

February 6, 2024

A workshop meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Victory Gardens, held on February 6, 2024.

Mayor Holeman called the meeting to order and declared a quorum present.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of Our Country.  
Please remain standing for a moment of silence for our military.

This meeting has been advertised in one newspaper, The Daily Record, in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act.

ATTENDANCE: Councilman Glass, Councilman Suarez, Councilwoman Hedgepath, Councilman Hale, Councilman Lorenzo.

ABSENT: Councilwoman Garcia Montes.

Chief Financial Officer Joe Kovalcik was also present at this meeting.

Tonights meeting is for discussion on the 2024 Municipal Budget.

At this time the meeting was **turned over** to the CFO. The Mayor stated that the meeting will be no longer than one hour since this is a preliminary meeting.

Joe gave a copy of the budget to the Council tonight. We are still tying out the last of the bank statements. I haven't received any yet. The Clerk said she thinks Letty has them. Some came in today. I will get them from her and we will put them on your desk.

The first page, I expect to come down some. Joe said that he was asked what the raises would be? I have a 2% down for right now. It is whatever you request. The other thing that I am not sure of is the Capital Fund. I want to talk to the Administrator and see where we are and what needs to get done. You have put in \$10,000 in years past. Depending on what you need will determine how much we put aside in that.

What you have in front of you is the preliminary draft. When we meet the next time we can see what it is that you want to do.

Councilman Glass asked if in this paperwork do you have a raise for the Engineer or Attorney? No. Jim said that hourly should get a 3%. No one else should get raises. I didn't get a chance to speak to Onnie to see what she thinks.

The Clerk said we have to do a reval for the town. It has to be done by 2026. My cost estimate, after speaking with the Assessor is that it would cost about \$30,000. With the reval we don't have much choice we have to do the tax maps and everything that goes along with it. If we do a reassessment then it is cheaper.

Councilman Glass asked about the American Rescue Plan monies, do we still have it? Yes, I was waiting to see how much money we have left in there so we can do the rest of the town with the sewer scoping. Money has to be expended by 2026 in December. The Clerk asked Joe to give her how much is left in the account so I can let Leon know to go out to bid so we can get it done. The Clerk also said we need to get this sidewalk done in front of town hall where everyone comes into the building. I know we have money left over from when we constructed town hall. I don't know if we can use that money for the sidewalk. Joe said it depends on what the Ordinance says. If there is something in there that says "but not limited to" we should be able to use it. We can do a reappropriation ordinance.

The Mayor said we need 2 doors at the firehouse. We also need lighting for up there. We also want money in there for trees if we have to take any down.

The Mayor asked the Clerk if the garbage contract is up this year? No, however the costs have gone up. January, February and March it will be \$12,267.58 per month. April thru December 2024 will be \$12,635.00 per month. Also the BOH contract for 2024 is \$27,355.00 .

The Mayor asked if anyone on Council had any other questions? Councilman Lorenzo said he would like to have the balance that we had left in last years budget. I want to see what was left in the line items from last year. Joe said he will go to the bank tomorrow afternoon to get the final bank statements. The Mayor asked if we can have that information by the 27th of this month so we have it for the following budget meeting. Joe said yes. Councilman Lorenzo said if Joe gets it before that date, send it to Debbe so she can make copies for us.

Councilman Suarez said no other questions with the budget, but there was a concern about the Workers Comp insurance. Was that taken care of? Joe said that 2022 is done although he hasn't see na draft of that. 2023 has been done except the last quarter and they are arranging to have that done. I have to send them the same sheets. I can get that done by the end of the week.

Councilwoman Hedgepath asked the Clerk if she said the Workers Comp had lapsed? Yes. Charlotte from H.O. Baker siad it was cancelled because the insurance audit was not done. I haven't received anything from her saying that we were now covered. I asked for it and haven't received it yet.

Councilman Glass said the Auditors said something but I don't remember what it was. She was asking about the debt statement and the financial statements. The debt statement has been done. Joe said that was completed. Financial statements are't due until March 9. Those are why I need the last quarter statements.

What about pension stuff? I am still working withthe State on trying to rectify that. I know you asked me to attend the Council meeting for next week but I am unable to attend. I have something of a personal nature that has to be taken care of.

Councilman Glass asked if everyone was okay with just giving the hourly employees a 3% raise. The Clerk said no, she wasn't. Councilman Suarez agreed with the 3% for hourly. Joe said Finance Department will be flat this year with no increase. Councilwoman Hedgepath asked about Debbe and giving her a raise? Councilman Glass said that was his thought, if you want to change that you can. I think that both Debbe and Letty should get a raise. Councilman Glass asked if we could do that - give Debbe a raise without giving it to the others? By law if you give a raise to the Clerk, you have to give it to the Finance, the Assessor and the Collector. You can give it to Debbe but not as a raise - it would be called a merit increase. That would be a 3% also. So if we go with just a 3% for the hourly and 3% merit increase for the Clerk, who else do we have? You have all your building inspectors, zoning, Assessor, Collector. Also your professionals will get no increase. everyone was good with that.

Joe, you don't have any money in for trees. we usually try to do between 7-10 trees. I know sometimes we take it out of O & E for Streets. You also have a zero in for Clean Communities. We always get \$4,000 for that every year.

The Clerk said she will try and look tomorrow for the Ordinance for the town hall reconstruction.

Motion to open the meeting to the public by Councilwoman Hedgepath, seconded by Councilman Glass and approved on verbal vote. None opposed.

Jim Janone - Do we have any idea what the total revenue will be? Not right now. I have to finish reconciliations. What about the interests we have earned. I know the rates have gone up. we have exceeded our interest. I can report on that at the next meeting. What are we going to do about the old ordinances that we can cancel out on our books? Joe said that most of these ordinances have multiple years life. One of the things you don't want to do is cancel the ordinance if you can still use it. Say for example on a truck. If something else goes wrong with that truck you can take from that ordinance. About the reval does that have to be all done in one year? No, we have I think, until the end of 2026 to have it completed. Joe said we can split the cost into 2 years so it isn't all coming out at one time. I was wondering if we can put aside some money to redesign the website. It is very old and outdated. You should put money aside to install some lights in the front of town hall. Councilman Lorenzo said we should put money in for a digital sign in front oftown hall. The Mayor said debbe suggested that several years ago and several times and Council always said no.

The Clerk asked the CFO if at one time he said that these cannabis places going in can do a host community agreement? Yes. well that is something they can do for us. I deal with their attorney in Wharton. I will talk to him about it. It's an agreement where the cannabis group coming in agrees to do something for the town.

Motion to close the meeting to the public by Councilwoman Hedgepath, seconded by Councilman Glass and approved on verbal vote. None opposed.

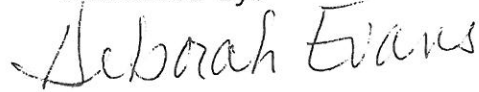
Joe said these agreements are renewable every 3 years. That would be a part of the approval process.

Councilman Glass asked if we are having another budget meeting? Yes, we have one on the 20th. Is there a planningg board meeting this month? Yes on the 21st.

The Mayor asked about the monies that come in from the cannabis establishments? How do we know what they are bringing in and what our percentage would be? They have to list that with the Planning Board and also with the State. It is called a proforma statement. I will ask their attorney about that.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Councilwoman Hedgepath, seconded by Councilman Glass and approved on verbal vote. None opposed.

Submitted By:



Deborah Evans  
Borough Clerk