

**MINUTES CITY COUNCIL**  
**CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP**  
**NEW JERSEY**

**A SPECIAL MEETING TO HOLD A BUDGET HEARING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP HELD VIA AUDIO-VIDEO CONFERENCING ON THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2022 AT 7:06 P.M.**

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

Council Vice President Tency A. Eason  
Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III  
Councilmember Clifford R. Ross  
Councilmember Adrienne Wooten (Arrived at 7:08pm)  
Council President Kerry J. Coley

**ALSO PRESENT**

Joyce L. Lanier, City Clerk  
Chris Hartwyk, Business Administrator (Arrived at 7:16pm)  
Laquana Best, Planning Director  
Nile Clements, Chief Financial Officer  
Alex Cirocco, Law Department  
Tina Dhanwa, Court Administrator  
Honorable Judge Michael Hackett, Director of the Court  
Aaron Mizrahi, Law Department  
Gracia R. Montilus, City Attorney  
James Moss, Municipal Court Director  
Marlin G. Townes, Legislative Research Officer  
Avram White, Law Department  
Margarette Homere, City Clerk's Office  
Tamara Robinson, City Clerk's Office  
Trisha Scipio, City Clerk's Office  
Gabrielle Sims Shelton, City Clerk's Office  
Blair Landolfi, Budget Consultant  
Carl Fields, Jr., Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Keane Cyrus, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Quantavia Hilbert, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Janicea Jones-Vance, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Carol Perkins, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Coram J. Rimes, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Zonasha Ward, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Christopher Wells, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Sharief Williams, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Tonia M. Womack, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee  
Leonor Young, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

**ABSENT**

Councilmember Harold J. Johnson, Jr.  
Councilmember Jamie B. Summers-Johnson

The City Clerk asked all to observe a moment of silence. Council Vice President Tency A. Eason asked that we remember Officer Rudy Diaz, and the shooting victims in Texas during our moment of silence.

The City Clerk announced that the requirements of N.J.S.A. 10:4-9 et. seq., "Sunshine Law" has been met. A notice of this meeting was sent to the Record Transcript and the Star Ledger published on May 24, 2022, posted on the City's Website ([www.ci.orange.nj.us](http://www.ci.orange.nj.us)) and the Council's Website ([www.orangetwpnjcc.org](http://www.orangetwpnjcc.org)) and filed in the Office of the City Clerk.

**MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

## Calendar Year Budget 2022 – Budget Hearing (1)

## Orange Municipal Court

Judge Michael Hackett stated there was a statement sent to Council about highlighting the accomplishments from the year. The court has moved to a hybrid virtual court, judges are required to be in court. Not many in-person trials but there are for more serious trials. They started transitioning before other cities did. Judge did trial court runs to prepare for virtual. They were ranked in top five in the state for back log reductions. Essential personnel had been issued laptops to work from home. James Moss stated they were able to acquire laptops and big screens to help through this and make it easier for virtual working. He thanked Council and the Judge for the assistance in this process. Tina Dhanwa is the new Court Administrator. Staff is determined by assignment judge, based on the volume.

Page 109 Councilmember Clifford R. Ross inquired if the department needed two and six Administrators/Deputy's. Nile Clements interjected to correct line 10 which should read Municipal Court Director. James Moss is the Director and Tina is the Administrator (correction) – A deputy retired suddenly. The second Deputy listed retired once the work payout is done there will be about a \$10,000 decrease because of the retirement. The replacement salary will be determined by the City. Judge Hackett stated we cannot just eliminate a title it must come from the assignment judge, and the City determines the salary.

Page 111 Councilmember Clifford R. Ross inquired about line one printing and binding –what was the increase of \$3,000. James Moss explained we have moved to e-tickets and there is a mandate of keeping two boxes in the building. We will not be buying anymore tickets for at least another year and half. Nile Clements stated we are not allowed to touch the courts budget. E-tickets are printed electronically on a roll so they only need these tickets in case the e-tickets go down. Professional services is higher because of the increase in virtual services and Non-English speaking victims and witnesses. Police has to have a way to. Communicate with Non-English speaking at all times. Before there were interpreters in court but because of virtual they must have help. Councilmember Clifford R. Ross is confused as we cannot make any changes to the courts and Business Administrator confirmed because this comes from superior court.

Judge Michael Hackett thanked his staff and if there are any questions he is available. Council President Kerry J. Coley inquired about a directive on warrants – police can arrest but can't incarcerate someone with a warrant of \$500 or less. Judge Michael Hackett stated they will still process and release on their own recognizance to keep the jail free of low level offenders. There was a study on low level offenders going to jail and it had a negative impact. For someone to lose so much for a \$500 didn't seem fair to the court. Council President Kerry J. Coley asked how many warrants and Director James Moss will get that report to him. The AG in the City of Orange, sometimes it is because of address change.

The CBAC represented by Janicea Jones-Vance asked if the Director could give a breakdown of the Contractual services as there seem to be an increase of \$12,000 increase from last year. Judge Hackett stated the line is \$5,000 so it could not be a \$12000 increase. The equipment – is there a break down as it was a \$2000 increase – Judge Michael Hackett stated there was a decrease. Ms. Jones-Vance asked why is it necessary to have a field training – That is not under tab 11. There was a mix up so she yielded her questions.

## Department of Planning

Director Laquana Best thanked everyone for the opportunity to present and began to share her screen. She addressed the City Council, Citizens Budget Advisory Committee, City Officials and residents of the City of Orange Township.

- The mission statement – The Department of Planning & Economic Development strives to promote sustainable communities, strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and comprehensive consensus-based urban planning throughout the City of Orange Township by:
  - Establishing and maintaining meaningful and productive relationships between the City and other governmental agencies, as well as area real estate developers, businesses, community organizations and other interested parties that are focused on intelligent and purposeful development; and
  - Recommending and enforcing development regulations and policies that ensure orderly, coordinated and maintainable growth throughout the City.
- Functional Divisions – The Department’s functions are delegated among five divisions:
  - Building & Construction
  - Code Enforcement
  - Licensing
  - Planning
  - Zoning Enforcement
- Leadership & Staff
  - Laquana T. Best, MPA Director of Planning & Economic Development
  - Christopher Mobley, Assistant Director of Planning
  - Building & Construction Division
  - Code Enforcement Division
  - Licensing Division
  - Planning Division
  - Zoning Enforcement
- Redevelopment Pipeline
  - Orange Crossing | Apex – Peek Properties in Phase 1 of 3, Reock Street, Summer 2022
  - Orange Crossing | Summit – Peek Properties Phase 2 of 3, Reock Street, Fall 2023
  - Highland Park – Peek Properties Phase 1 of 2, Lincoln Highland Ave., Fall 2023
  - Essex & Crane by Vermella –Russo Phase 1 of 2 Central Orange, Spring 2023
  - Orange Valley Lofts – Reynolds Asser Central Valley, Fall 2023 (Ross has visited site)
  - Mt Vernon Plaza \_ GoldKast, Mt Vernon Ave., Summer 2022 (Eason has visited the site)
  - Wawa Convenience Store and Gas Station – Paramount, Main St. Spring 2023
- Notable Achievements
  - Increased department revenues by 61%
  - Helped facilitate the only 3 opportunity zone development in Essex County
  - Created new efficiencies paving the way to bring a billion dollars plus in total new development over ten years
  - Engaged in comprehensive process to create strategic partnership between City and private developers for new residential and public recreation complex at former YMCA.
- There was a three year revenue comparison
  - 2020 - \$1,013, 132, 2021- 1,630,881, 2022 – 582,032
- The 2022 Budget request of 1.4 a five percent increase over last year is because of the revenue that came in. The anticipation is to be fully funded by the end of the year.
- They bring in revenue from permits and fines.

Page 46 – Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III inquired about the employee training increase and office supplies. Director Best stated we were virtual last year so there were no conferences and now we are back in office. Councilmember Montague, III inquired about the printing & binding. Director Best stated as streets are added there is additional printing for residential parking permits and the prices are inflated.

Page 47 – Councilmember Clifford R. Ross inquired about EDA site mediation, and title searches. Last year it was \$1,000 for site remediation and this year you are requesting \$3,300, the same thing for title searches, last year it was \$800 and this year \$4,000. Director Best stated as we are working with Public Works, the more sites need to be remediated because of the contamination, the costs have gone up. Title searches help to find out who own vacant properties as more properties are added on to the list, the numbers grow. Equipment went from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Director Best had intention on purchasing shredder for office to properly dispose of papers. Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III inquired about vehicle use for Zoning Officers. Director Best stated not all inspectors use City’s vehicles and per the inspectors contract with the union they can use their personal vehicle. There are four cars, seven inspectors and the part time inspectors do not have a vehicle.

Page 49 Councilmember Montague, III inquired about if professional services line is this the planning board attorney and it is. He also inquired what the \$2,000 Misc. line included. Director Best stated the department would like to go green with new software – go electronic instead of printing meeting material – this will be a onetime cost.

Page 50 – City Clerk Joyce Lanier stated that the training for Zoning Board members has been removed. They have mandatory training and refresher courses (which is approximately \$400 a year and averaging two members who go back for refresher training classes). The salary listed for the Attorney is listed incorrectly – it should read \$7,500 (Resolution 239-2022) which was passed by Council. Business Administrator Chris Hartwyk stated we should make the list of corrections. The Business Administrator has been in conversation with Historic Preservation Commission about the website and we need a resolution passed and alternative is to give them a page on city website. Council Vice President Tency A. Eason stated because we are rebuilding city website, it would behoove us to include them as a page on the city website instead of spending the additional funds. Councilmember Adrienne Wooten agreed. City Clerk Joyce Lanier received two quotes that was sent to Business Administrator and she is just relaying message. Director Best agreed they should have a page on the City’s website. Coley stated they can have a page on the City’s website. Business Administrator stated each page is about \$2500 so he doesn’t think they will do it. Director Best stated they can it be under Planning Page. Council President Coley stated it will be under Planning Department on City’s website.

Page 51 - Councilmember Clifford R. Ross stated the Zoning Board Attorney line item is \$5,000 and the Planning Board Line item is \$7,500. Director Best stated that was an error and only the \$7,500 line remains. Director Best stated the Planning Board meets every month and the Court Reporter is paid for by the developer. They are not required at every meeting. Ms. Lanier stated we have never had a need since she has become the Board Secretary.

Page 52 – Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III inquire4d about the increase under advertising – Director Best stated this is a typo, this should be changed from \$1,000 to \$100, a reduction of \$900. Council Weldon M. Montague, III inquired about HPB Professional Service – Director Best stated this is for the attorney.

Page 53 – Council Vice President Tency A. Eason asked why do we need a Code Enforcement Manager – The Business Administrator, Chris Hartwyk stated we have always had a Code Enforcement Supervisor. Council Vice President Tency A. Eason thought it was absorbed into another position like Field Representative Property Improvement. Is it something we absolutely need, which Chris Hartwyk stated yes and it is just putting money in proper place. Councilmember Ross stated this was not listed in last year's budget. Chris Hartwyk stated we broke out in transparency to put in proper department. CFO Nile Clements stated the 1<sup>st</sup> person listed is the Zoning Officer. Joyce Lanier inquired if there is also a Code Enforcement Manager as well. Councilmember Montague, III inquired about the overtime used in 2021 and shouldn't it be listed, CFO Nile Clements stated we actually used more.

Page 55 – Councilmember Weldon M Montague, III printing and binding went up. Director Best stated we are back in office and volume increase for permits.

Page 56 – Council Vice President Tency A. Eason asked if the Rent Leveling Board still functioning and are there enough members can we get a schedule date of their meetings. Chris Hartwyk stated we have a quorum.

Page 58 – Councilmember Clifford R. Ross stated the second and last line items have large increase – 2<sup>nd</sup> person, during Covid, it became evident that we needed a second person, both for conflict reasons as well as enforcement, the extra hours to keep up with inspections. Councilmember Montague, III are we leaving the Fire Sub Code vacant - Director Best stated this should be combined with subcode official and they are part time employees Montague are they able to handle everything on part time basis, Director Best states the Business Administrator says they must be part time.

Director Laquana Best thanked everyone for the opportunity to present and stated the team works hard as the work is tedious.

Council President Kerry J. Coley stated the Business Administrator Chris Hartwyk made a comment about the 1.8 million cut from budget as first written. Council President Coley asked if the Business Administrator and the CFO would put on record about the 1.8 million cuts. Business Administrator Chris Hartwyk will distribute a report.

The CBAC represented by Quantavia Hilbert in Janicea Jones-Vance absence due to connection issues. Ms Hilbert directed everyone to page 46 page and asked if there is a projected cost on what that would be like for the city. Director Best was speaking of parking decals – when there is another street added and for the residents coming on the new block. Once the parking authority is up and running it will handle this it will be its own entity. Zonasha Ward – apologized for the mix up on previous department's questions. Can the equipment increase be broken down from page 46 – Director Best stated this was the shredder as previously stated. Why is it necessary to have a Field Representative Improvement Training – Director Best stated the training is because he has been in department a certain amount of time and he must have a certain amount of time.

## The Law Department

City Attorney Gracia Robert Montilus thanked the City Clerk for allowing the Law Department to share their presentation.

In the Power point presentation Attorney Montilus began with

- Department Overview
  - The Department of Law:
    - Serves as legal advisor to the Mayor and all departments;
    - Oversees the Office of the Municipal Prosecutor;
    - Advises the Mayor and Municipal Council on form and sufficiency of all proposed legislation;
    - Drafts and reviews all contracts and other legal documents on behalf of the City;
    - Handles all litigation by and against the City, as well as appeals from adverse orders, decisions or judgements;
    - Renders legal opinions to the Mayor, Municipal Council, Business Administrator and Department Directors/Staff regarding their official powers or duties
    - Maintains records of all legal actions by or against the City; conducts investigations and prosecutions as required; and,
    - Administers the Municipal Insurance Fund
- Department Organization
  - City Attorney – Gracia R. Montilus
  - Deputy City Attorneys – Avram White, Aaron Mizrahi
  - Assistant City Attorneys – Alex Cirocco, John McGovern
  - Municipal Prosecutors – Theresa Pollard, Nathaniel Davis
  - Legal Secretary and Paralegal – Beatrice Hackett, Brylan Hoover-Hankerson
    - The City Attorneys have vast years of experience and the team is very well versed. The team has been managing cases and keeping cases in house. Saving money for the city.
- Notable 2021 Achievements
  - Implement legal strategies to address longstanding blight and community welfare concerns regarding the former Orange Memorial Hospital site.
  - Brought a number of workers compensation cases in-house as a substantial cost savings to the City
  - Reduced outside counsel spending for 2022 by at least 10% through re-assignment of work to City Attorneys.
  - Successfully resolved several high-exposure lawsuits, avoiding millions in potential liability awards against the City.
  - Assisted department heads with reviews of municipal operations and corrective action (if necessary) to ensure all practices are fully-compliant with the most recent legal requirements.
- 2022 Budget Request
  - Salary and Wages, page 42 (Tab5) Mayor’s Recommended Budget Book
  - Breakdown of Salary and Wages
  - Operating Expenses
  - Office Materials
  - Employee Training
  - Communications
  - Reporting Services

City Attorney Gracia Montilus thanked everyone for allowing him and his team to serve the City of Orange Township.

Council President Kerry J. Coley requested a copy of the presentation be forwarded to the Clerk's Office.

Page 42 – Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III asked why we have two legal secretaries. City Attorney Gracia R. Montilus stated there is one Legal Secretary and one who is assigned to a particular work. Attorneys are full time and are always available when not in office they are virtual and on call to attorneys but they don't get overtime. Councilmember Clifford R. Ross asked if the in-house cases are related to line item 3. CFO Nile Clements stated this employee was part time and now full time. Council President Kerry J. Coley number 3 – thought this person was separated from the town – how long has he been back – Attorney Montilus stated pre pandemic and the lawsuit was settled.

Page 44 Councilmember Clifford R. Ross inquired about the law professional services, if there are more cases in-house, why so many outsiders. City Attorney Montilus stated we have taken a lot more but there are still matters that need to be farmed out. Because of the complexity of the cases. CFO Nile Clements stated we need to increase professional services based on pending litigation, from 347,500 to 401,452, which makes the total requested is 753,600 is the new request. The goal is to net zero, we don't want to increase budget at all.

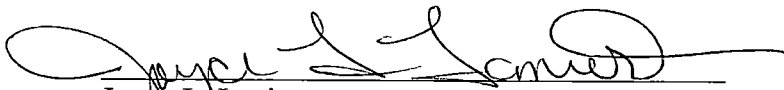
City Attorney Gracia Montilus thanked the Administration and Council in having confidence in the law department. He cannot thank his staff enough for all of their hard work.


The CBAC represented by Zonasha Ward asked can the increase and decrease be explain. City Attorney Gracia R. Montilus previously explained so we can handle in house and the decrease because of reduction in staff.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember Clifford R. Ross and seconded by Council Vice President Tency A. Eason

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Adopted: October 4, 2022

  
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Joyce L. Lanier  
City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tency A. Eason  
Council President