

Minutes of the Public Hearing concerning the FY-2024 Municipal Budget and Other Matters of the Township of Woodbridge, in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey on September 12, 2023 at 6:00 P.M. at the Municipal Building, 1 Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095. Formal action may be taken.

Council President Ficarra: Please rise for a salute to the Flag. Keep in mind the people that were lost during 9/11. Be grateful of the EMS and police that watch over us today and remember all those people we lost.

Members of the Council and all those present gave the Pledge of Allegiance.

Notice Requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law have been satisfied concerning this meeting. The Home News Tribune published a notice on August 20, 2023. A copy of the Notice was posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board. It should be so noted in the minutes of this meeting.

The Municipal Clerk took the Municipal Council attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Howie Bauer, Lizbeth DeJesus, Sharon McAuliffe, Debbie Meehan, Viru Patel, Brian Small, Kyle Anderson, Gregg Ficarra

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cory Spillar

ALSO PRESENT: John E. McCormac, Mayor
John Mitch, Municipal Clerk
Vito Cimilluca, Business Administrator

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Mr. President, at this time, our purpose is to meet on the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget. With that said, I'd like to entertain a motion to open the floor right now for public comment on the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to open the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Any questions or comments from Council? The Public Hearing is now open on the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Hearing no comment from the public, can I get a motion that the public comment portion on the Budget be closed?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to close the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Mr. President, at this time I entertain a motion to open the Public comment to the floor for any other purposes.

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to open the public hearing which was seconded by Councilman Small and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Any questions or comments? The public meeting is now open for general public comment.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Hearing no public comment, can I get a motion that the public comment portion be closed?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to close the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: At this time Mr. President, I would like to also open up the floor for public comment on both SID Budgets. That's the Main Street and Oak Tree Road SID Budgets. Can I get a motion to do so?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to open the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Any questions or comments? The public comment period is open on the SID Budgets.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: With no comment from the public on the SID budget, can I get a motion that the public comment on the SID Budgets be closed?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to close the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

The Municipal Clerk called for a Second and Third Reading of the following Ordinance:

A. ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE SFY 2024 MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: The public hearings have now been held. We are going to go into Letter A, which is a Second Reading on the CAP Ordinance. This Ordinance as you know we've previously introduced. With that said, can I get a motion that this Ordinance, Letter A, be taken up on Second and Third Reading and the public hearing be opened?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to open the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Any question or comments from the Council? The public hearing is now open on Letter A.

John Mitch, Municipal Clerk: Seeing no comment from the public, can I get a motion that the Ordinance be adopted, submitted to the Mayor for approval as required by law?

Council Vice President Anderson made a motion to close the public hearing which was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

The Municipal Clerk introduced the following Resolution as Consent:

- (1) **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Municipal Council hereby authorizes the Resolution to Amend the proposed SFY 2024 Budget. (The Municipal Clerk read the Amendment to the Council).
- (2) **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Municipal Council hereby authorizes the Resolution to Adopt the SFY 2024 Budget as Amended.
- (3) **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Municipal Council hereby authorizes the Resolution to Adopt the FY2024 Main Street SID Budget.
- (4) **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Municipal Council hereby authorizes the Resolution to Adopt the FY2024 Oak Tree Road SID Budget.

Councilwoman McAuliffe abstained from Resolution #3

Council Vice President Anderson moved the adoption of the foregoing Resolutions. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously.

GREGG FICARRA, COUNCIL PRESIDENT / COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE:

Council President Ficarra: Council, I am just going to quickly thank Administration and everybody involved in creating this budget. We like to use the term “Best Town Around” and there is good reason for that. For the services we offer, the various facilities that we have and for us to maintain that and grow it each year and to be able to have a budget like this without any type of significant increase or increase in general is really amazing. I’d personally like to thank you. Keep up the good work. Councilman Anderson.

KYLE ANDERSON, COUNCIL VICE-PRESIDENT / COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE:

Thank you for your time and effort in putting this budget together. I would also like to thank everyone on the Council for supporting many of the items that I support on my Agenda. Let’s have a great year.

Council President Ficarra: Councilwoman Meehan.

DEBBIE MEEHAN, 5TH WARD COUNCILWOMAN:

Thank you for all of your hard work. There has been a lot of great programs put in place and we appreciate your hard work and all of the support.

Council President Ficarra: Thank you. Councilman Small.

BRIAN SMALL, COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE:

Thank you. I know a lot of time and effort goes in to this. You always do a great job. As my fellow Council mates said, programs grow and extend and we hold the line. Again, thank you.

Council President Ficarra: Councilwoman DeJesus.

LIZBETH DEJESUS, COUNCILWOMAN-AT-LARGE:

I echo all of your sentiments. We are very grateful to have an Administration that does such a thorough job and supports all of our Agenda items. Thank you.

Council President Ficarra: Councilwoman McAuliffe.

CORY S. SPILLAR, 3rd WARD COUNCILMAN:

SHARON MCAULIFFE, 1st WARD COUNCILWOMAN:

I appreciate everything that you guys do for us. We work together as a team on the Council and it makes everything much easier. With the support of Administration we can get a lot more things done. Thank you very much for everything that you do for all of us and the town.

Council President Ficarra: Thank you. Councilman Patel.

(VIRU) VIRBHADRA N. PATEL, 4th WARD COUNCILMAN:

Thank you Council President. I would like to thank the Administration.

Council President Ficarra: Thank you. Councilman Bauer.

HOWIE BAUER, 2nd WARD COUNCILMAN:

Council President, again I echo the sentiments of my Council mates. Thank you to the Administration and your entire staff for producing such a sound budget for us our Township, residents and employees. With the Division of Administration, my fellow Council mates and the growth through our P.I.L.O.T.S., we are able to keep investing in our schools, infrastructure, and athletic fields, new equipment and vehicles. With the Second Ward having roughly a half dozen P.I.L.O.T.S., Administration again has been able to award a substantial amount of money to our fire districts to improve and purchase lifesaving fire equipment. This Administration and Council are committed on making Woodbridge a great place to live, raise children and build one's future. Thank you again to our Administration and staff for your hard work.

Council President Ficarra: Thank you Councilman Bauer. Mayor.

John E. McCormac, Mayor:

Thank you Council President. Thank you for the support from the Township Council for the Fiscal Year 2024 Municipal Budget which was just adopted. The most important aspect of this Budget is that the amount of Municipal property tax levy is the same as it was in Fiscal 2023. We are proud that we are able to hold the line of the tax levy because of our very strong financial position which is the result of our intense economic development efforts to bring more companies and businesses into town which lessens the burden on our existing residents and businesses. We have also managed to keep all spending increases within the State guideline despite insurance and pension costs rising by more than any other expense item in this budget. Our financial management team; Chief Financial Officer, Manny Fernandez; Deputy CFO, Michael Klepchick; and Accountant, Katie Mullen worked tirelessly on this document since Spring of this year when the budget preparation process started. Now that the budget passed, they will try to not spend all of the monies appropriated while bringing in even more revenues than we anticipated. Business Administrator, Vito Cimilluca and Deputy B.A., Casey Wagner work with our financial team during dozens of meetings with our department heads and division heads pouring through every expense line and requiring everyone to justify their budget requests. Our management team includes a half dozen people with an average of well over 40 years working for the Township. And that experience is not found in too many Municipal Governments. We mentioned economic development, which would not have been possible without Redevelopment Agency Director, Carol Ehrlich, who doubles as our Chief of Staff; Planning Director, Marta Lefsky and Deputy Redevelopment Director, Heather LaMotta. These three are widely recognized as also being the best in the State which is why so many businesses want to relocate to and expand within Woodbridge Township.

This year we have over \$26 million dollars in revenue from P.I.L.O.T.S. in the budget up from \$22 million last year. We have discussed this concept over and over at countless Township Council meetings and in our own newsletters, the news media and state wide publications. Simply put, P.I.L.O.T.S. have been a tremendous boon to our finances as reflected in our high bond rating.

P.I.L.O.T.S. this year represents \$619 per household, which is the amount the average household saves because of these efforts. Our P.I.L.O.T.S. supported two large Referenda with \$87 million in 2017 and \$57 million in 2020, with another large Referendum on the docket for March 2024 all for school improvements. All this work is done and paid for from P.I.L.O.T.S. and not regular taxation. Yet all taxpayers get the benefit of an improved property values because of the new schools and additions, new fields and courts, additional technology and perhaps most importantly, improved school security.

This budget also provides for \$10 million dollars in our own capital projects, which means we do not have to borrow money to finance this work which will save us millions of dollars in interest rate costs. This budget continues to invest in our Nationally Accredited Police Department, Public Works crews that handle trash, recycling, snow removal, road sewer park repairs and maintenance better than any town around.

Our Health Department that managed the COVID Pandemic flawlessly, our Recreation Department that oversees the Club at Woodbridge, Woodbridge Community Center, Cypress Center, Acacia Center, three youth centers and sports leagues for boys and girls with thousands of

participants. Our Senior Services Department that runs six senior centers with a dozen senior transportation buses and an Office of Aging that visits those seniors who cannot leave their home.

Our Planning Department that oversees thousands of new building permits because people want to invest in Woodbridge. A library system that is second to none. And many other dedicated administrative employees who work behind the scenes everyday improving the quality of life of our children, seniors and families.

The Township has garnered over \$15 million dollars in Federal, State and County grants combined in the 2023 and 2024 budgets. Thanks to the efforts of our grant writer, Megan Kushpa, which allows us to keep our taxes stable and add programs and services for our businesses and residents that we otherwise would not be able to afford.

We also accepted the outright gift of a mobile health unit from a local business in the Spring. We have brought this vehicle all over town to give our seniors and other residents the chance to be evaluated by a Registered Nurse and have things like blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels checked. These visits also give people an opportunity to ask questions about their health status. We have seen nearly 750 people so far and our next target will be our school children starting in October which include many students that do not see a medical professional on a regular basis.

We also thank the Township Council for being our partner in running the Government operation of Woodbridge Township. One look at your meeting Agendas shows how involved you are in helping us run the Government and in bringing ideas for new programs and services to our Township residents. You each advocate for issues that are most important to you and we are happy to work together to provide the funding to advance these causes in Woodbridge. A budget is the most important document in our Township after our Township Master Plan. And everyone who works for the Township can be proud that we have a stable tax levy while still increasing opportunities for everyone to enjoy living and working in Woodbridge. Thank you again.

JOHN M. MITCH, MUNICIPAL CLERK:

Council President Ficarra: Do we have anything else? Motion to adjourn.

On a motion made by Council Vice President Anderson, seconded by Councilwoman Meehan and carried unanimously, Mr. Mitch adjourned the hearing at 6:18 P.M.