

**HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING  
HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING AUDITORIUM**

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**Monday, March 21, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.**

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**PROPER STATEMENT OF NOTICE** – Mayor Peters-Manning called the meeting to order stating that notice of the meeting had been posted on the municipal bulletin board and forwarded to the Hopewell Valley News, The Times, the Trentonian and the Hopewell Express (the official newspapers) on March 18, 2022, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

**ROLL CALL:** Those answering the roll call of the Deputy Municipal Clerk:

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** David Chait, Kevin Kuchinski, Michael Ruger  
Mayor Courtney Peters-Manning

**ABSENT:** Uma Purandare

**STAFF PRESENT:** Administrator/Public Works Director George Snyder, Deputy Municipal Clerk Katherine Fenton-Newman, CFO Julie Troutman

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**2022 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Mayor Peters-Manning explained that this evening’s budget discussion will consist of the utility budgets regarding Princeton Farms, Brandon Farms and the Washington Crossing Estates. She then turned the meeting over to the Finance liaison, Committee Member Kuchinski.

Committee Member Kuchinski began by asking Ms. Troutman to explain how utilities are approached in the budget. Ms. Troutman explained that utilities are not part of the operating budget; that they are not tax based; and that the users of the utility pay rents and usage, which supports the utility. Committee Member Kuchinski added that the Township Committee has the fiscal responsibility to review the expenses and approve the budgets for the utilities each year.

Ms. Troutman explained that the revenues collected in 2021 for the Brandon Farms utility were different than 2020 because of a problem with the number of billings in 2020 resulting in an operating deficit in 2020; that the deficit was due to receiving untimely water readings from Trenton Water causing the Tax Collector to be unable to bill in a timely manner; that the deficit in 2020 required the Township to raise additional money in 2021; and that in 2021 the Township was able to bill and collect in order for the utility to be self-sufficient. She explained that interest on deposits has been budgeted for; that you can only budget what was realized the year before; and advised of the amount which could be budgeted in 2022; and then reviewed the amount of surplus needed to balance the budget.

Ms. Troutman then reviewed the appropriation section of the Brandon Farms utility budget. Committee Member Kuchinski explained that the increase in salary and wages was due to the addition of pensions and the Tax Collector’s prorated share for administrative duties for the utilities.

Ms. Troutman reviewed the operating budget noting that postage rates have risen and explained why a charge for pensions has been added to the budget. She then reviewed the debt service aspect of the Brandon Farms budget, advising that there is no principle due on notes, however, interest is due on them; that because the Township is self-liquidating and not at a loss, the Township no longer needs to budget for down payments on capital improvements; and that the prior year’s deficit amount does not need to be raised in 2022. She completed her review by explaining that the total expenses, less the known revenues, creates the surplus needed in the Brandon Farms utility required to balance the budget.

Committee Members questioned if there was any impact on the budget due to the pandemic to which Ms. Troutman replied that legislation was passed prohibiting charging interest on late fees.

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The Princeton Farms/Stony Brook Regional Sewerage Authority (SBRSA) budget was reviewed by Ms. Troutman who explained that the users are billed a flat rate and not for usage. Committee Member Kuchinski remarked that if a commercial user was to go online with SBRSA, it would not be fair to charge the same flat rate as the current users. Committee Member Kuchinski referred to Gail Downey, Chairperson of the SBRSA, for guidance as to what would happen if a commercial user came online with SBRSA to which she replied that the entity would need to be metered and billed accordingly. Ms. Troutman reviewed the projected revenues, which were less than the previous year; advised that there was an increase in salary and wages due to the addition of pension and the Tax Collector's prorated share for administrative duties for the utilities; that there was an increase in postage; and that there are additional monies slated in Professional Services for infiltration issues.

Committee Member Kuchinski explained that there has been an infiltration issue at Princeton Farms; that an evaluation discovered several manhole covers were subject to flooding during rainstorms; that excess water is getting into the system and will be addressed; and that the manhole covers will be raised to avoid flooding and infiltration. Ms. Downey strongly encouraged the Committee to work on the infiltration problem stating that it is severe. Ms. Troutman noted that the payment to SBRSA this year is down from the year before.

Ms. Troutman reviewed the debt service for the utility stating that the Township does not owe any principle on notes, but does owe interest. She explained that the surplus that will be needed to balance the budget this year is due to the cost of pensions, salaries, and medical being added as well as the overall costs of the utilities rising.

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Mayor Peters-Manning declared that, in the interest of time, the Washington Crossing Estates Utility will be reviewed at a future public budget meeting.

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## **PUBLIC SECTION**

The following members of the public spoke during public comment:

**Jon Edwards**, a resident of Pennington Harbourton Road, questioned if compensation for fire, EMS, schools, or the County were included within the 2022 budget; inquired as to how the Township reaches out to the Senior population; and asked what type of action the Township is taking regarding Pennington Borough allowing a cannabis retail store to operate within 1,000 feet of a school.

**John Hart**, a resident of Titus Mill Road, inquired as to the plans for the two Township-owned properties situated across from the Municipal Building.

The detailed public comment may be viewed at [www.hopewelltp.org](http://www.hopewelltp.org) in the video library.

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At 6:32 p.m., motion by Ruger, seconded by Kuchinski to adjourn the meeting.

### **MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**

The detailed public meeting may be viewed at [www.hopewelltp.org](http://www.hopewelltp.org) in the video library.

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KATHERINE FENTON-NEWMAN  
DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK