

Penbrook Borough Budget Meeting

August 28, 2023

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Elected officials present were Newcomer, Dry, Deardorff, N. Shaw, V. Shaw and Armbruster. Chief Murphy and Association President Sherrid were there representing the Penbrook Fire Department.

2. Penbrook Fire Department

A. Hogarth reviewed proposed estimates for the Fire Tax Fund revenues including the 1 mil tax revenue, interest and delinquent tax payments. Armbruster asked about consideration to raise the tax to support fire department expenses. Hogarth said the Borough Code only allows for a maximum 1 mil tax for fire protection.

B. Expense lines were reviewed and discussed as follows:

i. 411.320 Communications. It was asked what the \$4,000.00 payment was for. Hogarth looked at past receipts and found that it was for their audit. It was suggested that a new account line be added to allow for a more accurate record. Hogarth added 411.311 Accounting and Auditing with a proposed amount of \$4,000.00. 411.320 is used to pay for cellular access in the fire vehicles.

ii. 411.350 Auto Insurance. Chief Murphy said that amount might decrease since the membership is deciding whether to sell the old fire engine. If so the premium should decrease.

iii. 411.370 Repairs and Maintenance. Chief Murphy said sometime in the future they may have to consider repairing or replacing their roof. No figures were provided as an estimate. N. Shaw and Deardorff offered suggestions to have it looked at to find out what the issues are first.

iv. 411.720 is a one time interest payment on the debt service for the new engine.

C. Capital Improvements

i. Chief Murphy discussed the possible future purchase of a new air unit vehicle. The vehicle is used at fire scenes to replenish the air tanks used by the fire fighters. Hogarth commented that it's unlikely that the air unit would be deployed in Penbrook therefore it's more of a county wide resource that shouldn't be purchased with Penbrook tax monies. Murphy said the staffing doesn't support more than one vehicle being deployed on any one call.

ii. Hogarth asked if there would be any success in recruitment and retention if Council would consider a tax waiver for those volunteers that live in the Borough. Murphy said there were only a few volunteers that live in the Borough but it might help with recruitment. The council members present asked Hogarth to get more information from municipalities that offer this type of incentive.

3. General Fund Expenses

A. Codes and Property Maintenance

i. 413.130 Hogarth said the proposed amount represents a 3% increase from the BCO's current salary. Newcomer confirmed that Bragunier will have the roles of BCO and zoning officer in 2024 and asked if that salary was competitive with other similar municipalities. Hogarth said he would collect data and send it to Council.

ii. 413.540 Contracted Services. There was a long discussion over proposed costs and services provided by 3rd party contractors. Hogarth advised that going hand in glove with the budget proposal was the fee schedule that wasn't updated in 2023 but needs to reflect the fees proposed by Barry Isett.

4. Hogarth briefed the members of council about the upcoming AFSCME contract negotiation meetings. The public works staff had thought about decertifying AFSCME as their representative but that decision has been tabled for the remainder of 2023. Hogarth will be working with the rep from AFSCME to schedule dates within the next week. Solicitor Kern wrote a letter to Council with her recommendations for the upcoming meetings and that letter was read by Deardorff. Deardorff asked that an executive session be added to the September 5 Council meeting agenda.

5. Adjournment at 8:17.

Respectfully submitted.

Joseph Hogarth

Borough Secretary