

**MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
OF THE MAYOR & COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF WALDWICK
HELD ON SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026 AT 11:00 AM**

Mayor Giordano called the meeting to order and read the Statement of Compliance.

Mayor Giordano asked for a roll call. Present on roll call: Mayor Giordano, Mr. Brennecke, Mr. Martinello, Mr. Ritchie, Ms. Smith and Ms. Wingate. Ms. Cericola-Drake was absent.

Also present: Tatiana Marquis, Borough Administrator; Colleen Ennis, CFO; and Kelley Halewicz, Municipal Clerk

Mayor Giordano asked everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance, remain standing for a moment of silence honoring our Veterans and to remain standing for the prayer.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one came up to speak.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2026 Municipal Budget Discussion

Mrs. Marquis and Mrs. Ennis provided an overview of the proposed 2026 Operating Budget.

Mr. Martinello reported that there are little differences between the 2025 and 2026 appropriation line items. The most significant change is an increase in police salaries, which are under contract negotiations. The second notable increase is in the health insurance line item. Mrs. Ennis identified that the employee health line is an additional area of increase.

Mrs. Marquis provided the governing body with a 2026 budget overview and analysis sheet to explain the details. She also distributed a handout outlining the 2026 comparative schedule of tax rates. It highlighted the Borough's use of fund balance in recent years. She noted that the Borough regenerates approximately \$1.4 to \$1.5 million annually but the use of surplus has increased. At the end of 2025, the surplus balance was \$2.5 million. If no action is taken for 2026, it is anticipated that an additional \$2.5 million in surplus will be utilized.

Mrs. Marquis reviewed fixed expenses, including utilities, employee health benefits, and Social Security contributions, noting that these costs continue to rise. Mrs. Ennis provided an update on the employee health benefit incentive program, reporting increased participation from two employees last year to 21 employees this year, resulting in cost savings to the Borough.

Ms. Smith requested clarification on the \$192,000 reduction, and Mrs. Marquis confirmed it was taken from the terminal leave line.

Mr. Martinello reviewed the scenarios for reducing the tax levy from 10% to 7%.

Mr. Ritchie discussed the long-term impact of additional use of \$6.5 million in surplus in which case potentially be depleted by 2031 if going at the same rate.

He further noted that with a 4% tax increase, the Borough's surplus would be reduced to below zero by 2030. However, if taxes are increased by 10% annually over the next six years, the Borough will remain in a stable position.

The Mayor and Council discussed the scenarios of reducing tax levy. Mrs. Marquis advised that any further reduction would require cuts to services and employees. The Governing Body agreed that they do not want to cut employees. Mrs. Marquis further explained that the State of New Jersey provides some, but minimal relief.

They further reviewed future capital project planning. Discussion ensued on the Borough's intent to go out to Bond in October. When that process is started, they will look closely at the surplus. This could possibly result in a financial impact.

Ms. Smith requested clarification about talk regarding the purchase of a new firetruck. Mrs. Marquis confirmed that there is no intent for a purchase in 2026 or 2027 and that the previously referenced truck has already been purchased and paid for with prior years funds.

Mr. Martinello asked the Council to consider the direction that they should go while expressing they must be creative in how to develop more revenue.

Mrs. Marquis provided an example of the 10% municipal tax increase based on \$566,000, which is the average value of a home in Waldwick. The increase would come at an annual cost of approximately \$250-\$280.

Mr. Ritchie stressed the importance of both short-term and long-term planning to maintain a stable budget and reduce the reliance on surplus. Mrs. Ennis clarified the estimated tax impact associated with the 10% increase. Mrs. Ennis clarified the 10% tax increase would result slightly under \$250 for the year.

Mr. Martinello noted the need for financial analysis and discussed the cost of maintaining municipal services, including the pool which operates at a loss.

Mr. Brennecke agreed that additional revenue options should be explored and suggested reviewing other cost-cutting option.

Mrs. Marquis explained the municipal budget process.

Mrs. Ennis shared that they have made more budget transfers this year than prior years.

Mr. Martinello noted most of the budget goes to employee salaries, health benefits, and pension & social security, with the remaining portion left for daily operations.

Ms. Wingate suggested an adjustment to the garbage collection schedule to alleviate some costs. Mrs. Marquis noted that the Borough is currently under contract and they would explore alternative options with the hauler when the contract expires. She further stressed the only way of seeing savings is a reduction in services.

Mayor Giordano suggested exploring new revenue such as redevelopment. He further suggested that the Governing Body discuss ways to generate revenue under new business at future council meetings.

Mrs. Ennis touched on the various tax saving programs for seniors through State funding.

Mr. Ritchie requested formation of a committee to place ideas into action.

Additional discussion was held regarding the hydraulic water study, the H2M presentation, and possibility of future referendum.

Mr. Martinello advised the Governing Body to carefully review all paperwork before the budget introduction reflecting the 10% increase which will be held at the March 24 meeting. He noted that there will be a presentation for the public and they will have the opportunity to ask questions.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and Council at its Special Budget Meeting on MOTION by Mr. Brennecke, seconded by Ms. Wingate and on roll call carried the meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

Adopted: April 14, 2026

KELLEY HALEWICZ, RMC/CMC
MUNICIPAL CLERK