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**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET HEARINGS - PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2024-2025
FEBRUARY 26, 2024**

The Board of Finance held a virtual budget deliberations session on Thursday, February 26, 2024 via Zoom. Chairman Lema called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Brian Lema, Chairman
Scott Moulton
Ray Arnold
Lauren Ranges
Meghan Smith

Also Present:

Mayor Anthony S. Giannattasio
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

Mr. Moulton and Ms. Ranges made and seconded a motion to reconvene in public session. Motion carried unanimously.

(4131) Law Department (pg. 24)

Chairman Lema recused himself from the Law Department budget. Jonathan Berchem, City Attorney, stated the budget is flat with the exception of an increase request for law books. He stated the one new item requested was document management system which was not approved. Mr. Moulton asked if the old system of managing documents requires additional staffing. Attorney Berchem stated it does not. He discussed the inefficiencies of the current document management system. Mr. Arnold asked if an electronic system would be a recruiting tool. Attorney Berchem discussed the current system and stated it would not impact recruiting. Mr. Arnold asked if there is a risk of the current system being outdated or not supported. Attorney Berchem stated the current system does work although cumbersome.

(4520) Recreation Department (pg. 82)

Bill Garfield, Recreation Director, stated the electric, seasonal temp and paid officials line items were underfunded and increases are requested. He discussed expenditures from the accounts each year. Mr. Garfield stated fees for officials has not increased, the demand for officials has grown. He discussed minimum wage increases impacting the seasonal temp budget. Mr. Garfield stated the department looks for creative ways to make it work. Mr. Moulton asked what type of revenue the department realizes. Mr. Garfield stated funds are put back into the programs. He stated fees have gone toward payroll for baseball and will most likely do the same with basketball. Mr. Garfield stated some programs do very well and others do not. Chairman Lema asked why revenue is lower than last year. Mr. Garfield explained that beach parking fees shifted to the Police Department. Discussion ensued concerning beach parking revenue.

(4123) Community Development (pg. 20)

Julie Nash, Community Development Director, stated the budget is flat. She provided a brief summary of the department and economics of the City. Ms. Nash stated the City is recovering nicely from the Covid pandemic.

(4116) MGAT (pg. 16)

Kara Flannery, Chairman, stated the budget is flat. She stated approximately 130 meetings are being produced each year. Ms. Flannery stated they would like to add more meetings in the future.

(8411) Borough of Woodmont (pg. 88)

Ed Bonessi, Warden, stated no increase has been requested. He discussed projects planned by the Borough. Mr. Bonessi discussed the Belmont Street Groin repair project. He stated the project will be added to street paving funds. Mr. Bonessi discussed the new contractor for land maintenance. He stated the Borough is doing well overall. Mr. Moulton asked if the Borough ever realizes a surplus. Mr. Bonessi discussed reserve funds. Kit Schmeisser discussed reserve funds being earmarked for specific projects. He stated the Borough has been operating in a deficit for a number of year and is just getting close to break even. Mr. Bonessi provided a brief explanation of the work performed by the Borough.

(8426) Boys & Girls' Club (pg. 92)

Megan Altomare, Director, stated no increase is requested. She provided a summary of club activities. Ms. Altomare stated the Boys & Girls Club is looking to expand their programming. Ms. Ranges asked if the program is any new buildings this year. Ms. Altomare discussed school site based and clubhouse-based programs. Mr. Moulton asked what percentage of the overall budget the City grant represents. Ms. Altomare stated the budget is \$1.7 million. She stated one of the goals is to not raise fees and burden families when everything else is increasing.

(4142) Department of Permitting & Land Use (pg. 27)

Joseph Griffith, Director, stated the budget requests an increase of \$8,200. He discussed decreases within the budget. Mr. Griffith states the increase is based on contractual salary increases. He discussed a vacancy for building inspector. Mr. Griffith stated there is much competition for filling the position. He stated the staff is doing a great job in keeping up with increased demands. Mr. Griffith discussed the cost of construction and fee structures. Mr. Moulton asked how long the building inspector position has been vacant. Mr. Griffith stated it has been vacant for 3 years.

(4210) Police Department (pg. 43)

Keith Mello, Police Chief, stated the patrol cars are in the budget. He stated they were previously funded from the vehicle acquisition account but are now back to the police budget. Chief Mello discussed the addition of 1 police officer. He discussed funding for the licensed clinical social workers that were previously funded through ARPA. Chief Mello discussed the requirement for police

departments to do a feasibility study to implement social workers into the department. He discussed services provided by the social workers. Mr. Moulton asked if the social workers go through the academy. Chief Mello stated they are not police officers. He stated they are social workers that report to the administrative division. Ms. Ranges asked for an explanation of the drones. Chief Mello stated it replaces the department's drone that is approximately 6 years old. He stated most police departments have drones. Chief Mello provided a brief explanation of how drones are used for various incidents. Mr. Moulton asked for an explanation of overtime, holiday and vacation/relief increases. Chief Mello stated the request is based on utilization last year and the gross wage increase. Discussion ensued concerning surplus in the wage account and filling vacancies. Chairman Lema asked if the radar speed signs are portable or fixed. Chief Mello stated there are both types. Chairman Lema asked how many cruisers will be purchased. Chief Mello stated it should allow for 5 or 6 cruisers. Mr. Moulton asked if computers are specific to vehicles. Chief Mello stated computers all need to be replaced because they do not support the software. He stated 20 computers will be replaced this year and 20 next year.

(4240) Animal Control (pg. 59)

Scott Ellingson, Animal Control Officer, stated the budget is the same except for the increase cost of secretarial fees. He stated the electricity and fuel budgets are also increased due to climate control requirements and increased fuel costs.

Mr. Moulton and Ms. Ranges made a seconded a motion to recess until February 28, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until February 27, 2023. The Board recessed at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary