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Upper Darby Township Council Meeting

October 5th, 2016

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A regular meeting of Upper Darby Township Council was held on Wednesday evening, October 5th, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Meeting Room #202 of the Municipal Building, 100 Garrett Road, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Donald P. Bonnett with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Donald P. Bonnett, Thomas P. Wagner, Edward E. Monaghan, Jacob A. Bierling Jr., Sekela Coles, Robert Gwin, Barbarann Keffer, Marc Manfre, Lisa Faraglia, Sheikh M. Siddique, Patrick Spellman

Present at the Meeting

Thomas N. Micozzie, Mayor
Thomas J. Judge Jr., CAO
Kelly C. Hayes, Esquire
Richard G. Nolan, Chief Municipal Clerk

Public Forum

Mr. Bonnett: This is the time set aside for the public to speak. When you hear your name come forward to the podium and state your name and address for the records. Comments are limited to five minutes.

Richard Blye, 274 Kent Road
Same issues, no results

Paul & Margie Kane, 8003 Arlington Avenue
8004 & 8006 Arlington Avenue

Alfred Achtert Jr., 7228 Radbourne Road
Taxes

Their comments are filed on tape.

Mr. Monaghan: That concludes the speakers for this evening.

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you, Ed. This is the time of the meeting set aside for our Mayor, the Honorable Thomas N. Micozzie.

Mayor Micozzie

Mayor Micozzie: Thank you. I have two announcements before I give my Budget Message. Councilwoman Sekela Coles is having a Domestic Violence Awareness Workshop on Wednesday, October 26th, 2016 at 7PM at the Municipal Library, 501 Bywood Avenue, Upper Darby, PA 19082. Also, there is a Senior Health Fair being supported by Mercy-Fitzgerald and Rite-Aid on Thursday, October 27th, 2016 from 10AM until 1PM. There will be Free "Ask a Doctor", free flu shots and free screenings and info tables. COSA will be present as well. This will take place at the Watkins Community Center, 326 Watkins Avenue, Upper Darby, PA 19082.

Mayor Micozzie read the 2017 Preliminary Budget Message.

As Mayor, I am proud of Upper Darby Township. We are a community of neighborhoods, each different, each diverse, but all committed to making Upper Darby Township a good place to raise our families. As I worked with my staff on the 2017 budget, we reflected on the number of good things that ARE happening in our community. We also struggled with costs associated with the operation of a local government in a township of nearly 83,000 individuals.

We face difficult challenges however, through hard work and community spirit we can overcome these challenges. Development and redevelopment of business properties and opportunities continue to present themselves and help us move forward in the township. Just last Friday, September 30 the seventh (7th) all-purpose supermarket opened in Upper Darby Township and another McDonald's fast food operation opened at Baltimore Pike & Union Avenue. McDonald's is a complement store to the shopping center that features the Goodwill Donation Shop, the Training Center and Auto Zone. Not too long ago, this was an abandoned shopping center which will now thrive.

I am pleased with what my Administration has accomplished to attract new retail development to the Township while maintaining a good mixture of existing mom and pop stores. The new stores and business operations helped keep our residential tax rate in check, although we are constantly challenged by successful tax appeals.

This fall, the Upper Darby Township, the Upper Darby School District and the Philadelphia Museum of Art partnered with the Inside/Out Art Program. This program displayed 10 classical art pieces placed in visible locations throughout the township. These art pieces have instilled a new interest concerning art with students and residents of Upper Darby.

The senior living complex, Alicia Court (site of the former St. Alice School), is in the final stages of construction. This complex is a welcome addition to the Township around 69th and Walnut Street area. SEPTA is moving forward with plans for a multi-use building including a parking garage on the parking lot next to the 69th street terminal. The Wawa store at West Chester Pike and Park Avenue is moving along and should open within the next several months.

The 2017 preliminary budget includes a .45 mileage increase and a \$25.00 per household increase in the trash/recycling fee. The recycling market has changed drastically over the last several years across the region and the county. The Township is now paying on average over \$30.00 per ton to the contracted recycling agent. The proposed Police and Fire Budget is \$40,805,046(55.5% of the proposed budget) of which constitutes 72.8% of the Budget proposed increase.

Having served as a volunteer Fire Chief and Chairman of the Council Public Safety committee, I highly respect and appreciate the work our police and fire perform every day in their efforts to protect our Township. However, the increased disability cost for officers injured in the line of duty continues to burden the Township's annual budget. While my Administration makes every effort to control these costs, work related injuries and disabilities are unavoidable. I assure you that my Administrative staff and I will continue to work hard with the Fraternal Order of Police and International Association of Fire Fighters to control costs; however I will not jeopardize the safety of our resident's Township with our efforts to achieve cost saving.

With 2016's 0% increase in taxes and fees, the 2017 proposed budget is tight and my Administration will continue its effort to curtail costs and control spending. I understand the burden placed on seniors and homeowners in our community and I remain committed to provide services our residents deserve at the lowest possible cost.

Mayor Thomas N. Micozzie

Mayor Thomas N. Micozzie

October 5, 2016

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you Mayor. Also Members of Council, at this time I would like to ask Councilman Wagner who chairs our Finance & Appropriations Committee to review with us the court dates associated with the budgeting process.

Mr. Wagner: Thank you, Mr. President and thank you Mr. Mayor for your Budget Address. As most of you know, we are required to follow a very deliberate process to pass the Budget and that begins with the submission of the Capital Budget to Council which has already been done and then it proceeds with the Mayor's Budget Address which we have just heard. We are required then to have two Public Hearings on the Budget and they specifically are on November 9th, 2016 and November 16th, 2016 approximately five minutes after the regularly scheduled meeting here in this room. The meetings will be advertised. Once the meetings take place

Council can act on the Budget at the December 7th, 2016 Council Meeting. So, that is the Budget process.

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you Tom.

Mayor Micozzie: Just for Council's edification, in the 33 years that we've been tracing this, there were 3 Budgets that were 0%. There was 1 in 1993, 1 in 1996 and 1 in 2016. This is the 4th lowest Budget presented to Council by at least, if I'm right, by 2 points in 33 years. So, I have to say that the Departments have worked very aggressively over the last 3 years to really bring in and as much as we would have liked to do another 0% for our residents, we have tightened our Budgets. Since 2009 we had some high years there but 2.26% in a Township of 83,000 people with an \$89 million budget with some of the experiences we've had whether it was a snowstorm or the Pope's visit, Council has supported it and I think we run a great town and we've come to a point where we can keep things under control and keep this community going. The trash thing is a disaster but under State law we have to maintain it. It's a typical Government.....there is no secondary market for recycling anywhere in the country. So, we're paying....I thought it was \$38.

Mr. Judge: No, it's \$30. The average is \$30. We have paid as high as \$38.

Mayor Micozzie: But, we are still the best trash deal in the County.

Mr. Wagner: Mr. President, as Chairman of the Finance and Appropriations Committee, I would like to really commend the Mayor, Mr. Judge and the Administration for what they've done to keep this budget increase as small as possible consistent with our overall operation to see that the Township remains solvent. We have done that and the Township remains served by an excellent Police and Fire Department together which constitutes for more than half of our entire Budget.

Mr. Bonnett: Well said. And also, the true picture of this is that if you are going to annualize the 2.26% increase then you have got to annualize it over the last 2 years because we had a zero last year. So, it's really 1.13% if you do it that way.

Mr. Wagner: That's a great point.

Mayor Micozzie: Rick, remind me. We have 2 invitations. There is the Blue Mass at St. Laurence on Friday at 9:30 am and also at 7:00 pm at St. Bernadette.

Ms. Coles: I know it's too late for this Budget process but for next year when the Finance Committee and the Administration looks into the 2018 Budget, is it possible that some of our costs or expenses that are associated with the tax appeals.....would it be possible to talk to the County about maybe doing a Countywide reassessment of tax appeals. I know we default to whatever the Solicitor for the School District approves but can we express our concern that this is hurting us and we would like to look into that?

Mr. Bonnett: I think you are right on point and that has been done.

Mr. Judge: We've had informal talks but nothing official where it came from Council and I will make a presentation at the next Finance Committee Meeting to the entire Council breaking the Budget down as I have for the past several years.

Mr. Bonnett: And perhaps as we wind up this Budget process, we will take that position.

Ms. Coles: Yes, and maybe do a formal Resolution or maybe write a letter to County Council saying that this is something that is really hurting us financially and how can we work toward a resolution?

Mr. Bonnett: We are being bombarded with tax reduction requests. It's a court process and is almost always negotiated to mitigate the losses to the Township, the County and the School District.

Ms. Coles: Not all of them but a large number of them are landlords that don't live in the Township but they have multiple properties normally in my District or maybe Siddique's District or Manfre or Bob Gwin's District. They know that it's a hit for us if we try to fight them legally so we'll take the less expensive route.

Mr. Bierling: Sitting on the Finance Committee is not just sitting down and saying that we're going to go with that. Mr. Wagner and Mr. Gwin would back me up when I say that we sit and look at what the appraiser is putting on us and it's not some fly by night guy. He's very good. There was just one in the past couple of months where they said this and he said that and they.....I know what you're saying that there are a lot of rental properties but we can't differentiate and say that because you have a rental property your taxes will be higher.

Ms. Coles: I don't mean that. I am saying that on a Countywide level there could be some sort of reassessment.

Mr. Bierling: I don't think it's just hitting us. I think it's hitting a lot of people that you don't hear about. If you talk to some of the other Council people in other towns, they are getting hit with it too because there is actually an attorney from out in Newtown Square who sends out flyers all the time....

Ms. Coles: I do believe it's hitting everyone but I just feel like it's worse because we are larger.

Mr. Bierling: Believe me, we sit there and look at them and just scratch our heads sometimes and when you see 12 or 14 of them it's discouraging.

Mr. Bonnett: Any other comments?

Mr. Judge: The flyer for the Fire Prevention Parade will be emailed tomorrow. The Fire Department gave it to me yesterday and I did not get it into your folders. It is not October 9th. It is Sunday, October 16th and I believe it starts at noon. I will email you that flyer tomorrow. They will assemble at Drexel Hill Middle School.

Mr. Bonnett: Any other questions? Does the Solicitor have anything for the body?

Solicitor: Only that my office is aware of the Disorderly House Ordinance and I believe that Kelly Sullivan is working on it but unfortunately she is out of the country right now.

Mayor Micozzie: I just saw an article and Norristown settled. They paid money to settle.

Mr. Judge: Yes, but the key question is what were the rules that they were allowed and I did not see in the article what they were allowed to do and that's what we need to follow up on.

Mr. Bonnett: I believe she is due back on the 10th.

Mayor Micozzie: It doesn't sound good that they paid money.

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you. A motion would be in order for adjournment.

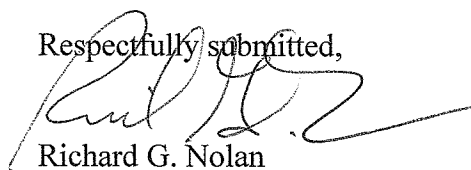
Adjournment

Mr. Wagner: So moved.

Mr. Manfre: Second.

Mr. Bonnett: Moved and duly seconded. All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? The ayes have it. This meeting stands adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard G. Nolan
Chief Municipal Clerk

RGN/akc