

**BOROUGH OF GREEN TREE
COUNCIL MEETING
NOVEMBER 22, 2021**

Call to Order / Moment of Silence / Pledge of Allegiance

Green Tree Borough Council met on Monday, November 22, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. at the Green Tree Municipal Center, 10 West Manilla Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Roll Call

Members Present:

Edward Schenck, Mayor
Mark Sampogna, President
Arthur Tintori, Vice President
Rino Lindsey
John Novak
Ron Panza

Also Present:

Judy Miller, Borough Manager
Babette K. Legler, Finance Director
Colin Cleary, Chief of Police
Kary Rahner, Director of Public Works
Don Gaupp, GT Volunteer Fire Company
Adaena Tray, GT Public Library Director
Deborah N. Gawryla, Stenographer
Kim Beck, Stenographer

Absent:

David Lorenzini
David Rea

HEARING OF THE CITIZENS

Stacey Cleary, 1016 Dale Drive

Mrs. Cleary asked why line 310.700 Mechanical Devices had changed so significantly from \$8,000 to \$3,000 to \$0 over the years. Ms. Miller said that Mechanical Devices cover items such as poker machines, which require a fee to be paid to play them and requires staff to go out and inspect them. The borough has had an interruption in code enforcement in 2021. With a new hire this summer and the retirement of the Borough Engineer the routine inspections for these items were not done. With this changeover, the cost for this line had not been established, but should be set shortly.

Mrs. Cleary said that the borough has a relatively small staff and they have recently lost employees with institutional knowledge of the borough. She asked if there will be an effort put forth to maintain the quality of staff and if there will be training, advancement, and succession planning for these changes built into the 2022 budget. Ms. Miller said the most recent hire has a tremendous amount of experience in code enforcement and was hired based upon his building inspection knowledge. She added that Public Works Director, Mr. Rahner, has been a big help in taking the new code enforcement hire through the borough and has helped the new hire gain some institutional knowledge. She said she hoped to be able to keep most of Green Tree's long-term staff.

PRESENTATION OF 2022 PROPOSED BUDGET BY BOROUGH MANAGER

Ms. Miller said she would be going through some of the revenue and expenditures in the General Fund as well as some special funds and projects. She stated that the 2022 budget is balanced and did not require a tax increase. She hoped to be mindful of maintaining expenses since the pandemic in 2020 put the borough to a test that they had never experienced before. Government was impacted in much the same way as regular businesses were.

GENERAL FUND

Revenues

Ms. Miller stated that Real Estate Property Taxes appear to have kept pace with inflation due to the sharp increases in housing market prices. However, some commercial real estate tax appeals

have been successful and several large properties obtained substantial real estate tax reductions. Real estate property tax revenues increased in 2020 due to the increase in the real estate tax, but it has been flat in 2021 and will likely continue in 2022.

Business Privilege Tax (BPT) is the most concerning of the three major taxes that generate revenue for the borough. BPT brings in about 25% of the borough's revenues. In 2012, BPT generated \$1.7 million, but in the last three years the borough has only generated a little over \$1 million in BPT. She mentioned some of the businesses that had left the borough creating some of the reduction. BPT will continue to be a challenge for the borough and it is not something that the borough can control. Work will have to be done to attract new businesses to the borough and keep existing businesses.

Ms. Miller reported that Earned Income Tax (EIT) has been relatively stable, but she would like to see those numbers increase. She felt that the pandemic in 2020 had an impact on the amount of EIT collected. The Act 32 collection system has been successful since its implementation by raising the number of people paying this tax.

Ms. Miller said the borough received \$100,000 in 2020 from the CARES Act and additional funds from the American Rescue Plan. The maximum that Green Tree can receive, based upon population, is \$505,000. The borough received the first installment in 2021 and should receive the additional funds in 2022. These federal dollars come with some spending restrictions.

Some of the other sources of borough revenue include Cable Franchise Fees, which help the borough and do not come directly from the residents or businesses. Discussion continued regarding the reserve fund.

Expenditures

Ms. Miller said that General Fund revenues fund items in both the General Fund and the Capital Fund. If some items do not have current-year funding, they may have funding carried over from previous years. Borough staff has done an excellent job in maintaining expenditures during the pandemic.

One of the larger increases in 2022 is for Road Paving. No road paving was done in 2020. Paving was budgeted in 2021, but was not done due to some major work that needed to be done by the gas company on one of the streets scheduled for paving. By the time the gas company roadwork was completed it was too late and cold to begin repaving in 2021, so that project will be completed in the spring of 2022. Another \$500,000 has been budgeted for road paving in 2022.

Mr. Sampogna said the Borough Engineer's letter regarding paving estimated the need for \$395,000 worth of roadwork versus the proposed \$500,000. He suggested that the borough might consider utilizing Roadbotics to evaluate the streets that might need to be repaved if there is extra funding in the paving budget. Mr. Novak suggested that the extra \$100,000 might be used for road maintenance such as sealing and patching. Ms. Miller said that if Council is agreeable to the budgeted \$500,000 for road paving, the borough could revisit the actual street list to make sure that the list matches with the roads that need to be repaved. Mr. Sampogna said that paving evaluation is typically done in the spring, after the winter months have taken their toll on borough roads. Ms. Miller said she would like to begin the repaving program earlier than in past years. The new Code Enforcement Officer has been in contact with the gas company to get a list of roads they will be working on in the borough in 2022. Once the borough has this information, it can better plan its paving program.

Mr. Lindsey asked if the line item for Road Repairs that is currently listed under the Public Works budget could be moved from Public Works to a Capital Budget item. He said that including Road Repairs in the Public Works budget makes their look much larger than it actually is and it is not accurately reported. Discussion continued whether to make it a Capital Project budget or place it elsewhere in the budget.

SPECIAL FUNDS

Sewer Fund

Ms. Miller the Sewer Fund revenues are exclusively from sewer fees and they are used for nothing else but paying for sewer work, including creating new sewers, repairing existing sewers, and any other sewer work that is required for sound sewer infrastructure.

Ms. Miller said that ALCOSAN has informed the borough that their rates will increase by 7% for the next five years. Sanitary sewer rates will be adjusted as needed to cover the increases.

Capital Projects Fund

Ms. Miller said left most of the same items in the Capital Fund. She would like to discuss with Council what projects should be added to the Capital Fund. Projects for the Capital Fund should include projects with a high price tag and have a useful life of several years or more. She asked if Council would like her to move the purchase of police vehicles back to the operating budget to give a better comparative picture to last year's budget.

Mr. Lindsey said that any purchase of a Public Works vehicle should also be moved. Mr. Sampogna said that each year the borough purchases at least one police vehicle and that is considered to be a recurring operating cost and should be in that department's operating budget in the General Fund. However, Public Works vehicles are often used for ten to 15 years and when a new Public Works vehicle is purchased it is a special purchase, with a higher price tag, and a longer use life. Mr. Lindsey said the Fire Company has an Apparatus Fund for the purchase of its vehicles. Mr. Sampogna said that the police vehicle purchases should be moved back into the General Fund. Mr. Lindsey said he would like the Capital Projects expenditures to be shown individually in the pie chart in the budget to make the larger project expenses clearer overall. Discussion continued regarding where the purchase of police, fire, and public works vehicles should be placed in the budget.

Ms. Miller said that funding for all capital projects comes from the General Fund revenues. She said the borough has resubmitted a grant application for Greentree Road work to the Pennsylvania Multimodal Program. If approved, the grant funds 70% of the expense with the borough paying 30% of the total, similar to the recent multimodal project that was recently completed.

Ms. Miller said that the borough should not overlook the value of its many volunteers that provide assistance with various departments and projects. She asked that department heads who were present to provide some additional details about the operations of their departments.

Green Tree Police Department - Chief Colin Cleary

Chief Cleary said that the Green Tree Police Department currently has ten full-time officers and one part-time administrative assistant. There are always at least two officers on patrol 24/7/365. The department has a great physical plant and workstations. The department has transitioned out of Windows 7 usage and the computers meet the required security requirements. Chief Cleary

outlined some of the various equipment upgrades in the department since he became Chief in 2015.

Chief Cleary said he has been reaching out for grant funding and has used some the American Rescue funds to upgrade the radios and other equipment. He said that this past year was the first year since his arrival that the department has had a full complement of officers, so overtime was almost cut in half leaving the department almost \$30,000 below the overtime mark in 2020. He added that the entire department only used 12 sick days in the past year, except for one officer who had a breakthrough case of COVID and needed to quarantine. Chief Cleary said he has sometimes filled in a shift in a pinch to save on overtime and he has been trying to keep the costs down when he can.

Two police vehicles need to be replaced. One new vehicle has arrived and is in the process of having the required equipment installed. Council has given permission to order a second vehicle because of the lead-time needed in receiving new police vehicles. That vehicle is scheduled to be manufactured in February 2022. Currently there are two police vehicles with over 90,000 miles on them and another one with 86,000 miles that will need to be replaced next year.

Chief Cleary said he had requested an increase in training funds. Instituting some mandatory training during officers' shifts has saved some money. It takes a little bit longer and can be harder to concentrate, but overall it has worked out well. He continued to detail a number of training courses the officers will be undertaking.

Don Gaupp, Green Tree Volunteer Fire Company

Mr. Gaupp said that the a fire truck had been offline for a while because it needed a 30-year old piece, but it was recently repaired and put back online. The GTVFC had its share of difficulties during the pandemic. They received some PPE from the County and State, which helped. Two new members from the City of Pittsburgh have also joined the department. The fire company's calls were down last year with approximately 90 calls.

Mr. Gaupp reported that the GTVFC received six new bulletproof vests and helmets and they ended up being used about two weeks after they were received. The department submitted a grant to FEMA last year, but did not receive approval. They will be submitting another grant application in 2022 in the hopes of replacing the company's self-contained breathing apparatus equipment (SCBA) that is over 15 years old and is outdated and worn.

The GTVFC has been taking part in training classes despite the pandemic. Mr. Lindsey asked when the department had gotten a grant for the last SCBA package. Mr. Gaupp replied that the department had gotten a grant in 2005. Discussion continued regarding the details of what the grant had included and what current supplies were needed for the GTVFC.

Public Works Department - Kary Rahner

Mr. Rahner said 2021 was a difficult year for everyone and Public Works was no exception. The parks and public facilities reopened and each Public Works employee was assigned an area to keep clean and sanitized. After being unable to hire anyone for seasonal summer help after repeatedly advertising, the full-time employees were tasked with cutting grass throughout the borough. Mr. Rahner hoped that there would be applicants for seasonal help in 2022 so the full-time employees would be able to work on other maintenance projects.

Mr. Rahner reported that the Public Works equipment fleet is healthy due to the ongoing off-season maintenance provided by the employees. Most Public Works vehicles are used for 20 or more years before replacement with the oldest vehicle in the fleet being an F-550 dump truck with 65,000 miles. He is recommending replacement of this vehicle in 2023. Public Works handles much of the pool maintenance and Mr. Rahner felt that the current pool facility could be successfully maintained until a major renovation project is approved.

In 2022 Public Works hopes to complete the exterior vestibule on the firehouse social room. Additionally, Green Tree Park soccer field fencing will be done in 2022 although there has been a 40% increase in fencing materials since March. Public Works hopes to do parking lot sealing and striping in the upper and lower Green Tree Park parking lots, the Municipal Center library lot and rear lot, and the pool parking lot including the Public Works parking lot. This will probably be the last time these lots can be maintained with sealing and will require complete milling and repaving in the future.

Also in 2022, Public Works hopes to rebuild a retaining wall in Wilson Park. This would be done in the off-season because of where the blocks would need to be staged during rebuilding. Mr. Sampogna asked when the retaining wall would be rebuilt. Mr. Rahner replied that it would be done either this coming winter or early spring before there are any activities on the field.

Mayor Schenck asked who would be doing the work for the proposed band shell in Green Tree Park. Ms. Miller replied that the work for this project would have to be contracted out.

Mr. Lindsey asked about the item in the budget for the Rook steps. Ms. Miller said that it has not yet been decided whether the steps would be repaired or removed, but it has been budgeted for either possibility.

Green Tree Public Library - Adaena Tray

Ms. Tray said that the Green Tree Public Library was hit hard by the pandemic. The library's reopening provided a chance to reevaluate and diversify services. It has been a positive experience in reaching different people. The library has been focusing on online services by offering patrons library bundles, such as movies, children's books, etc. The library provided curbside, touchless pick up services as well as Experience Kits provided by the Regional Asset District.

Ms. Tray said that the library has not been able to provide as many programs as before the pandemic, but has been offering virtual programming via Zoom or Facebook for all ages. There have been some drop-in programs as well as some in-person programs. Ms. Tray said the library hoped to offer surveys in the new year to see what kinds of services patrons might like to see.

Ms. Tray said in 2022 the library would be providing outreach into the schools and restarting storytimes. The library will be erecting an exhibit about Green Tree history next year in partnership with the Heinz History Center thanks to a grant from the Heinz History Center.

Before the pandemic the library had been open 47 hours per week. The library is currently open 35 hours per week. The Library Board would like to start conversations about sustainable funding for the library and possible future capital improvements. Ms. Tray said the library recently transferred its budget accounts to a different system.

Mr. Tintori asked about the reduction of library hours. Ms. Tray said that the library is still open every day except Sunday, but some hours were shaved off from different days. Previous library hours had been 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and the library found that it did not get a lot of traffic during the last hour. Currently the library is closed on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and also closed on Wednesday mornings. On Mondays and Wednesday the library is open until 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Sampogna said that the Borough Manager would make some adjustments to the proposed budget based on some of tonight's comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

Mr. Panza made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lindsey, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mark Sampogna, President

Judy Miller, Borough Manager

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