

MINUTES CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP
NEW JERSEY

THIS IS A SPECIAL MEETING TO HOLD A BUDGET HEARING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ORANGE TOWNSHIP HELD VIA AUDIO-VIDEO CONFERENCING ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2024, 6:02PM.

Roll Call:

Present: Councilmember Kerry J. Coley, East Ward
Council Vice President Tency A. Eason, North Ward
Councilmember Quantavia L. Hilbert, West Ward
Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III, At-Large
Councilmember Clifford R. Ross, At-Large
Councilmember Jamie B. Summers-Johnson, South Ward
Council President Adrienne K. Wooten, At-Large

Also Present: Joyce Lanier, City Clerk
Dwayne D. Warren, Esq., Mayor (*Arrived at 6:09pm*)
Chris M. Hartwyk, Business Administrator
Nile Clements, Chief Financial Officer
Aaron Mizrahi, Esq. Deputy Attorney
Blair Landolfi, Budget Consultant
Marlin G. Townes, Legislative Research Officer
Tamara Robinson, Deputy City Clerk
Margaret Homere, City Clerk's Office
Trisha Scipio, City Clerk's Office

Absent:

The City Clerk announced a Moment of Silence. Council President Adrienne K. Wooten dedicated the moment of silence to a great man from the City of Orange Township, Mr. James A. Summers (father of Councilmember Jamie B. Summers-Johnson).

The City Clerk announced 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, published in the Star Ledger on August 2, 2024, posted on the Bulletin Board at City Hall, the Council's Website (www.orangetwpnjcc.org), the City's Website (www.orangenj.gov) and filed in the Office of the City Clerk.

The City Clerk announced the purpose of this meeting is to have the public hearing on the amendments for the Calendar Year 2024 Local Municipal Budget.

A motion to open the Public Hearing on the amendments for the Calendar Year 2024 Municipal Budget for the City of Orange Township was made by Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III and seconded by Council President Adrienne K. Wooten.

Roll Call:

Yeas: Hon. Kerry J. Coley, Hon. Tency A. Eason, Hon. Quantavia L. Hilbert,
Hon. Weldon M. Montague, III, Hon. Clifford R. Ross, Hon. Jamie B. Summers-Johnson
and Hon. Adrienne K. Wooten,

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Motion Adopted

The City Clerk announce this is an advertised Public Hearing on the amendments for the Calendar Year 2024 Municipal Budget. Copies have been made available to the public. Anyone who has not secured a copy on the amendments for the Calendar Year 2024 Municipal Budget may do so at this time. Before opening this hearing, I wish to outline the procedure. Each person desiring to be heard will rise, give his/her name and address before speaking. I will recognize one speaker at a time, in order of rising, as nearly as I can determine. Address all questions to the Chair, when necessary, they will be referred to the individual Members of the Governing Body, Municipal Officials or Advisors. Questions must be confined solely on the amendments Calendar Year 2024 Municipal Budget before us; school or county matters are not proper subjects for this hearing and cannot be discussed or answered here this evening.

Chief Financial Officer Nile Clements stated tonight is the Public Hearing on the 2024 Amended Budget which was approved via Resolution on July 15, 2024. CFO Clements explained the process: Departments submit their request at the end of a calendar year, the administration reviews and makes the first round of cuts, the debt statement and financial statement are finalized, the budget is introduced to the Council (May 21, 2024), Department heads present their request to the City Council, and the Council make amendments.

The 2024 Budget is \$89.2 million which is up \$5 million from 2023 budget (\$84.1million). The increase is \$2,300,000 is due to salary and wages, \$1,200,000 is due to pension increases, \$600,000 is due to insurance increases, \$600,000 is due to the capital improvement fund, and \$400,000 is due to the garbage contract and an increase in utilities. The raw tax impact, the average homeowner assessed at \$315,000 – the total increase is \$580 (4.9% increase). This number is down from the introduced budget.

Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, Esq. addressed some of the items in the 2024 budget that will not happen in the 2025 budget. He asked that Council begin the 2025 budget as soon as possible. The over-time and pension made a major impact on this year's budget. The union negotiations will have an impact on the 2025 Budget. The Administration and Council working together will make a difference. The Healthcare and prescription plans had increases due to the economy but there was a savings by switching companies. This revenue is the last budget cycle before the city has the benefit of the Pilot payments.

There were no comments from the Budget Consultant, Blair Landolfi.

The City Clerk declared open the Public Hearing on the amendments for the 2024 Calendar Year Budget.

Resident Karen Wells inquired about the posting of the amended budget. CFO stated the advertisement of the amended budget was done prior to it being voted up by resolution at the July 15, 2024 meeting.

Resident Dr. Gloria Boseman thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She inquired about how the budget is done and she stated the increase in her taxes does not match the services she receive. She believes all civil servants has a responsibilities to the residents and there should be some offset to residents expenditure. Business Administrator Chris Hartwyk spoke to how Administration handles the budget, the expenditures and services for residents.

Resident Janice Morrell expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to speak. She stated the necessary information to make comments about the budget is difficult when the residents do not have access to the amended budget and the reasons for the each amendment. CFO Niles Clements explained the process for publishing the budget. He gave a description of the FOCA Code.

Resident Nordia Gibbs expressed the same sentiment of not having access to the amended budget and agenda for tonight's meeting. She inquired about how Administration, Council, and Department Heads meet to discuss the budget. She had concerns about some staff wages and would like to see the Salary Ordinance.

Resident Aisha Samuel of 401 Highland Terrace stated she understands the budget process and the Council should vote this budget down. She had concerns about the pilots and where the funds will go. CFO Niles Clements directed her to Sheet 10 to find the information she has concerns with

Ashley and Franz Flacide of 165 Elmwyn Drive new homeowners in the City of Orange Township. She inquired about how residents are able to obtain copies of the budget if they cannot come to City Hall, what cost cutting measures were taken with the budget other than higher level positions being cut, the effectiveness of civil servants, accessibilities of the Council Meetings, and where does she submit questions to be e-mailed.

Richard Martha of 740 McLaughlin Place stated he has reviewed the budget and compared the operating budget with previous budgets. He discussed the increases that he reviewed and how it compared to the hike in taxes. He stated the increases are not sustainable for the residents and encourages Councilmembers to vote no.

Randall Nixon of 666 Mosswood Avenue stated the tax rate in the city is high and wants to know what will be added value with this budget. He asks that Councilmembers vote no to this budget.

Tyrone Tarver of 258 Ogden Street expressed concerns about the timing of the posting of the agenda and budget and the increases in fire and police.

Volora Howell of 483 Mountainview Avenue expressed her concern of the lack of democracy. She is concerned about the tax increase and is looking for a plan to help residents.

Constance Mendoza of 55 Randolph Place expressed her delight with the ambiance of the City of Orange but is concerned about the Tax increase. Business Administrator Chris Hartwyk stated that every effort was made to keep taxes down.

Chalif Clark of 353 Alden Street expressed his concern about taxes and the cost of living.

A Manuel Ortega stated the Hispanic community is under served and over taxed. He inquired if the city will do something different to assist the underserved community.

Sharene Williamson of 447 Alden Street expressed concerns with the Law Department's tone with the residents, the tax increase, the lack of services for youth, and for Council to vote no to this budget.

James H. Ward, III of 743 Hauxtun Avenue expressed concerns about shared services between fire and police, the work of the CBAC, and the lack of services in the city.

Racheal Tenant471 Waverly Place shared concerns on the budget that should have been corrected, lawsuits, and pension delays.

Paulina Bryan of 179 South Jefferson Street asked Councilmembers to vote no on this budget.

Rachel Palumbo of 351 Alden Street agreed with other residents, stated she is vested in the city and strongly advised Councilmembers to vote no on this budget.

Mary Reed-Learmont of 483 Hillside Avenue is concerned about the increased taxes. The increased building providing tax abatements is a stress on the current residents. She encourages Councilmembers to vote no.

CFO Nile Clements stated the budget is being done by the books

Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, Esq. thanked residents for attending and he also stated his office will get the information on the notice of the meeting. He also stated that immediately after this budget is adopted, Council should work on the 2025 budget.

A motion to close Citizens Comments was made by Councilmember Clifford R. Ross and seconded by Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III.

Motion Adopted

There were no comments made by the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee.

349-2024 A resolution adopting the Calendar Year 2024 Municipal Budget. (January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024)

A motion to adopt Resolution 349-2024 was made by Councilmember Clifford R. Ross and seconded by Council President Adrienne K. Wooten.

Roll Call:

Yeas: Hon. Kerry J. Coley, Hon. Tency A. Eason, Hon. Weldon M. Montague, III, Hon. Clifford R. Ross, and Hon. Adrienne K. Wooten,

Nays: Hon. Quantavia L. Hilbert and Hon. Jamie B. Summers-Johnson

Abstain: None

Absent: None


Motion Adopted

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember Weldon M. Montague, III and seconded by Council President Adrienne K. Wooten.

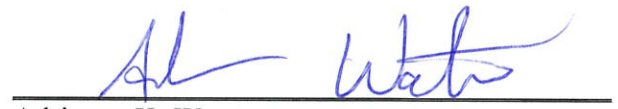
Motion Adopted

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm.

Approved: September 3, 2024



Joyce L. Lanier
City Clerk



Adrienne K. Wooten
Council President