

TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW
PUBLIC HEARING & TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP
ZOOM TELECONFERENCE
February 23, 2021 @ 5:30PM

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Reddington called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance. Council Members Bruce White, Bert Reynolds, Tom Maly and Frank Twardzik were present. Town Manager Carol Houck, Finance Director Dawn Parks, Planning, Zoning and Development Director Ken Cimino, Police Chief Ken McLaughlin, Town Solicitor Dennis Schrader, and Town Clerk Donna Schwartz were also present.

Mayor Reddington reminded everyone of the meeting rules prior to the opening of the meeting.

2. ADOPTION of AGENDA

A motion was made by Council Member Twardzik, seconded by Council Member Maly, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously 5/0.

3. PUBLIC HEARING FOR BUDGET

Mrs. Houck opened the public hearing with a power point presentation on draft #2 of the FY22 budget. She explained each slide to those present on the ZOOM teleconference. At slide #7, Council Member White suggested she pause the presentation and take questions during the public hearing.

Mr. Robert Schuman, 40 Fairway Drive, asked about rental collections. Mrs. Houck responded by saying we are increasing the cost of rental licenses from \$75 to \$150 a property. He then asked when the property tax increase would take place. Mrs. Houck replied it would take place May 1, 2021. Mr. Schuman suggested putting off the tax increase because of COVID-19 and the difficulties people are having. Mayor Reddington responded by saying on average it would cost the taxpayer \$58 more a year. Mr. Schuman also asked about transfer tax and resales. Mrs. Houck noted that resales are very important to the town and would be even more so when the Town is completely built out.

Mr. Gerald Murphy, 3 Masters Drive, questioned the salary increase of 3.3%. Mrs. Houck replied that 2.12% was a possible merit increase and the balance was COLA. She stated she thought total personnel cost were great at 56%, which she considered a very lean figure.

Mayor Reddington closed the public hearing at six o'clock.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of FY22 Budget

Town Manager Carol Houck continued her discussion along with slide 8, showing graphs and charts on multiple slides. Council Member Twardzik questioned fire department funds, saying they are not paid with taxpayer money. Mrs. Houck agreed, saying we collect impact fees on building permits which fund OVPD and MVFD.

5. OPEN DISCUSSION

Council Member Reynolds questioned what the new assessment impact would have. Mrs. Parks stated the new assessment would become effective May 2022. Any change would be made in the FY23 budget. She said she incorporated a 2½% increase. Mrs. Houck stated, however, that the current recommendations could change.

Council Member White stated he was sympathetic to COVID-19 sufferers and was concerned about raising taxes this year. He said in 2010 taxes were .1144 and in 2020 taxes were .2478. He is concerned about the Town's reputation and higher and higher taxes. Council Member Twardzik asked if services should be cut. Council Member Maly asked Mr. White what he would cut. Council Member White suggested not doing a complete reassessment in 2022. He suggested that would save \$90,000 in the FY22 budget.

Mrs. Houck suggested more research needed to be done because not doing the reassessment can cause future problems. Council Member Reynolds questioned if we had a contract with the assessment company. Mr. Schrader replied yes, we have a private assessor and there is a contract. He also noted we are bound by the Charter to reassess property every five-years. He said he believed only 212 properties were being reassessed this year. Mrs. Parks reminded everyone that only those properties with changes would be subject to reassessment. Mr. Schrader stated the idea is to make it as fair as possible to all property owners.

Council Member Maly questioned what the average increase would be at two-cent per hundred. Mrs. Parks replied \$60 average. Mr. Maly remarked that equates to \$5 a month. Mrs. Houck stated she believed that living in Ocean View is a good deal to the property owner.

6. CITIZENS' PRIVILEGE

Mr. Robert Schuman questioned the need for an additional police officer. Mrs. Houck replied that the study that was done in 2019 indicated the need for two additional officers. We have hired one and he just finished the academy. The FY22 budget allows for the hiring of a second officer because additional staff is required to maintain a year-round presence. Chief McLaughlin noted an independent study was done by Professor John Shane in 2019, which indicated the department was under-staffed. He noted that the department is sometimes dispatched into other areas on emergency medical calls. Mr. Schuman asked if we are reimbursed. Chief McLaughlin replied no. Council Member Twardzik noted we are given \$25,000 yearly from Sussex County for assisting the State Police.

Mr. Mike Darcy, 122 Augusta Drive, asked if some of these unincorporated areas around us could become incorporated into Ocean View. Mrs. Houck said probably not, people do not want to annex into town and pay taxes, and there is no way to compel the owners. Mr. Darcy stated he also thought this was bad timing for a tax increase. He asked if there would be another meeting on the budget before approval. Mrs. Houck replied yes on 3/9, and a workshop on 3/23 if needed. The vote on the budget is scheduled for 4/13

7. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Twardzik, seconded by Council Member Maly, to adjourn the meeting at 6:48pm. The motion carried unanimously 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. Schwartz, CMC
Town Clerk