

BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD
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BOROUGH OF EDGEWOOD
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF DECEMBER 7, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

President Wainright called the meeting of the Borough of Edgewood to order at 6:30 pm. The public meeting was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following responded: Mr. Bright, Mr. Fuller, Mr. Love, Mr. O'Donnell, Dr. Petrolla, Ms. Yaney, Mr. Wainright, and Mayor Wilson. Solicitor Barry was also present.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Mr. Wainright asked for public comment on the proposed 2021 Edgewood Borough Budgets.

Mr. Zahorchak read the following comments received via email:

Thank you to our municipal leadership for their hard work in compiling the proposed budget!

I see in the draft that the police budget has increased substantially, yet it appears that the police budget in recent years exceeded actual expenditures. I wonder what the reason for this increase is. As a resident, I would prefer to see that line item continue to decrease its share of the overall budget with funds being allocated for community wellness programs that go beyond the punitive measures usually associated with police intervention.

Possible alternatives could include establishing paid municipal internship for Woodland Hills high school students, increases in the recreation staff coordinator funding to re-imagine COVID-19 safe recreation options for Edgewood residents, and further support for the excellent programs run through the CC Mellor Memorial Library.

I suggest that each of these investments, or other similar programs, would better achieve the aims of a safe, healthy, and vibrant borough than further increases in police funding.

Respectfully,

Madeline Nagel
Resident of 110 West Hutchinson Ave, Pittsburgh, 15218

Dear Edgewood Borough,

I understand there is a vote on the Edgewood Borough budget this evening. I read through the line item budget posted online. I had a few questions and am wondering if these would be addressed at the meeting:

Line 01-410-100 from \$617,586 to \$828,363. The comment states this is for contractual police salaries and a 5% increase for the chief of police. Is there an increase in officers? If so, has there been a demonstrated need for an increase in Edgewood's police? I find the Edgewood police are excellent and very responsive to the needs of the

Borough. However, it seems that there is adequate staffing already in the police force to cover community safety needs and additional police are not necessary -- unless the Borough has specific documentation of this need that I am not aware of?

Could this additional money be used for other community services, like non-emergency community counselor(s) or similar role instead? Or be used to invest more in park repairs (like the cracking surface at Koenig Field), park and street trees, or additional computer access, or remote and socially-distant library services during this time of COVID?

Line 01-410-251 shows an increase of \$310 to \$2000 for animal control. Did Ferree Kennels increase their rate by this almost \$1,700, or does this reflect some other cost?

Thank you for taking my comments into consideration.

Anne Hong
W Hutchinson Ave
Edgewood Borough

Manager Zahorchak responded to Ms. Hong's questions with the following:

Regarding your questions, Borough Council intends to hire an additional full time police officer in FY2021 to increase our full time roster from eight officers to nine. This arrangement provides for three officers per shift and makes for greater predictability in scheduling. The department currently utilizes several part time officers to fill open shifts in the schedule but their availability fluctuates and has previously created the need to hold officers over to cover another shift generating overtime costs. The borough employed nine full time officers for many years and only recently dropped to eight. All full time police officer salaries are governed by their collective bargaining agreement which exists between the police department and borough. The department negotiated a 2.75% salary increase for 2021. The Chief of Police is not included in the bargaining unit and his salary is determined by council.

Council has increased contributions to street tree planting and maintenance from zero to \$45,000 in the last five years. Council was asked by the library to contribute an additional \$1500 to the library in 2021 (totaling \$40,000 annually) and they agreed. Council has also agreed to setting money aside for future capital projects like renovating the borough parks in the next few years. This includes a budget of \$112,000 for rehabilitating the Laurel Street tot lot in 2021. I'm not sure what you mean by additional computer access. Allegheny County provides social workers through the Department of Human Services should the police that type of assistance.

Lastly, the borough entered into a contract with Ferree Kennels fall of 2020. This is a new expense as we never had a dog catcher. This is a monthly fee for service.

Mr. Wainright added that he had resisted hiring a full time police officer for a number of years but given the challenge finding qualified part time officers in this current environment, he felt it made the most sense to hire a full time officer.

Mr. O'Donnell remarked that in the absence of part time officers we rely on full time officers working overtime which can be dangerous if we're overextending employees. A full time employee is more predictable and reliable than part time police which tend to leave once they gain full time employment elsewhere. The borough is also in the process

of procuring body cameras for all police officers to increase both accountability and transparency in the police department.

Mr. Fuller added that full time officers are able to receive more training and that training is a long term investment in an employee.

A brief discussion ensued between Ms. Hong and several members of council as Ms. Hong was also attending the meeting virtually.

Mr. Wainright added that council authorized the chief of police to test for a third sergeant to ensure each shift had proper supervision and accountability.

Mr. Fuller thanked the borough staff for their work on the budget, the rest of council also joined in his thanking of the staff.

Mr. Zahorchak thanked the public works department and finance director for their dedication and hard work, especially during the pandemic which has created all new challenges for everyone.

Mr. Wainright thanked Mr. Zahorchak for creating the capital improvement plan which allows the borough to maintain its facilities and equipment without lengthy debates.

M-1 Mr. O'Donnell moved to adjourn at 7:00 pm. Second by Mr. Fuller.

DISCUSSION: None

The aye vote on the motion was unanimous. **Motion carried.**

Rob Zahorchak, Borough Manager