All revenue collections exceeded the projections for 2021 bringing in an additional \$1M.

The total assessed value of real property upon which the tax rate is based is (\$3,700,598,909) Three Billion, Seven Hundred Million, Five Hundred Ninety-Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred Nine Dollars, so every (\$370,060) Three Hundred Seventy Thousand, Sixty Dollars of the amount to be raised by taxation equals one cent on the tax rate. This budget uses a 97.54% rate to compute the reserve for uncollected taxes in 2022.

The public hearing is scheduled for April 4th at 7:00 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.