

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - TOWNSHIP OF EDISON
June 29, 2020**

A Special Meeting of the Municipal Council was held at the Performing Arts Building at Middlesex County College on Woodbridge Avenue on Monday, June 29, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Council President Ship-Freeman followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were Councilmembers Brescher, Coyle, Gomez, Joshi, Patil, and Ship-Freeman.

Councilmember Diehl was present via telephone.

Also present were Township Clerk Russomanno, Deputy Township Clerk McCray, Mayor Lankey, Township Attorney Northgrave and Business Administrator Ruane, Health Director Elliot, Police Chief Bryan, Acting Recreation Director Fircha, Deputy Chief Fire Toth and Water & Sewer Director Smith.

The Township Clerk advised that adequate Notice of this meeting as required by the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975, has been provided by a Special Notice sent to The Home News Tribune, on June 2, 2020 and posted in the Main Lobby of the Municipal Complex on the same date. Due to COVID 19 we have announced at all prior Council Meetings.

Council President Ship-Freeman turned the meeting over to Mayor Lankey.

Mayor Lankey thanked the Council for being flexible to host this meeting at the College. He will go through a short presentation hold all questions until finished. We will be here until all questions are answered or get back to you as soon as possible if we cannot answer tonight.

Mayor Lankey in 2014 we started with our infrastructure and have continued with improvements and trying to keep taxes as low as possible. He then explained each page of his 2020 Budget Presentation.

In conclusion this is what we believe is the best balancing act. We are down in public safety we are in the process of hiring police and fire. We need to make sure our town is desirable to everyone. We have to look long term. The value average home is \$175.00 per year increase taxes. Thank you I appreciate your patience.

Councilmember Gomez, asked if we heard from the state regarding COVID expense?

Councilmember Joshi, he appreciates the presentation and thanked the Mayor, and respects the work that goes into the budget. He is also on the Finance Committee. He asked if we know the dollar amount we will be receiving from the County under the Care Act Money which they received \$140 Million.

Ms. Ruane said early next week we will be submitting for the time period of March 12th to May 21st.

Mayor said they will reimburse you at what we spent and what we would like to do but no way will we get the revenue reimbursed.

Councilmember Joshi, it is potential money we will get back?

Mayor Lankey replied this budget doesn't take into the account of COVID expenses. This budget wasn't prepared based on COVID.

Councilmember Joshi, asked about FEMA money and the current legislation being proposed in Washington. He feels we should wait until we know what resources we will have to off set.

Mayor Lankey replied, if they pass the problem would then be the need to get funding. Washington hasn't sent funding.

Councilmember Joshi, addressed his concerns on the staffing levels for Public Safety. The overtime expense is large.

Mayor Lankey, we haven't done hiring in the past few years, we cannot project retirements.

Councilmember Joshi, asked what is the rational why not replace as we go.

Mayor Lankey explained the best use of the dollars it's not just the salary it's the fringe benefits.

Councilmember Joshi, asked about the Master Plan.

Ms. Ruane, by law we have to do it next year.

Councilmember Joshi, according to the AFS, there is still money, 1.6 million not touched in tree fund.

Mayor Lankey, we don't want to just use money we have we want to make sure the best use for the funds.

Councilmember Coyle, walk us through what happens in the Finance Committee.

Councilmember Brescher would like to know the process of the Finance Committee. He thought they would review the budget and then make recommendations to the Council. He will send his comments and or recommendations to the entire Finance Committee.

Councilmember Gomez, as Chairman of the Finance Committee explained the process and functions of the Committee.

Councilmember Gomez, we are still in the process.

Mayor Lankey, this is administration budget we feel is the best to put forth.

Councilmember Brescher suggested to the Mayor, he would like to see only the municipal side on page 3.

Councilmember Brescher expressed his personal feelings regarding public safety however he also would like to hold the County accountable for more money. He had some questions regarding vacant positions in the budget and Public Safety. He would feel comfortable hiring only ten police.

Mayor Lankey explained the police numbers.

Ms. Ruane explained the state gave us the ability to use the snow trust fund money for COVID. Hopefully the overtime reimbursement will go back into the budget.

Councilmember Brescher expressed he would like to see a plan for the Maintenance of Building and Parks.

Councilmember Patil, asked are we using reserve or surplus on page twenty.

Mayor Lankey explained we are using both. We have used surplus every year to keep the tax burden down.

Councilmember Patil asked about JFK contract expiration and revenue generated. He also had asked what the expenses were on SUEZ along with the cost average per employee on insurance.

Councilmember Joshi asked if the administration is looking into updating certain department's technology.

Mayor Lankey agreed we are looking at that.

Councilmember Coyle, asked what is the total revenue to increase the taxes.

Mayor Lankey, replied 7.5 million.

Councilmember Coyle suggested to go back to each department to reduce their budget to lower this increase

Councilmember Coyle again this year asked for an Economic Development person to be hired, is there any money in this budget?

Mayor Lankey, not in this budget.

Councilmember Coyle also asked about the CARES Act funds from the County however we really don't know what the actual number will be. He questioned the legal expenses. He asked the amount we receive for the leasing of the building to JFK.

Ms. Ruane, replied one more year, \$236,650.

Council President Ship-Freeman opened the meeting for public comments:

Elizabeth Conway, 20 Netherwood Circle, this is a calendar year budget 2020 when do you anticipate it to be completed. Can you explained why it is so late in the year?

Mayor Lankey explained one of the negatives we don't know state aid because they are on a fiscal year. It's tough to make the cuts.

Ms. Conway, would it be beneficial to go back to fiscal year.

Mayor Lankey, there are positives and negatives to both.

Ms. Conway, one item in the budget is Community Out Reach program can you give me an example.

Mayor Lankey, Municipal Alliance.

Raelene Joran, 71 Lexington Avenue, on page 9, what is the miscellaneous revenue, where is it from and explain the seven million dollar surplus.

Mayor Lankey explained miscellaneous is one time revenues and the surplus is the amount we are using in this budget.

Ms. Joran, we are all suffering in this state. She said she doesn't care in what you believe, just wants to know the facts in dollar amounts. The Finance Committee should have all the information ready to be respectful of our time. On Page 11 regarding Library Fund, please explain.

Mayor Lankey explained the Library Fund is required by the state, there are no options on the debit service.

Hearing no further comments from the public Councilmember Patil made a motion to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Councilmember Gomez and duly carried.

Having no further business to discuss, on a motion made by Councilmember Gomez, seconded by Councilmember Patil the meeting was adjourned at 8:23p.m.

Joyce Ship-Freeman
Council President

Cheryl Russomanno, RMC
Municipal Clerk