

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
BUDGET MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday  
December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Joseph Pilieri, President  
Joseph Knowles, Vice President  
Ed Kisselback, Secretary  
Jesse Sloane, Member  
Ed Tokmajian, Member

**SUPPORTING STAFF:**

Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo  
Debora McBreen, Council Clerk/Recording Secretary  
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor  
William Cmorey, Director of Administration  
John Chaykowski, Acting Director of Administration  
Fred Harran, Director of Public Safety  
Tim Shultz, Acting Director of Public Works  
Chuck McMullin, Director of Parks & Rec  
Ken Farrall, Director of Building & Planning  
Jim Bogan, Director of Operations, Bensalem Township Country Club  
Matt Galvin, Director of the Banquet Facility - Country Club

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**The minutes are not verbatim but rather a synopsis of what transpired during the meeting, and while I do my best to attribute remarks and questions to the correct individual, there may be mistakes or omissions because of the “back and forth” dialogue and the lack of the use of the microphone.**

**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**Council President Pilieri** opened the meeting with a moment of silence which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION HONORING ARMY PRIVATE FIRST-CLASS ROBERT JOSEPH MORRIS AND NAMING THE NESHAMINY FALLS BRIDGE IN HIS HONOR:**

**Mr. Edward Preston** thanked the Mayor and Council and presented a brief background of the Bucks County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. PFC Morris graduated from Bensalem High School, At the age of nineteen, he enlisted into the Army and after arriving in Vietnam just three weeks later, was killed in action. This Resolution means more than just a plaque on a bridge. To the family and relatives PFC Morris left behind the Neshaminy Falls Bridge dedication means he will never be forgotten, his legacy will live on forever.

**Council Member Sloane** motioned to approve the Resolution honoring Army PFC Robert Joseph Morris and naming the Neshaminy Falls Bridge in his honor, **Secretary Kisselback** seconded. **Solicitor Pizzo** indicated, in keeping with the nature of the ceremony, read the Resolution for the public to hear. The motion carried 5-0.

**Ray “Skip” Bates**, Chairman of the Bensalem Veterans Advisory Board, addressed the suicide rate among veterans which has become a very serious issue. Veterans are struggling everyday with PTSD which seems to be the issue with the Afghanistan Vets. Mr. Bates introduced Mr. Steven Roll, PTSD Counselor, who works on a daily basis with veterans struggling with mental issues. Any veteran, a spouse of a veteran or a family member are asked to please call 215-633-3657.

**Fran Drummond**, Commander of the Bensalem Disabled Veterans, Chapter 85, indicated they meet at the Bensalem Library and thanked council for their consideration on naming the Neshaminy Falls Bridge: PFC Robert Joseph Morris. Mr. Drummond indicated this means a lot to so many veterans.

3. **REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED 2022 BUDGET:**

**Council President Pilieri** invited the **Mayor** to make the Opening Remarks. The Mayor indicated he was very proud working with Council through the years to make sure they take care of Bensalem. The 2022 Budget being presented this evening has no tax increase, which is no different than any other year and working through COVID hasn’t been easy. The Mayor thanked Council and all of his Director’s for their hard work.

The **Mayor** turned over the meeting to the **Acting Director of Administration, John Chaykowski**. **Mr. Chaykowski** introduced the **Director of Public Safety, Director Harran**.

Council Secretary Kisselback indicated, after his review of the budget, put a motion on the floor for council to accept and approve the 2022 Mayor’s Budget. Since there are no changes, and it is very similar to last year’s budget with no tax increase. **Council Vice President Knowles** seconded the motion if council intended to vote on the budget now.

**Council Member Sloane** indicated he would like to hear from all of the Director’s before voting on the motion.

**Council President Pilieri** proceeded with the vote, and the motion carried 2-3-0. It was resolved to have the Directors make their presentation.

**PUBLIC SAFETY/FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

**Council Member Sloane** asked Director Harran if he was making any decisions to hire additional officers.

**Director Harran** responded, he was not.

**Council Member Sloane** indicated the detailed 2022 budget showed 3 new officers.

**Director Harran** indicated they are not 3 new officers, but 3 replacements.

**Council Vice President Knowles** asked Director Harran how many officers were in the chain of command, along with their titles.

**Director Harran** indicated there is 1 Director, 1 Deputy Director, 6 Lieutenants, 10 Sergeants, 8 Corporals, 15 Detectives and 65 Patrol Officers.

**Council Member Tokmajian** asked about the IT increase.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated there is a Township wide IT expense which includes licenses for Microsoft Office as well as the server protection for viruses. The larger increase is due to those renewals that were purchased for a 3-year term are now up.

**Council Member Sloane** noticed a bunch of items under Tech Support which were not licenses and have significant increases over last years budget and asked Director Harran to elaborate on this item.

**Director Harran** indicated a lot of the Tech Support now involves community components where the cameras in front of an individual's home can download the information to the police department when a crime is committed. This does come as an expense, as it is not a free service to retrieve the footage.

**Council Member Sloane** noticed last year's vehicle purchases to be identical to this years and asked Director Harran if he planned on doing the same purchase.

**Director Harran** indicated they were not adding to the fleet, just swapping out cars and motorcycles.

**Council Member Tokmajian** asked about the line item indicating metal detectors.

**Director Harran** indicated the current ones are fairly old and need to be replaced.

**Council Member Sloane** asked about the significant increase in ammunition.

**Director Harran** indicated ammunition is very hard to get due to everybody buying ammunition because of the current situations that are going on in the country. The merchants are using that to their benefit by controlling the market.

### **FIRE:**

**Council Secretary Kisselback** asked what the Professional Services expense entailed.

**Director Harran** indicated the fire companies are looking at architectural drawings for vehicles that are now being housed at Public Works and some of the vehicles are being kept outside which is taking a toll on them. The Mayor has allocated funding for the construction of a building, like a pole barn, to house the emergency vehicles. It will be Police, Fire and EMS incorporated giving Public Works some of their base space back for some of their expensive equipment which is being stored outside.

**Council Member Sloane** asked if additional staff was being hired in the Fire Department.

**Director Harran** indicated no additional staff is being hired.

**Acting Director of Administration Chaykowski** indicated the Township had a younger group of firefighters, with the step increases their getting more towards the top end of the salary range.

**Council Member Tokmajian** indicated a decrease in the volunteer firefighter comp.

**Acting Director of Administration Chaykowski** indicated he was able to shop around and the Township is not using the state volunteer workers comp program anymore. The Township went with their private insurance carrier for the volunteer fire workers comp.

### **FEDERAL FORFIETURE:**

**Council Member Sloane** asked about the transfer to the General Fund.

**Director Harran** indicated money is transferred at the end of the year to the General Fund. Some of the narcotics investigations are not paid for by the state narcotics money, they are paid for by federal narcotics money. The Township is very fortunate to have the federal money to pay for those investigations.

### **PUBLIC WORKS**

**Acting Director Tim Shultz** presented the budget for the Public Works Department.

**Council Member Sloane** noticed a significant increase in salaries going into 2022 and asked if more employees were being hired, or is this step increases.

**Acting Director of Administration Chaykowski** indicated these were step increases as well. There are no new employees, just one replacement.

**Council Member Sloane** indicated the clothing and uniform costs have doubled from last year's budget.

**Acting Director of Public Works Shultz** indicated the clothing and uniform budget had not been budgeted properly over the last 3 to 4 years. The price constantly increases so the budget has been corrected to indicate such costs.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** questioned the Labor Attorney line.

**Acting Director Shultz** indicated Public Works was coming up on their contract negotiations for the union and the assistance for a Labor Attorney will be needed.

**Council Member Tokmajian** questioned the PWD Maintenance & Repairs Facility costs line.

the costs of supplies had increased. There is also a plumbing issue that will involve busting up some concrete which will be quite costly.

**Council Member Sloane** asked about the hydrant service costs and questioned if it was an Aqua rate increase.

**Acting Director Shultz** indicated it is a projected cost. Aqua will not give a straight answer to any rate hikes but believes there will be a 15% to 20% rate increase.

### **ROAD EQUIPMENT:**

**Council Member Sloane** asked the Acting Director to elaborate on the major equipment purchases slotted for 2022.

**Acting Director Shultz** indicated the tree service has increased and has a full-time tree crew running. Looking to upgrade to a slightly bigger chipper. Public Works has a chipper and a back-up chipper. The back-up chipper is getting old and they would like to retire it. Then the current chipper would become the back-up chipper and with the purchase of a new chipper it will be able to handle a larger diameter of trees.

### **BUILDING AND PLANNING**

**Director Ken Farrall** presented the budget for the Building and Planning Department.

**Council Member Tokmajian** inquired about the significant increase in salaries and asked if this was due to hiring new employees.

**Acting Director of Administration Chaykowski** indicated it was budgeted in 2021 to hire 1 clerk. The additional monies are for the inspector, which the Township has been unable to fill

due to the number of certifications that are required. The Township is continually in search for that position.

**Council Member Sloane** inquired about the Engineering Services and asked the Director to elaborate on the Comprehensive Plan and the Ordinances.

**Director Farrall** indicated they are close to completing the Comprehensive Plan. The timeline for the Public hearings should be early January or February for the Comprehensive Plan. The Township is looking over the zoning ordinance and will need to bring it up to current standards.

**Council Member Kisselback** indicated the Travel, Training, and Conferences has a significant increase for 2022 and asked the Director to elaborate on those costs.

**Director Farrall** indicated the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is moving into the year 2018 code. The department will have to purchase all new books, which are expensive, for the building inspectors, electrical inspectors, fire inspectors, along with the code enforcement officers and the Director of Building and Planning.

**Council Member Sloane** inquired about the transfer of data from Alchemy to MuniLogic and asked how much longer is the effort going to take and how much will it cost.

**Director Farrall** indicated the money was not used during the course of this year due to MuniLogic updating the software, which was very extensive. The money was forwarded to the 2022 budget. Alchemy is the old data base for Building and Planning. Moving forward, all of the data from Alchemy will be transferred to MuniLogic.

**Council Member Tokmajian** indicated the revenue for building permits was down.

**Director Farrall** indicated the current permits being entered are for small things, for example, decks, sheds and fences. Please keep in mind the Amazon permit was last year in excess of \$100,000. Those kinds of permits are on hold because of COVID. The Building and Planning department is very busy with smaller permits.

**Council Vice President Knowles** asked what permits are outsourced and if the current company is working and saving the Township Money.

**Director Farrall** indicated Code Inspections is the Townships outsource company and yes, they are saving the Township money. The commercial inspector from Code Inspections is physically located in the Building and Planning department along with the electrical inspector from United and the residential component is also handled by Code Inspections.

### **BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNTRY CLUB**

**Director of Operations for the Country Club, Jim Bogan**, presented the budget for the Country Club.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated **Matt Galvin**, Director of the Banquet Facility-Country Club, was also available for council, should they have any questions.

**Council Member Tokmajian** asked Director Bogan to outline item 43100 Professional Fees.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated the fee was for the Banquet Facility Manager, and it includes the professional services of the company itself, as well as the Banquet Manager because she is an employee of the managing company.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** asked for a breakdown of salaries and how many employees are staffed at the facility.

**Director Bogan** indicated the Country Club carries 6 employees throughout the whole operation. The rest are part-time, and with COVID it is hard to find labor. The labor force varies from 30 to 50, including catering. Golf and greens probably about 25 to 30 employees.

**Council Member Sloane** inquired about the transfer of funds from capital improvements.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated in 2021 there were 2 projects the Township was going to do at the Golf Course, one being the paving of the golf paths, the other was to replace the bridges on the golf course. The bid for the golf paths was too large and the Township decided not to do the paving for 2021. The bid for the bridges is ready to go out in 2022. The money did not get utilized in 2021 either, so it would be a reallocation from 2021. The paving of the paths will be done in sections, as opposed to doing the entire course.

**Council Member Tokmajian** asked for the breakdown on line item Maintenance and Repairs.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated it was for the banquet room which is in dire need of ceiling tiles and some maintenance work within the banquet facility such as painting. Also, pressure washing or painting the mansion so they do not lose the building.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** asked if there were any plans for the mansion.

**The Mayor** indicated when the Township acquired the Golf Course in 2006, they were contemplating on doing something with the mansion, but the expenses were just too great. The mansion is a great asset to the Country Club, but the expenses are far greater. It has to be done at some point of time, but the allocation of money is just not there.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

**Director Chuck McMullin** presented the budget for the Parks and Rec department.

**Council Member Tokmajian** asked **Director McMullin** if he was expecting all of the summer programs to be in full swing this coming year.

**Director Chuck McMullin** indicated they were just going to run a program out of Community Park as they did this past year due to the up rise of COVID they will be using caution to the different programs. The response for the program has been low due to people still being too reluctant to do anything.

**Council Secretary** enquired about the salaries and asked if the rise in expense was due to a new hire.

**Director McMullin** indicated they did hire someone new due to acquiring First Responders Field.

**Council Vice President Knowles** thanked Director McMullin for lighting the field at Community Park for the girls' softball team and asked when the hockey rink would be resurfaced.

**Director McMullin** stated, if approved by council, he will be ordering it in January. The cost is included in the 2022 budget.

**Council Member Tokmajian** indicated there were a number of increases across the utility services and park maintenance equipment line item.

**Director McMullen** indicated those increases were due to the new First Responders Field.

## **FINANCE**

**John Chaykowski, Finance Manager**, was open to Council for any other questions regarding the proposed Budget for 2022.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** asked Mr. Chaykowski to elaborate on the American Rescue Plan Act line.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated A.R.P.A. are funds the Township received from the Federal government as part of COVID. There is a very small window as to what those funds can be used for according to the Department of Treasury. One of the allocations it can be used for is infrastructure repairs. What the Township is going to use it for is stormwater repairs for next year. There are a number of projects scheduled in the design phase.

**Council Member Sloane** asked for the targeted areas.

**Acting Director Chaykowski** indicated Ogden Avenue, Marion Avenue, there is a design for Hansell Drive but will wait to see how the Armstrong project will come into play for Hansell Drive. Those are a few of the targeted areas and there is a group of smaller areas the Township has in the design phase along with a few basins the Township will be redesigning and rebuilding throughout the Township to be able to filter and hold more water.

The Mayor and Council discussed, in length, the future of Bensalem which can be seen in its entirety at [www.bensalempa.gov](http://www.bensalempa.gov)

**Council President Pilieri** asked if anyone would like to speak for or against the 2022 Budget. Seeing no one come forward, the Public Comment portion was closed.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** made a motion to accept the 2022 Budget as presented and discussed by Council this evening, **Council Vice President Knowles** seconded and the motion carried 5-0.

The **Mayor** thanked everyone and said it is a team effort working together, appreciated Council going through the budget and thanked all of the Directors for their report regarding their department. The Mayor believes in teams, as teams win and we are doing it for the people of Bensalem.

#### 4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Melanie Goldstein**, 4419 E. Yates Road, thanked Council for their Service and wished Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane the best of luck in their future endeavors.

**Brian Allen**, 2627 Woodview Drive, wished everyone a Merry Christmas and thanked Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane for their service. Wished all the best to the new Councilmen for a very productive next four years.

Seeing no one else come forward, the Public Comment portion was closed.

**Council President Pilieri** thanked Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane for their service.

**The Mayor** thanked Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane for the 4 years of service to the people of Bensalem. Wished everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah and a Happy New Year. Thanked all of the volunteers for their dedicated work. The Mayor thanked all of his Directors for the continued work and support through the year. Thanked all of Council for making Bensalem the place that it is and looks forward to working with everyone next year.

**Council Member Sloane** thanked his biggest supporters, his wife and kids along with his parents who were present in the audience. Thanked those who watch the meetings for staying tuned in to their local government. It has been a privilege and honor for Councilman Sloane to serve on Council these past four years. And wished the best of luck to the incoming councilmen.

**Council Member Tokmajian** wished the incoming councilmen the best of luck. Thank his family, friends and neighbors for their unwavering support.

**Council Vice President Knowles** thanked Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane for their service. It is a difficult task to acclimate yourself to this job, you're not doing it for pay, but for community service. Looking forward to the new councilwomen who will be working with council.

**Council Secretary Kisselback** indicated when you run for public office, you make that decision that is going to separate you from a lot of individuals because you make a commitment not only to yourself, but to your family and all the residents of Bensalem. Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane have done this with dignity the entire time they have served on council.

**Council President Pilieri** indicated we live in the best Township in the state of Pennsylvania because of the hard work council and the administration puts forward. Welcomed the new councilwomen, Stacey Champion and Michelle Benitez. Wished Councilman Tokmajian and Councilman Sloane the best of luck in their endeavors.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned.

The Bensalem Township Budget Council Meeting of December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

[www.bensalempa.gov](http://www.bensalempa.gov)

or

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Debora F. McBreen**  
**Recording Secretary/Council Clerk**