

**BOROUGH OF ROSELLE  
MAYOR & COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING  
JULY 18, 2019**

Mayor Dansereau called the Borough of Roselle, Union County, New Jersey, Mayor and Council Special Meeting of the Borough of Roselle, Union County, New Jersey, held at Borough Hall, 210 Chestnut Street, Roselle, New Jersey to order on July 18, 2019 at 6:32 p.m. The flag salute was done, and the invocation was given by Councilman Atkins.

Acting Municipal Clerk, Lydia D. Massey then read the below Statement of Compliance into Record:

This is to state for the record that this meeting is being held according to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act, Section 5, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, by emailing Notice to the Union County Local Source, The Home News Tribune and the Star Ledger Newspaper, by posting on the Borough Hall Bulletin Board and the Borough of Roselle website, and by filing said notice in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

**ROLL CALL:**

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Arrived</b>
Reginald Atkins	Councilman	P	
Kim Shaw	Councilwoman	P	
Cynthia Johnson	Councilwoman	P	
Brandon Bernier	Councilman	P	
John Fortuna	Councilman	P	
Denise Wilkerson	Councilwoman	P	
Christine Dansereau	Mayor	P	

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Jack Layne, Borough Administrator; Anders Hasseler, CFO and Lydia D. Massey, Acting Municipal Clerk

**BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Anders Hasseler, Chief Financial Officer, gave a presentation of the Municipal Budget, highlighting the change in tax rate over time, saying that there are many varying reasons for changes in the tax rate. He said that it is not his goal to constantly increase taxes; but rather to analyze our actions and exercise foresight in developing the budget in the future. He talked about some of the audit findings in the budget process that were previously unaddressed; and stated that he is training Department Heads so that they can train their staff on proper purchasing procedures, so as to prevent over-expenditures. He mentioned the latest Annual Debt Statement

and said that our debt ratio is significant, considering our budget. He said that there is quite a bit of short term debt that is coming due. He explained the CAP Bank and what it means for our budget. He continued to go through the budget, section-by-section, giving explanation as to how the numbers were reached.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

1. Maria Hegener, 920 Spruce Street, complimented Mr. Hasseler on the budget presentation, saying that it was more information than ever before presented; and said that she hopes he stays forever.
2. Anthony Esposito, echoed the sentiments of Ms. Hegener, saying that the budget presentation was the best that he has ever seen in government. He talked about the debt service, and said that Roselle is in crisis. He commented that he liked the way the budget was presented because it was easy for people to understand.
3. Garrett Smith, asked if the issue with the County tax levy has been resolved; and if there's state money that will effect appropriations. He also asked how the budget is developed.

Anders Hasseler, CFO, explained the two lines for state aid and said that the County does now have their tax rate set. He further explained that the estimated tax resolution was prepared by him and approved by the Governing Body. He said that the estimated tax resolution does not raise the budget; but rather allows for protection against raises by the state. He explained that in preparation of the budget, each Department Head is asked how much is needed for salary and wages and operating expenses, then the numbers are analyzed and

4. Sylvia Turnage, thanked Mr. Hasseler for the budget presentation and said that there was only one other CFO who gave such a presentation of the budget. She asked if Mr. Hasseler could tell specifically where the bulk of the \$137,000 over-expenditure came from. She asked what was included in "other expenses" and what got the Borough into \$38 million in debt. She asked about the difference in PILOTS and tax abatements, and how many of each we have active. She asked if there was any regulation on expenditure for certifications and training because there are 6 people in the Department of Public Works in school for their CPWM certification. She commented that in the past, the Borough has paid for employees to get certifications and when they attained it, they left the Borough and found employment elsewhere.

Mr. Hasseler said that the over-expenditure came from various Departments, due to not having anyone in the office to transfer funds when needed. He explained the net debt and said that we are approaching the state debt limit. He reported that we have 6 PILOT Agreements.



5. Helena Johnson, said that she was coming for clarification, and asked when the public could expect a definite tax bill. She asked if the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter taxes would be adjusted according to the overpayment for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. She asked if there was any idea what the actual tax rate would be.

CFO, Anders Hasseler answered that tax bills will be sent to the mortgage companies with the adjusted tax rate, so that the amount of escrow needed to cover the taxes should not increase.

Councilman Bernier added that the actual tax levy for the year comes out to about \$65 million, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter taxes were charged as if we owed \$67.5 million. Therefore, the difference in what was estimated and the actual tax levy will cause the decrease in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter taxes.

Motion by Councilman Fortuna, seconded by Council President Wilkerson, to adopt Resolution Number 2019-156.

**RESOLUTION NUMBER 2019-156**  
**ADOPTION OF THE 2019 MUNICIPAL BUDGET**

<b>Vote Record – Resolution Number 2019-156</b>				
	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Atkins			x	
Councilwoman Shaw		x		
Councilwoman Johnson		x		
Councilman Bernier	x			
Councilman Fortuna	x			
Councilwoman Wilkerson	x			
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted as Amended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Tabled <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn				

Mayor Dansereau then opened the meeting for Public Comment.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Anthony Esposito, said that the people on the left side of the dais should be ashamed of themselves for sabotaging the Borough of Roselle. He said that it's such leadership that put the Borough in the situation that it's in. He said that there is nothing wrong with the budget; and that their actions were reprehensible. He remarked that he hopes that someone changes a vote because the budget was not passed out of spite. He exclaimed

that what they did was disgraceful and that he hopes the hearing airs so that people can see what has been done.

2. Courtney Washington, said that she respects the plea of Mr. Esposito; but where was that plea before, when there was no budget. She said that she did not get the clarification that she needed regarding the rationale for the hike in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter taxes. She said that she doesn't want anyone to just change a vote, but rather go back and do the work to correct the budget. She said that her issue is that people are saying things and no-one is being clear.
3. Maria Hegener, said that she has been around budget hearings for 27 years and has come to understand that the budget over time. She said that the debt comes from the last couple of years of doing things willy-nilly. She commented that those who voted against the budget are just dead weight; and she'd be glad when they're gone. She said that they should all be adults and just do the right thing.

CFO Anders Hasseler, implored the Council to work with him in getting the Budget passed. He said that the Borough needs to run and salaries need to be paid.

4. Sylvia Turnage, remarked that the budget vote didn't surprise her at all. She said that one half of the dais was not aware of what was going on, and that dissention didn't just happen today. She said that all of the confusion has been happening on the Mayor's watch and it needs to stop. She said that it's not about any one person; but about the people and the Borough needs to function. She asked that the Council come to a medium and pass the budget.
5. Garrett Smith, said that the thing that needs to be addressed is the Administration, and what's happened in the Finance Department. He posited that no-one talked about the tax levy before the election; but right after the election, the people got hit with a big levy. He said that he's still not clear what is going on with the County tax rate and the State of NJ. He said that everything being done now seems extremely shaky, which makes him uncomfortable.

Seeing no-one else come forward, Mayor Dansereau closed the Public Comment Portion of the meeting.

### **COUNCIL COMMENT**

Council President Wilkerson addressed the tax levy, stating that there is a law that says that tax bills have to come out before the first of the month; and at the time we had no budget, neither was a state budget passed. She asked rhetorically why we didn't have a budget, then went on to explain that there was an anomaly that occurred in 2018, which had to be remedied. She said the budget is \$2.50 increase per household, per month and that people shouldn't believe the hype. She talked about the \$36 million in debt, saying that it comes from previous administrations, including bonds not being paid on time. She said that she's appalled that the budget didn't go



through for every other reason except the benefit of the people. She said that some things which were overlooked in the budget were the overage from Recreation and the Salaries and Wages that were out of control. She iterated that the preliminary budget was sent to the Borough Administrator and all Finance Committee Members on April 7, 2019, and then it went out to the entire Council, so no-one should say that they weren't included in the budget process. She said that questions should have been asked then.

Councilman Brandon Bernier commented that there are no words for what transpired, stating that although the Council has been hyper-politicized for years, there has never been a budget that failed. He said that he doesn't know the ramifications of not having a budget; but he's sure that the Borough Attorney will advise of the consequences. He cited the fact no-one who voted "no" asked any questions regarding the budget prior to the June 19<sup>th</sup> Budget Introduction. He said that voting no makes more than a political statement; but rather it's a statement to every employee and tax-payer in the Borough. He asked why people would sink a budget with a "no" vote, without any discussion. He asked the Council Members to reconsider the budget, and have a discussion, even make amendments if necessary, but by all means, reconsider.

Councilwoman Johnson said that her issue is transparency, and said that the three members on her side of the dais are left out of many decisions. She said that the Mind and Body Complex was mentioned, although it is not in existence, but taxes went up anyways. She said that Recreation was talked about, yet the summer program was cut and money is being paid out to do studies and hire assistants. She said that she will not support anything that she is not aware of and doesn't benefit the people. She asked what is being done beside hiring vendors and giving friends contracts. She said she would continue to fight until she understands what is going on.

Councilwoman Shaw greeted the public and said that she ran in 2010 because she cares about the community and thought that she had skills that could benefit the community. She iterated that Roselle is her home, so she is not any less vested in the community than anyone else. She talked about the structure of the HR/Finance Committee and said that there was no work-through of the budget. She said that some resolutions are typed in the same font, as if they're being out-sourced and that resolutions were pulled from agendas because they were a hot mess. She stated that the statute says that a budget can be amended any time during and after the Public Hearing.

Councilman Fortuna said that contrary to popular belief, he did not see the budget before any other members of the Council. He said that when he got the budget, he went over it and he thought it was good, so he voted to pass the budget.

Councilman Atkins began by saying that he's been Roselle for over 20 years, many of them as an Elected Official. He talked about the service he and his wife give to the community and said that he loves Roselle. He said he would never try to put down the people of Roselle and hold them hostage. He commented that he thinks it was shameful for someone to say that they should be dragged out by a mob because it mimics racist remarks that have been made in the past. He said that integrity needs to be restored because everyone is hurting. He claimed that no Department Heads had input into the budget and he knows as much because he spoke with Department



Heads. He that it's not shame on him, but shame on the process. He said that the numbers are inflated because people want to hire their cronies and family members. He exclaimed that he has money because he has a job and said that he doesn't mind hiring a lawyer. He commented that all he's done in this community all his life is make things better for people.

### **MAYOR'S COMMENT**

Mayor Dansereau clarified that she has not been smirking at members of the public; but that she had surgery on her gums and has been holding her face during times of discomfort. She said that the budget process was open to the entire Council; and that rather than simply vote "no" without any discussion, the members of the Council could have asked questions and done their own fact-checking. She commented that instead of rhetoric, people should focus on the numbers. She said that there are no hidden costs in the budget. She iterated that tax stabilization is a constant balancing act between ratables and cost to homeowners. She said that it's not fair to constantly blame the people who came before because it's a cycle. She posited that being an elected official is not about just leaving a legacy; but rather a relay race and the baton has be handed down so that the government can continue. She too, asked that the Council reconsider passing the budget.

Motion by Councilman Atkins, Seconded by Councilwoman Shaw to adjourn the meeting.

<b>Vote Record – Motion to Adjourn</b>				
	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Atkins	x			
Councilwoman Shaw	x			
Councilwoman Johnson	x			
Councilman Bernier		x		
Councilman Fortuna		x		
Councilwoman Wilkerson		x		
<b>Mayor Dansereau- Tie Breaker</b>		x		
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted as Amended <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Tabled <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn				

Motion by Councilman Bernier to adopt Resolution Number 2019-212 and go into Closed Executive Session.

## **RESOLUTION NUMBER 2019-212**

### **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CLOSED (EXECUTIVE) SESSION**

**WHEREAS**, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances, and

**WHEREAS**, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Borough of Roselle Council, County of Union, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussions of and action hereinafter specified as:
  - Matters falling within the Attorney-Client Privilege
2. It is anticipated at this time the above stated subject matters will be made public when it is determined that the need for confidentiality no longer exists.

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

I, Lydia D. Massey, Acting Municipal Clerk of the Borough of Roselle, in the County of Union, State of New Jersey, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Borough Council of the Borough of Roselle, County of Union, State of New Jersey at a Special Meeting of said Council held July 18, 2019.

<b>Vote Record – Resolution Number 2019-212</b>				
	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Atkins		x		
Councilwoman Shaw		x		
Councilwoman Johnson	x			
Councilman Bernier	x			
Councilman Fortuna	x			
Councilwoman Wilkerson	x			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted as Amended <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Tabled <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn				

The Governing Body went into Closed Executive Session at 9:12pm.

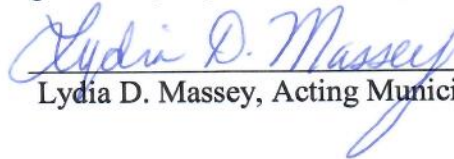
The Governing Body came out of Closed Executive Session at 9:47pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilwoman Johnson, seconded by Councilman Atkins to adjourn the meeting.

<b>Roll Call Vote to Adjourn</b>				
	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent
Councilman Atkins	x			
Councilwoman Shaw	x			
Councilwoman Johnson	x			
Councilman Bernier	x			
Councilman Fortuna	x			
Councilwoman Wilkerson	x			

The motion carried and the meeting was duly adjourned at 9:48pm.

  
Lydia D. Massey, Acting Municipal Clerk