

## Wyckoff Municipal Budget Adopted Limiting Increase to Less Than 4/10 of 1 Percent

The Wyckoff Township Committee introduced the 2019 municipal budget on March 19, 2019 limiting the increase to 0.04%. The Township Committee, led by Mayor Thomas J. Madigan and Councilwoman Melissa D. Rubenstein, worked diligently to limit the growth of the budget and provide a stable tax rate despite requirements to address uncontrollable expenses such as state mandated pension costs and employee health care costs. The impact on the average home (assessed at \$790,000) is \$32.39 for 2019. The tax rate increases 4/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 cent per \$100 of assessed valuation. The 2019 budget totals \$19,747,689 with a tax levy increase of \$241,481. The municipal budget is within the budget cap and the 2% allowable tax levy cap.

*The Municipal Budget accounts for only 14% of a resident's tax bill. The schools and county elected officials establish their own budgets and their own tax levies.*

### Investing in the Future

In 2019, the budget reflects a decision to invest in the Township's infrastructure. It includes funds allocated for road resurfacing and replacing DPW rolling stock which has reached the end of its useful life. To comply with State and Federal mandates, firefighter safety equipment such as personal protective gear and self-contained breathing apparatus for search and rescue are funded. An underground culvert which passes beneath Mountain Avenue is expected to be funded by a State grant because Mountain Avenue connects two cross-county arterial roads, one in Bergen County and the other in Passaic County. In addition, technology advancements for the uniform construction code (UCC) office and a program to digitize permits will be continued this year which will help to improve efficiency. In order to maintain our high level of transparency, Township Committee meetings will be recorded on video to complement the many other measures the Township currently utilizes.

### Holding the Line on Costs

The Finance Committee held flat the standard operating expenses, as compared to last year's levels, to compensate for investments in township infrastructure. 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 of 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 in order to help control the growth of expenditures. No changes to the current Township provided services are planned.

## **Maintaining Priorities**

The Township Committee continues its efforts to control the increase in expenditures, pursuing positive fiscal operation 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 Bergen County Health Department, fuel facilities and vehicle maintenance services to the Wyckoff Board of Education, strategic purchasing through Northwest Bergen Cooperative Purchasing Consortium and the Wyckoff, Oakland, Franklin Lakes (WOLF Group) shared services group. A new shared service for Court Administrator and Violations Bureau Services was implemented with Glen Rock, resulting in a reduction of one full-time position.

## **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 adopt their own budgets funded by taxes. They are: the Bergen County government, the K-8<sup>th</sup> Local Public School District and the Ramapo-Indian Hills Regional High School District. Two tax levies: The Bergen County Open Space Tax and the Municipal Open Space Tax are approved by voter referendum. The Wyckoff Free Public Library Tax is a separate tax levy and represents 2% of the total tax levy. The county taxes, K-8<sup>th</sup> local grade school taxes and regional high 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 tax levy portion only and has no involvement in determining the other budgets nor 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 including the Wyckoff Free Public Library tax.** Ms. McLeod 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 2019 are: Bergen County Open Space, Uniform Fire Safety, New Jersey Recycling Tonnage Grant and an anticipated NJ Department of Transportation Grant. We are also participating in a program to obtain surplus U.S. government equipment that can replace aging equipment for the Township at little or no cost. Additionally, grant applications have been submitted to the federal government to pay for assistance for first responder firefighting equipment.

### **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 are essential.
- We worked diligently with approximately 6 meetings to deliver this budget with a focus on delivering residential services at a marginal tax increase of \$32.39 on an average residential assessment of \$790,000.
- Technology investments were made where we can demonstrate efficiency and/or economic gains.
- The budget is being introduced within the State mandate deadline.

## **TOWNSHIP OF WYCKOFF WHERE YOUR TAXES ARE GOING... Breakdown by Percent of Total Tax Levy**

