

August 16, 2021

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:11 pm. Trustees Gabram and Trustee Port were present. Fiscal Officer Karen Walder and Fire Chief John Frazier were also present.

Trustee Mueller was absent.

The Budget Commission advised the Trustees that the problem was not in the Townships budget, but with the growing year end balances. The Budget Commission noted that from 2017-2021 the Trustees were approving capital projects in their budget, getting the money to do the projects, but were not doing the projects. They estimated that that Township's true 2022 ending balance for the General Fund would be closer to \$1.03 million. This is the same problem the Budget Commission warned the Trustees against at last year's budget hearing, and reiterated that the township doesn't have a need for inside millage since Russell can't spend what it has or says they will, even after promising at last year's budget hearing that they would spend the capital money and complete the projects that are in the budget.

The Budget Commission noted the "flip-flops" regarding the Old Fire Station and asked the Trustees what happened to the projects they promised would be done. Mr. Gabram said the Old Fire Station wasn't taken down because Mr. Mueller was against it. The Budget Commission advised the Trustees that there are three of them for a reason, and that we are "Russell Township", not "Mueller Township". Mr. Gabram told the commission that the storage building isn't built due to some setbacks but there are plans drawn up and the architect is ready to bid out the project, and Mr. Gabram expects groundbreaking for the building to be next spring. The Budget Commission asked why they should take the Trustees word when they didn't follow through last year when they promised these projects would be completed.

The Budget Commission went on to question the \$225,000 in the 2022 Budget for "OFS Raze/Remediation" and "Town Hall move" at the same time that \$420,000 of reserve spending was planned for capital improvements to these same properties, noting that it was illogical at best to budget for improvements to a building at the same time as tearing it down.

The Commission asked the Trustees why there was a levy on for the Fire Department. The Trustees explained that they money will be used to hire full-time fire staff. Upon examining the cost estimates, the Commission pointed out that the Fire Fund levy would be short by \$10,000 each year. The Commission further noted that the submitted budget indicates a 2022 ending cash balance of \$780,000, while the RFD's cost estimate shows need of \$294,000. The Budget Commission concluded that based on the submitted budget and the cost estimates provided, there is no demonstrated need for a 1.9M Fire Levy. The Budget Commission then voted to suspend collection of the 1.9M Fire Levy for 2022, should it pass in the November election. They also recommended having the Fiscal Officer calculate these items in the future.

The Budget Commission suggested the Township may want to voluntarily surrender inside millage to correct the recurring issues with the General Fund. Mr. Gabram said that inside millage was needed for the Road Department. The Commission recommended that the Trustees return on August 27 with a plan to voluntarily surrender millage or the Commission will do so at their discretion. The Budget Commission tabled the Russell Township 2022 Tax budget until Aug 27,

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2021.

Ms. Port made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Gabram seconded and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:04 pm.

Kristina Port, Chair

Karen Walder, Fiscal Officer

Recorded by: J. Dorka