

WYCKOFF Public Service Announcement

For Immediate Release

04.26.17

Wyckoff Township Committee Adopts 2017 Budget

The Wyckoff Township Committee adopted its 2017 municipal budget at its public meeting last night, Tuesday, April 25, 2017 at 8:00 pm. The Township Committee worked diligently to limit the growth of the budget and provide a stable tax rate. Despite many State mandated and uncontrollable expenses such as State mandated pension costs, employee health care costs and contractual salary increases, the 2017 budget results in a tax rate increase of 0.71% or less than one cent. (Last year's increase for an average home was \$31.12 per year).

The municipal budget is below the two percent tax levy cap. The budget totals \$19,573,374 which is \$845,378 over the previous year. State aid remained stable; and reflects the 25.5% reduction experienced since 2010, which was the largest single decrease of State aid of any of the 70 municipalities in Bergen County. A final hearing on the budget will occur on Tuesday, April 25, 2017 at 8:00 p.m.

Investing in the Future

The 2017 budget reflects a decision to invest in the Township's infrastructure. It includes funds allocated for road resurfacing, replacing DPW rolling stock which has reached the end of its useful life and replacing the roof on Fire House #1. To comply with State and Federal mandates, firefighter safety equipment such as personal protective gear is funded, self-contained breathing apparatus for search and rescue and an appropriation for work to improve a section of Crescent Avenue. Crescent Avenue is expected to be funded by a State grant because it connects two Bergen County cross-county arterial roads.

Holding the Line on Costs

The Finance Committee held flat or cut nearly half of the standard appropriation line items compared to last year's levels to compensate for increases in other areas. The Township Committee appreciates the efforts of our Department Managers who worked with us in reviewing every line item of the budget to justify their need for taxpayer money to provide services to our community. Our Department Managers worked hard to minimize expenditures and assisted the Township Committee to hold down operating expenses. The Finance Committee reviewed every line item of the budget in order to justify each proposed line item of expense and to control the growth of expenditure. No changes to current Township-provided services are planned.

Maintaining Priorities

The Township Committee continues its efforts to control the increase in expenditures, pursuing positive fiscal operations such as seeking grants from all levels of government and reducing operating costs through competitive bidding and shared services. Cost reductions and enhanced technology have been realized by regionalization with the Township's many Shared Service Agreements which includes: 911 dispatch services, Board of Health services with the Northwest Regional Health Commission, providing fuel facilities and vehicle maintenance services for the Wyckoff Board of Education and strategic purchasing through the Northwest Bergen Cooperative Purchasing Consortium and the Wyckoff, Oakland, Franklin Lakes (WOLF Group) shared services group.

The Township Committee only establishes the Municipal portion of taxes

Diana McLeod, the Township's Chief Financial Officer, also points out that municipal taxes represent only a portion (14%) of a Wyckoff property taxpayer's obligation. Three separate governmental entities; the Bergen County government, the K-8th Local Public School District and the Ramapo-Indian Hills Regional High School

District develop and adopt their own budgets to be funded by taxes. The Bergen County Open Space Tax and the Municipal Open Space Tax are approved by referendum. The Free Public Library Tax is a separate tax levy; however, it is included in the municipal budget and represents 7% of the municipal budget. The county taxes, K-8th local grade school taxes and regional school taxes have not yet been determined. Although a resident's tax bill reflects all seven separate taxes, the Township Committee is involved in the municipal budget and municipal tax levy only and has no involvement in determining the three other budgets nor in the determination of the six other tax levies. State fiscal laws require the Township's municipal government to serve as the billing and collection agency for all six separate taxes and the Free Public Library tax. She said the sum of all seven of these tax rates ultimately determines the total property tax rate for the year.

The Township Committee continues to seek grants from County, State and Federal sources. These grants allow the Township to upgrade and renovate recreational facilities and roads which we would not be able to fund otherwise. Grants included in the 2017 are; Bergen County Open Space (for lighting improvements), Uniform Fire Safety, Drunk Driving Enforcement Grant, New Jersey Recycling Tonnage Grant and a pending NJ Department of Transportation Grant.

Additional parameters that guided the Finance Committee

- This is a budget developed with the taxpayer in mind. Austerity or fiscal discipline and changing how we do business is essential.
- We worked diligently with approximately 12 meetings to deliver this budget with a focus on delivering residential services at a marginal tax increase of \$7.83 on an average residential assessment of \$782,700.
- The budget is being introduced within the State mandated deadline.