

EBLAST FROM WARREN TOWNSHIP

Warren Township NJ Municipal Complex



WARREN 2016 MUNICIPAL BUDGET PROVIDES FOR ZERO INCREASE IN MUNICIPAL TAXES

The Township Committee, at their meeting of February 25, 2016, commenced their review of the Township Administrator's Budget recommendations for 2016. The Township Committee approved the goals and objectives for the 2016 budget on August 15, 2015. The Township Committee reviewed these goals at the February 25th meeting. These include the following:

- 1) To construct the New Municipal Building while insuring that costs are within the project budget and completion is within a timely manner.
- 2) To insure the lowest possible amount to be raised by taxes and tax rate utilizing an appropriate amount of annual fund balance while providing the necessary services to the residents in an efficient manner. Evaluate current staffing levels to determine the appropriate levels of staffing within all departments based upon departmental requirements and to adjust or cross train staff to ensure that effective and timely service is provided for all Township functions.
- 3) To implement the revised Master Plan through applicable amendments to the zoning and land use ordinances and procedures including developing the affordable housing strategy.
- 4) To implement new technology in order to provide increased access by the public and enable staff to be more efficient in serving the residents including computer, phones, public safety radio equipment, 911 and to evaluate the current methods for communicating with residents i.e.: newsletter, email blasts, etc., and to determine their effectiveness.
- 5) To review the Boards and Commissions and to determine if existing Boards are still necessary and effective or to create others as necessary.
- 6) To update the Capital Facilities Plan and develop an improved methodology for evaluating the condition of the Township's 325 roads to determine the priority for those roads requiring overlay and drainage improvements.

- 7) To improve and update opportunities for recreation including the Municipal Complex, East County Park and to expand upon the success of the various recreation camps and events. To develop and implement a revised Master Plan for the Wagner Farm site.
- 8) To engage the business community directly and through participating in organizations and to streamline the development process in order to support and expand business activity within the Township.

At the Reorganization meeting of the Township Committee, held on January 7, 2016, the Township Committee directed the Township Administrator to submit a budget with no increase in the 2016 amount to be raised by taxes from 2015, in order to ensure that there was minimal impact on the municipal taxes to the residents of the Township.

While still under discussion, the budget as proposed is \$18,796,485.65. This is an increase over the 2015 final budget of \$18,706,901.37 or .48%.

The 2016 Budget proposes an amount to be raised by taxation by \$13,465,570.53 which is a zero increase over the 2015 amount. The budget provides for a tax rate of .2987 cents which is a decrease of .009 cents from the 2015 tax rate of .308.

The average house in 2016 is valued at \$717,015 and will pay \$2,142.00 or \$16 more than the average house in 2015 valued at \$690,295 which paid \$2,126 in municipal taxes in 2015.

It should be noted that property values in Warren are rising and have nearly reached the 2007 previous level of \$719,000. Property values in the Township reached a low of \$605,500 in 2010 and have been slowly returning to their previous levels.

The Township will receive an identical amount of State Aid in 2016 in the sum of \$1,321,130.00.

The Township Committee has utilized a variety of other sources of revenue to the extent permitted by law in order to minimize the amount of current year taxes required to fund the 2016 budget. These revenue sources include:

- Prior years fund balances \$900,000
- Receipts from delinquent taxes \$725,000
- Anticipated Construction Code fees \$725,000
- Cable TV franchise fees \$142,000
- And other sources of revenue

The 2016 Budget proposal includes the following appropriations:

- \$900,000 for the annual overlay and drainage program
- \$1,647,000 for debt service - NO Funding is required in this budget proposal in support of the construction of the new Town Hall.
- Funding for 77 full time employees and 18 part time employees for a total of 95 employees of which 30 are sworn police officers.
- \$210,000 for snow plowing
- \$135,000 towards the purchase of a new 911 system for the Police Department
- \$65,000 for the purchase of other police equipment
- \$268,000 for support of the Warren Township Volunteer Fire Dept.

- \$31,000 for the replacement of bridges on the Hoffheimer trail at the municipal complex
- \$131,000 for Public Works equipment
- Provides funding to upgrade existing computer equipment and to implement online access to residents for construction office permit activity.

The Township Committee has crafted a budget which maintains service levels, and improves communication with residents, while providing for no increase in the amount to be raised by taxes in support of the Municipal Budget. This does not include taxes required in support of the schools or Somerset County's budget. The Township Committee will be reviewing the budget proposal prior to the formal introduction in accordance with the State legal process. Additional updates will be provided as the process continues.

Based upon the current Budget schedule, the Public Hearing on the Budget proposal will be held on May 12, 2016.

For additional information, please contact the Township Administrator, Mark M. Krane, at (908) 753-8000, ext. 250.

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