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November 13, 2023

Mayor Datsko and Members of Borough Council:

The 2024 Budget is respectfully submitted to the Borough Council, Mayor Datsko and residents of Ebensburg Borough. This budget complies with the Borough Code and the requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It represents our commitment to strong financial management practices, and our strategic plan for continued growth and a sustained future.

The 2024 Operating Fund Budget is a comprehensive document that addresses the anticipated revenues and expenditures for ALL borough operations including general government, police, streets, wastewater system, water system, stormwater system, recreation programs, community development and capital funds. For accounting purposes, all operations are managed within a single operating fund. For illustration purposes, this Budget document also contains "snapshots" of each of these separate operations.



The annual budget document is the single most important policy document adopted by Borough Council each year. The budget guides the management of the Borough throughout the year by clearly setting forth the goals and objectives of the Council for the coming year and authorizing the programs that will be carried out to meet those objectives. The budget document also sets forth the management plan for implementing the programs and achieving the community goals and objectives. As Council's number one policy statement, the budget accomplishes the following:

- Economic development initiatives are pursued
- Service levels are set
- Partnerships are nourished
- New technology is acquired
- Community security is enhanced through public safety
- Borough employees are supported in delivering efficient and effective services
- Public infrastructure is built and maintained

- Recreation for citizens is provided
- Public health is protected by recycling, waste collection and water resources
- Reliability of utility services is funded
- The Borough's financial integrity is maintained to meet service and debt obligations, and to provide sufficient reserves for future capital investments
- Customer service is enhanced
- Improved quality of life is sought for all citizens

The budget sets the annual operating and capital budgets, as well as the capital improvement program for the next ten years. The budget and capital improvement program recognize the importance of well-planned improvements and replacements that are necessary to protect the Borough's public facilities. Therefore, the budget document not only serves as a policy guide for the coming year, but it also establishes a long-range planning document that provides the framework for sound financial decision-making and establishes the foundation for a strong and dynamic future for the community.

The 2024 Operating Budget calls for revenues of \$7,266,390 and expenditures of \$7,266,390. The general fund budget is balanced without an increase in real estate taxes.

	Revenues	Expenditures	Surplus
General Fund Budget	\$2,573,760.00	\$2,573,760.00	\$0.00
Water Fund Budget	\$2,456,600.00	\$2,456,600.00	\$0.00
Wastewater Fund Budget	\$2,005,530.00	\$2,005,530.00	\$0.00
Stormwater Fund Budget	\$230,500.00	\$230,500.00	\$0.00
Total Operating Fund	\$7,266,390.00	\$7,266,390.00	\$0.00

The General Fund Budget reflects an increase of 10.9% over last year. This increase is primarily due to overall inflation in supplies and services. In particular, the budget reflects a new five-year garbage and recycling contract and the hiring of an additional full-time police officer to reduce anticipated overtime and to ensure 24/7/365 coverage, mainly due to difficulties encountered in reliably securing part-time officers utilized in the past.

The Water Fund Budget has a 14.9% increase, which is due to an increase in revenues and expenditures due to a large infrastructure project to replace a third of the borough's antiquated waterlines. The Borough has a rich history but unfortunately, the waterlines are a product of this history and many have not been updated. Fortunately, the Borough's Municipal Authority was able to secure a substantial grant that will cover a little over forty percent of a water main replacement project, but the rest will have to be paid for by the users. The Authority has also applied for funding to help cover the cost of a Phase I Stormwater Project but as of this time, the

outcome is unknown. If obtained, however, the Stormwater Fund should have an adequate reserve and revenue stream to fund this project.

BASIC POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- A basic premise in preparing the 2024 Budget is to minimize any required increase in real estate tax rates to fund day-to-day operations.
- It is the Borough's policy to estimate revenues conservatively.
- A two-tier real estate tax will be maintained.
- Existing levels of service shall be maintained.
- It is the Borough's policy to minimize borrowing. Borrowing is for capital expenditures and only when sufficient current funds are not available or municipal needs are unable to wait until current funds are available.
- Program fees charged for specialized services such as the swimming pool, tennis center and YPCC will be further evaluated to cover expenses associated with such programs, while keeping the program affordable. While a subsidy from general funds for these departments is acceptable, the optimal goal is self-sufficiency.
- The Borough will budget adequate funds to maintain all its assets at a level which protects the borough's capital investment and minimizes future repair and replacement costs.
- The Borough will project its equipment and vehicle replacement needs for the next ten years and will update this projection each year.
- All departments will budget contributions to Capital Reserves based on their estimated future share of costs for the replacement of vehicles and equipment, and for future maintenance and improvements to borough-owned facilities and buildings.
- Utility fees will be set at a level that fully supports the direct and indirect costs of providing service, including funding of Capital Reserves.
- The Salary & Wage Schedule will be adopted by Resolution of Borough Council annually.
- Idle cash will be invested on a continuous basis in legal, safe investments with adequate liquidity and yield.
- All department heads will actively pursue all State, Federal and private grant sources available for any and all borough expenses, including major equipment purchases and projects.
- Water and sewer tap fees will be placed in Capital Reserves for capital improvements to those systems.
- The appropriate departments will be assessed the actual stormwater fee associated with their facilities.

REAL ESTATE TAX

Ebensburg Borough utilizes a two-tier real estate tax assessment. A higher rate is applied to land than is applied to buildings. This form of assessment encourages the development of vacant land and does not overly penalize property owners for improvements made to properties.

The total taxable real estate assessment is \$35,052,130 comprised of assessed land value of \$6,351,370 and assessed building value of \$28,700,760. The rate of collection is estimated to be 95%. Overall, 25% of the assessed value of property in Ebensburg is exempt from real estate taxes.

The 2024 tax rates remain unchanged from 2023, with 39.25 mills on land and 11.75 mills on buildings. This is the equivalent of a 16.75 mill real estate tax in conventional terms.

On a two-tier basis, the tax rates of 39.25 mills on land and 8.5 mills on buildings are divided as follows:

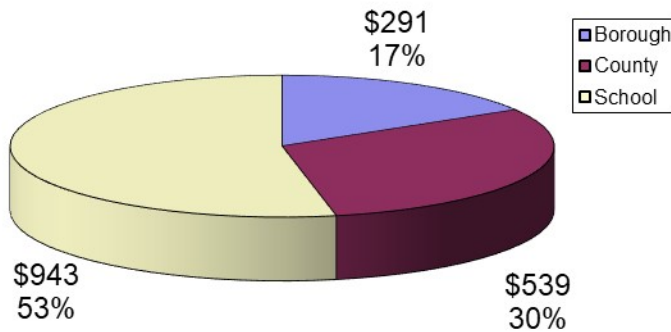
Tiered Millage Rate	
General Purposes	36.75 mills on land & 11.75 mills on buildings
Stormwater	2.50 mills on land
Total	39.25 mills on land & 11.75 mills on buildings

The following demonstrates how the calculation of the two-tier tax rate compares to the calculation of a conventional tax rate.

	Assessed Value	Millage Rate	Revenue Generated
Land	\$ 6,351,370	39.25	\$249,241
Buildings	\$28,700,760	11.75	<u>\$337,234</u>
Total			<u>\$586,525</u>
95% collection	\$35,052,130	16.75	\$557,199

COMPARISON OF TAXING AUTHORITIES

The 2024 average property assessment for residential property in Ebensburg Borough is \$17,383. Thus, the average taxpayer will pay approximately \$291 per year (a little less than \$25 per month) for borough services. These taxes fund the most basic borough services such as police protection, fire protection, street sweeping, snow plowing, street resurfacing, traffic signals, recreation, leaf collection, playgrounds, street lighting and other similar activities.



These borough services, and the corresponding borough property tax, represent only 17% of the total property tax bill paid by borough taxpayers. Thirty (30%) percent of taxes paid by borough taxpayers goes to county government (31.0 mills), and fifty-three (53%) percent goes to the local school district (54.25 mills).

OTHER TAXES

All Act 511 taxes will remain the same in 2024. The Act 511 taxes are as follows:

- 1.0% Realty Transfer Tax
- 1.0% Earned Income Tax
- \$47.00 Local Services Tax

2023 SUCCESSES

Ebensburg Borough has enjoyed remarkable change over the previous two decades. Each and every Council during that period has changed the face of Ebensburg, completing projects begun by their predecessors and undertaking their own new initiatives. Those notable accomplishments of past Councils include the YPCC, Memorial Field, Tennis Center, swimming pool and roller rink projects; neighborhood sidewalk replacement projects, the downtown streetscape project; the Saltlick waterline and inter-municipal connections; wastewater plant and collection system upgrades; new playgrounds; new downtown events; and multiple shared projects and purchases.

The current Borough Council continued that progressive spirit with even more initiatives. In 2023, Borough Council accomplished the following:

- Completed installation of new waterlines in the main section of downtown along East and West High Street.
- Milled and resurfaced streets in the northwest area of town.
- Replaced a police cruiser.
- Applied for and received a grant for the renovation of the Borough Pool.

- Oversaw the construction of a dog park at Lake Rowena, sponsored by the Rotary Club.
- Supported the Municipal Authority in a sewer line replacement project for Lovell Avenue and Manor Drive.
- Completed a hiring search for new Police Chief and successfully transitioned over
- Hired an additional full-time police officer.
- Maintained gold certification in the PA Sustainable Community Program.
- Currently negotiating with the Police Union for a new 4-year labor agreement.
- Oversaw installation of a “Welcome to Ebensburg” mural to beautify the salt shed at Lake Rowena
- Successfully negotiated a new five-year contract with Inframark for the continued operation of the sewer and water plants, plus oversight of sewage pumping stations.
- Negotiated a contract for the provision of electrician services, including coverage for emergency/quick-response needs.
- Bid the provision of garbage collection services and executed a new 5-year agreement with Pro Disposal.

GRANTS

The Borough Council has actively sought grants and low-interest funding for many projects.

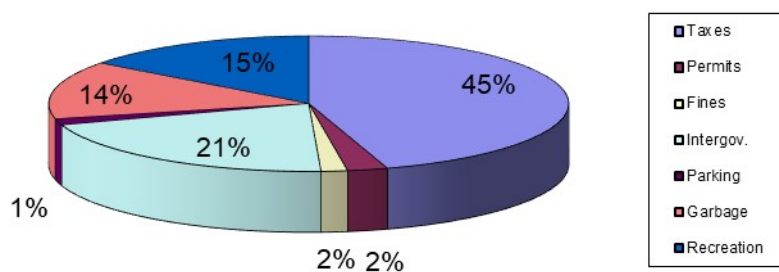
2023 Funding Sources		
Pool Renovations	Commonwealth	\$134,600
Airport Paint Machine	PennDOT	\$7,540
Street Resurfacing	PennDOT	\$112,637
Street Resurfacing	County	\$7,500
Dog Park	Commonwealth	\$112,000
Dog Park	S. Alleghenies	\$30,000
Dog Park	CFA	\$4,000
High Street Waterline	PENNVEST	\$1,265,610
Phase I Waterline Replacement	PENNVEST	\$3,476,431
Drug Task Force, Aggressive Driving, Etc.	PennDOT	\$3,371
Total Grants		\$5,153,689

DEBT ANALYSIS

Ebensburg Borough guarantees several loans on behalf of the Ebensburg Municipal Authority. As the Authority loans are self-liquidating, they are not included in the Borough's debt statement.

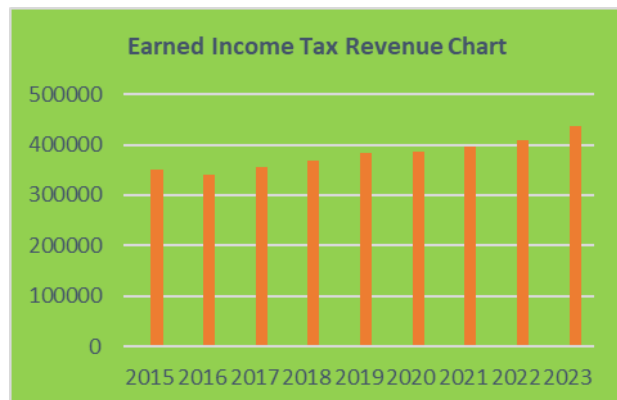
In 2020, Ebensburg Borough opened a line of credit for ongoing sidewalk and curb improvements in 2020 and 2021. The line of credit allowed costs to be paid for both projects while property owner assessments are collected. Following the completion of the 2021 project a balance of approximately \$670,000 existed. A separate loan was obtained in early 2022 to settle the line of credit. The loan was amortized over five years with funds already being reserved annually for sidewalks being utilized to cover the debt service. While the majority of sidewalk assessment funds have been collected, as of October 31, 2024, \$86,335 in assessments remain outstanding.

ANALYSIS OF GENERAL FUND REVENUES



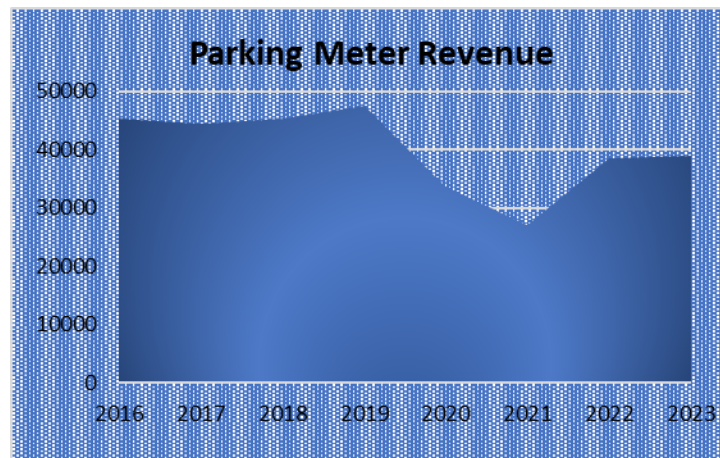
This chart illustrates the breakdown of revenues into the general fund. While real estate taxes make up the greatest percentage of revenue, they still represent less than 50%. Although decreasing in recent years, Ebensburg's combined recreation programs remain a significant source of revenue, constituting 15% of total revenues. It is important that those recreation-related revenues be monitored throughout the year to be certain that programs are meeting budgeted goals.

Earned Income Tax – The earned income tax is a ½ percent tax on all earned income for residents living within the borough limits. While the rate is constant, the collected amount increases nominally every year as wages and incomes increase.



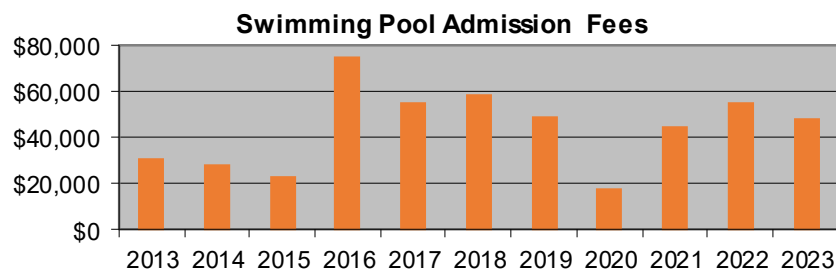
Local Services Tax - The local services tax is paid by all persons employed within Ebensburg Borough. The tax is \$52 per year, of which \$47 is paid to the borough and \$5 to the school district.

Parking – The revenue generated from parking meters has never been looked to as a source of income for the borough. The primary reason that the parking meters exist is to help assure that vehicles are rotated through the available parking spaces, making parking available for visitors to downtown Ebensburg.

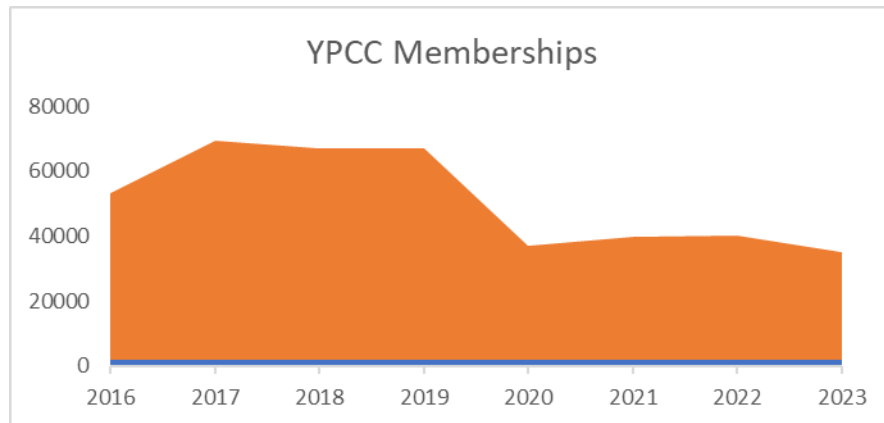


That said, it is important that the revenue covers the ongoing cost of enforcement, the capital costs of the meters and stations, the maintenance of same, and the parking lot lease cost. The annual cost of enforcement is approximately \$24,000. Annual maintenance is less than \$2,000. The parking lot lease is \$15,600. The capital cost of meter replacement varies and is addressed in the capital budget. Revenues remain below pre-pandemic levels. We will continue to monitor the revenue through 2024 and will make adjustments as appropriate.

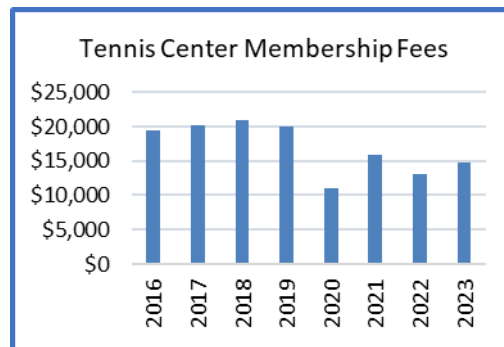
Swimming Pool – Revenue from swimming pool annual and daily passes has varied greatly over the years. Since the new pool was opened in 2012 there had been a gradual decline in memberships. New management, a summer of excellent weather, and the temporary closing of two nearby municipal pools resulted in a 324% increase in 2016. The 2020 season brought in only \$17,900, but the past season's revenues increased to just below pre-Covid levels.



YPCC – YPCC membership fees have also varied over the decade. Memberships drastically increased in 2009 when the fitness center was introduced and continued to grow for three years. As the fitness center became outdated and other privately-owned centers were opened, membership fees decreased. Covid and the purchasing of in-home equipment by customers, who were previously members, greatly reduced membership.

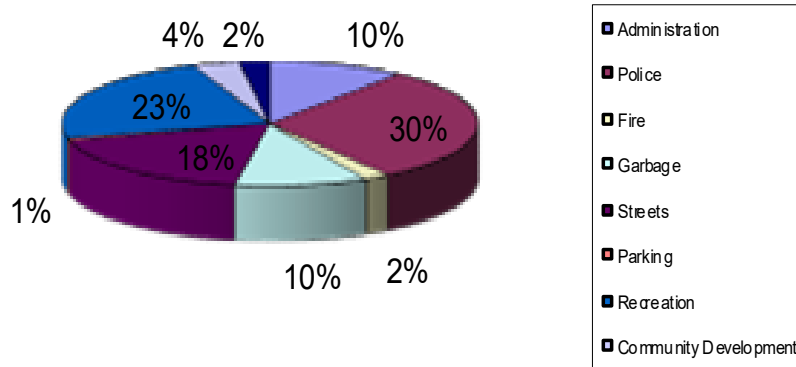


The Borough and the Recreation Committee will monitor this facility and look for ways to increase membership. Program fees, such as Silver Sneakers, have become a higher source of revenue and other such programs will continue to be evaluated and possibly increased.



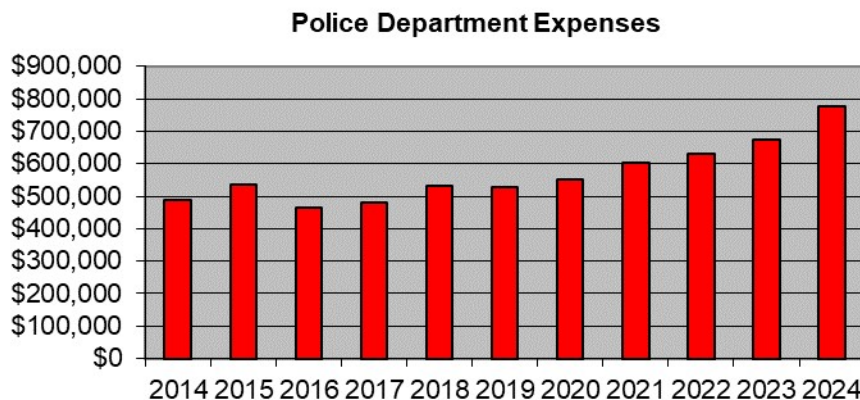
Tennis Center – Membership fees at the tennis center remained fairly consistent over its twelve years of operation but Covid-19 impacted the past four years of revenues. The past two years revenues appear to be on an upward trend but will continue to be monitored. The tennis pro has been very active in increasing the center's presence on social media and will continue to do so in 2024 to pursue additional members.

ANALYSIS OF GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES



The above chart illustrates the breakdown of expenditures from the general fund. The cost of police protection is Ebensburg's largest budgeted expense (\$776,935) followed by recreation (\$585,370).

Police Department – The cost of providing police protection has remained fairly consistent over the years but 2023 brought several major changes. The Borough welcomed a new police chief and because the number and availability of part-time officers has steadily decreased and it is anticipated that another long-time officer will retire, the Borough hired another officer. This decision was not made lightly as the cost affected the budget, but the safety of Borough residents is a priority. The hiring of this officer allows Ebensburg to continue to benefit from full twenty-four-hour coverage. The Borough will pursue obtaining a grant that will off-set the cost hiring another officer, should we experience attrition, for the first five years of employment through a COPS Hiring Program. This grant is designed to provide funding directly to communities for the hiring of officers in an effort to increase community policing and crime prevention efforts.



Recreation – The 2024 Budget contains five sections devoted to recreational facilities.

YPCC – Since its inception, the YPCC has required a significant subsidy from the general fund in order to pay for day-to-day operational costs. That subsidy was as high as \$88,000 in 2015. Due to significant changes the subsidy dropped to less than \$30,000 but the effects of Covid were severe and the subsidy increased to over \$50,000 for several years.

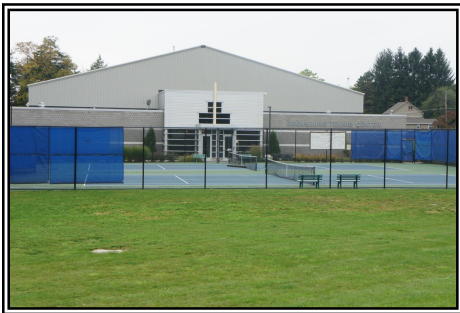
For 2024 the subsidy is approximately \$42,900. Staff increased activities offered and will need to continue to assess membership and activities provided to increase revenue sources.

Considering the amount of activity at the YPCC and the high percentage of our population served by the center's programs, Council remains committed to subsidizing its operation to the extent necessary.

Swimming Pool – The swimming pool has also historically required an annual general fund subsidy. That subsidy varies greatly from year to year depending primarily on weather. While revenues increased drastically when the renovations were completed in 2012, they gradually declined since. The pool recovered in revenues after Covid but increases in chemical costs, heating and personnel have caused an increase in outflows. The annual subsidy for the swimming pool is approximately \$38,190.



Parks – This line item covers the operation, maintenance and electricity for Kimball Park, Penn Eben Park, Veterans Park, Memorial Field, Lake Rowena and the three playgrounds.



Tennis Center – Ebensburg's Tennis Center has continued to grow its programming and has been able to reliably support its own operation. Since Covid, though the facility has experienced a deficit. This year, a deficit of approximately \$54,660 is anticipated. Staff continues to seek ways to control expenses and increase revenue sources.

Roller Rink – The roller-skating rink is not expected to generate any significant revenue, nor incur any significant cost. Program fees assessed for leagues and tournaments will be sufficient to cover unusual costs for those events such as electricity and staff.



Highways – The Borough did not undertake any street paving projects between 2014 and 2019, in anticipation of the comprehensive wastewater project. Since then, the Borough has repaved nearly every Borough-maintained street. Due to increased asphalt costs, the Borough was unable to finish the few remaining streets, but it is anticipated these will be done in 2024. After this, the Borough will be in a good position to return to a regular schedule of street maintenance.

The Borough has made it a standard to mill existing paved surfaces prior to resurfacing. While that increases the total cost by 25% it avoids stormwater issues, preserves curb reveal and makes a better job overall.

Timber Management – Ebensburg owns over 1,300 acres of property in the borough and Cambria Township. Approximately 800 acres of that is populated with various types of standing timber. The last sale of timber was in 2018. The borough retains a forester to manage the timber, and to provide advice on management practices. Have you checked with our forester to see if the Borough or Municipal Authority should be cutting in 2024?

Community Development – Events in Ebensburg such as PotatoFest, Wheels & Wings, Dickens of a Christmas, Homecoming and Art in Bloom will continue to grow and have a very positive impact on the community.

Capital Improvement Program – The Borough Council places great importance on adequately funding a comprehensive capital improvement program. The capital reserve fund allows Council to undertake unanticipated projects and incur unexpected costs without negatively impacting the annual operating budget.

Regardless of any difficulties experienced in balancing an annual budget, the importance of continuing to fund a capital reserve fund must be recognized.

ANALYSIS OF UTILITY-RELATED FUND REVENUES

The 2018, 2019 and 2020 budgets described rising concerns about water and wastewater revenues and warned of rate adjustments that would be required in coming years. Water rates were adjusted in 2022 and will need to be adjusted again in 2024 to adequately supply the revenue needed for debt service on projects. Wastewater revenues will remain adequate in 2024.

Wastewater System – There are three factors looming in the future that will affect wastewater revenues, none of which are addressed in the 2024 budget.

First, the facility-owned wastewater collection system at the Ebensburg Center is in such poor condition, and allows so much stormwater to infiltrate, that a surcharge has been added to the facility's bill for many years. The surcharge averaged \$54,000 annually, with over \$30,000 still received in 2023. Repairs are ongoing at the facility that should greatly reduce the amount of infiltration. While that is good news for the treatment plant's capacity, it will negatively affect wastewater revenues.

Second, there have been discussions about the potential closing of the Ebensburg Center. That is

not likely to occur in the near future, but if it were to eventually happen, the loss in wastewater revenue will be in excess of \$130,000 annually (unless, of course, another user with similar water needs were to move into that facility).

Third, the reserve fund was utilized this past year to install 3,500 L.F. of gravity sewer main and appurtenances along a backlot area adjacent to Manor Drive and Lovell Park, including reconnection of existing customer connections. The purpose of the project was to address structural deficiencies within the existing sanitary sewer mains which resulted in excessive inflow and infiltration. During 2024, the reserve will need to be evaluated for future planned capital projects.

Water System – There are three factors that will affect the water system revenues in the long term as well.

First, if the closure of Ebensburg Center were to occur, the loss in revenue would be approximately \$80,000 annually.

Second, Ebensburg Center has been plagued by water leaks. Major water leaks generate revenues to the fund, but repairs are usually made as soon as possible. Again, while that is good news for Ebensburg Center, it is bad news for our own water sales.

Third, Maple Heights (formerly Cambria Care Center) has taken measures to decrease the amount of water purchased. For example, their laundry now recycles water. Annual sales to that facility are down more than \$60,000 annually. Only a small part of that loss of revenue is being made up for through new customers, as overall system revenue growth is stagnant.

In the coming years, there will likely be the need for further rate adjustments to cover 1) routine operating costs and 2) planned capital projects and repairs to water leaks that plague the system. The water reserve fund contains less than \$200,000, which is insufficient to cover these future capital costs.

ANALYSIS OF UTILITY-RELATED FUND EXPENDITURES



Wastewater System – A major wastewater system replacement project was begun in 2018 and completed in 2019. The project was aimed at separating stormwater from the wastewater system, allowing the combined sewer overflows to be eliminated. The \$9M project was funded with a PENNVEST loan with an interest rate of 1% over 25 years.

A wastewater rate increase was implemented in 2013 in anticipation of the project. The balance of the required increase was imposed in 2016. All revenue generated by those rate increases has been directed towards the debt service due to PENNVEST.

In 2023 a sewer line replacement project in the areas of Lovell Park and Manor Drive was completed. Other than that, no major capital projects are anticipated.

Water System – In 2020, the Municipal Authority conducted a water system evaluation and capital needs study of the distribution system. That report, presented to the Authority in the spring of 2021 described a capital improvement project costing \$10+ million on the distribution system alone. It included the need to replace storage tanks first constructed around 1900 and water mains that are 120 years old.



In 2022 the Municipal Authority imposed a rate increase that provided additional annual operating revenue that was applied to short-term debt for engineering costs associated with grant applications for improvements at the water plant and for the replacement of antiquated lines.

This endeavor was successful because, as stated earlier, the first phase of this project will take place in 2024. A grant in the amount of \$3,476,431 and a low interest loan in the amount of \$5,59,030 was secured through PENNVEST for this project. Although rates will have to be raised considering this, it is the best fiscally responsible decision to do so because if the Authority waited, the lines would still need to be replaced and it is doubtful that such a large grant would be secured in the future.

In addition, the total replacement of the water treatment plant is being considered. That project, which will need to be addressed at some point in the next ten years, will cost at least \$15 million. The Saltlick loan will be paid off in 2025 freeing up funds that can be directed toward a water plant project, but it is less than half of what that new debt service will cost.

Stormwater System – Stormwater management fees were implemented in September 2014, and the full rate was imposed in 2016. Each department is assessed a stormwater fee on its Borough-owned facilities, just like all other private property owners. A small portion of the fees is utilized for stormwater maintenance, with the majority placed in reserves for future projects.

With the elimination of stormwater flows into the sanitary sewer system, and the apparent increased frequency of significant rainfall events, the Municipal Authority began design on a major stormwater improvement project affecting several areas of town and is currently seeking funding for the construction.

HUMAN RESOURCE FACTORS

Labor costs obviously affect all departments. It is important to understand historical trends relative to labor and strive to control those costs.

Pension Plans – The Borough provided two defined benefit employee pension plans that had recovered from the depressed market conditions that resulted in the need for the borough to expend considerable sums on employee pensions. The borough share that had once exceeded

\$130,000 was below \$25,000 in 2016 and 2017 but it has increased due to the recent market situation.

The employee contributions to the non-uniformed plan increased to 5% but the uniformed pension plan remains at 3% in 2024.

Due to the downward spiral of investments, a major financial concern facing Ebensburg Borough in the future will continue to be the cost of employee pensions.

In 2021 the Borough implemented a new pension plan for all new non-uniformed hires. This plan is a defined-contribution plan that is not dependent on market conditions and will allow the Borough to benefit from the ability to plan the expenditures well into the future.

Employee Healthcare – Increases in the cost of employee healthcare have had a drastic impact on everyone in the public and private sectors. Premiums are anticipated to increase 9% in 2024. The first half of the decade saw double-digit increases in premiums each and every year. Borough Council has acted responsibly and proactively to contain those costs to the extent possible and will continue to do so.

Employee Wages – In 2021 and 2022 the Borough experienced significant difficulty in attracting and retaining employees, especially in the Public Works department, for several reasons. Due to the economy and recent trends in the workforce, potential employees considered other starting wages and benefits in the area and the Borough's compensation and packages offered were not competitive. As a result, the Borough was unable to fill vacant positions and operated with a limited workforce for most of the year. To retain current employees and ensure the capacity to attract new employees in the future, the Borough increased the hourly wage of employees to a level that is in line with the average with other municipalities of our size across the state. The Borough was also forced to reinstate health insurance for employee dependents, although with continued contributions required from employees that were already in place.

The decision to reinstate benefits and increase wages was not taken lightly by Council knowing that it would affect the budget this year and in the future. However, it was determined that staff could not operate efficiently to provide the essential services that our residents require without a fully staffed workforce or even worse, with a "revolving door" in which employees routinely left for better opportunities.

SIDEWALK PROJECTS

In 2018, Council approved the design of a major sidewalk improvement project on Horner Street, Crawford Street, Sample Street, Caroline Street, South Marian Street and West Triumph Street. The design costs were paid from the sidewalk reserve. All required permitting, including HOP and E&S, were secured.

In 2019 sidewalk and curb construction was completed on South Caroline Street, South Marian Street and West Triumph Street. In 2020, a similar project was completed in the northeast quadrant of town on North Caroline Street, East Horner Street, East Crawford Street and East

Sample Street. In 2021 a contract was awarded for sidewalk and curb replacement for the third and final phase of this project in the northwest quadrant of town. This was completed in 2022 with the roads paved and trees planted in the fall. Both sidewalk projects on the two northern quadrants are being financed over a five-year period. The revenue that was reserved annually has been redirected to cover that debt service.

In 2024, no significant sidewalk project is planned. Council may consider a sidewalk project in the future, once the current loan for the most recent project is paid off.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY CERTIFICATION

The Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification, a project of the Pennsylvania Municipal League, is a voluntary performance recognition program designed to help municipalities achieve sustainability goals, which in turn will allow them to save money, conserve resources, and encourage innovation. The program is intended to bring recognition to municipalities that are applying the policy and practice of sustainability; municipalities that incorporate sustainable practices into their operations also foster community prosperity. The program provides communities with an online structure and performance platform for recognition as they adopt sustainable policies and practices. The program helps municipalities progress from whatever their municipal practices are or have been in the past toward achieving a Sustainable future.

In 2021 the Borough received the Gold level of sustainability. Only a small percentage of communities across the Commonwealth have attained this status. Looking ahead, the Borough will focus on maintaining and resubmitting for sustainability recognition in 2024.

DIVERSITY

In 2020, Council formed a standing diversity committee and established policies for private and civic groups to sponsor events in Ebensburg. Organized activities in this area were, and to some extent, remain to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We expect continued emphasis on this area throughout 2024.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES IN 2024

The purpose of borough government is to serve the residents and property owners of the community. This requires the various departments of the Borough to do their share in providing a livable community in all respects (physically and socially). The community needs a sound infrastructure to serve its residents and property owners, as well as to protect property values in the future. The Borough must also protect its residents and property owners, as well as their properties. The Borough must provide a social atmosphere that will encourage the community's viability in the forms of recreation, social services, aesthetics, sound economic base and responsiveness to community problems. Finally, borough government has a responsibility to inform the public of its activities and plans to permit the residents and property owners the ability to assess the effectiveness of their government and make known their opinions.

There are four basic divisions for accomplishing the above:

1. General Government
2. Protection of Persons & Property
3. Public Works
4. Culture & Recreation

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The basic functions of the Borough need a variety of support and coordinating services to permit them to operate. These services also act as the implementation arm for Council's policies. These services include administration, finance, tax collection, facilities, community development, and professional services such as legal, engineering and accounting. The objectives in 2024 include:

Administration

- Provide training and educational opportunities to elected officials including conferences and seminars sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Boroughs Association (PSAB).
- Provide training and educational opportunities to management including municipal management conferences and seminars offered by PSAB, Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management (APMM), International City/Municipal Managers Association (ICMA), and PA Municipal League (PML).
- Continue inter-municipal cooperation with neighboring municipalities in the areas of recreation, comprehensive planning, and economic development.

Community Development

- Continue to implement the Main Street 4-point Approach to downtown revitalization; economic restructuring, organization, design and promotion.
- Obtain a new series of Façade Improvement funds for downtown improvements.
- Continue improvements to the community website.
- Continue publication of borough newsletter twice per year.
- Continue efforts to maintain a college intern on staff throughout the year.
- Refinish benches, bollard lights, trash receptacles, pole bases as needed.
- Continue to maintain certification in PML's Sustainability program and begin the recertification process.
- Complete a project intended to welcome trail users to Ebensburg and encourage them to visit downtown.
- FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT



PROTECTION OF PERSONS & PROPERTY

The Borough provides or finances a variety of services to protect the public and property including police protection, parking enforcement, fire prevention and suppression, emergency management, codes enforcement, planning and zoning, and solid waste collection and recycling. The objectives in 2024 include:

Police Protection

- Continue to provide educational opportunities for police officers.
- Monitor use of part-time officers in order to remain within budgetary limits.
- Make a concentrated effort to share resources and opportunities with the neighboring municipalities.
- Purchase ammunition
- Purchase or lease body cameras.
- Calibration of parking meters.

Codes Enforcement

- Maintain strict enforcement of property maintenance regulations.
- Continue strict controls on neglected grass and weeds.

Zoning

- Continue to assist Laurel Municipal Inspection Agency with zoning enforcement so that the needs of our residents are met.

Solid Waste Collection & Recycling

- Increase public education for the voluntary curbside recycling program to encourage maximum participation.

PUBLIC WORKS

The Borough maintains a 15.2-mile road network, storm sewers and numerous buildings and structures. In addition, the Borough maintains the water, wastewater and stormwater systems on behalf of the Ebensburg Municipal Authority. The objectives in 2024 are:

Highways

- Complete a street resurfacing project.
- Provide efficient snow removal services.
- Continue the annual replacement program for old street signs and posts, in compliance with retro-reflectivity policy.
- Conduct yearly inspections of traffic signal poles.

Water System

- Continued monitoring and repairing of leaking lines.
- Install a meter pit at Maple Heights for fire hydrants and sprinkler lines.
- Begin an annual program of customer water meter replacement.
- Continue with inspection of lines and laterals and complete paperwork involved to abide by mandated Lead-Copper Rule.



Wastewater System

- Monitor and repair/replace mains as needed.

Stormwater

- Secure funding for the construction of a significant project in the northern quadrant of town.

Timber Management - No planned activities.

CULTURE & RECREATION

The Borough provides a well-rounded variety of recreational facilities including three playgrounds, Lake Rowena, the YPCC, Memorial Field, the Ebensburg Tennis Center, Ebensburg Skate Park and Ebensburg Swimming Pool. It also provides financial support to the Ebensburg library. The objectives in 2024 include:

General

- Acquire college interns to assist with department needs including landscaping, field maintenance, office admin and programming.

Swimming Pool

- Purchase additional deck chairs.
- Begin renovations to the pool to secure the stability of the structure for the future.

Lake Rowena

- In coordination with the Fish Commission, apply herbicide to control lake weeds.
- Continue control program to manage geese.
- Repair or replace the fishing pier, with the assistance of the Mainstreet Partnership.
- Remove the suspended boat dock.
- Continue to investigate possibility for a dredging project.



Tennis Center

- Resurface the indoor courts.
- Evaluate solutions to prevent condensation from roof

YPCC

- Continued evaluation of practices and activities to increase membership.
- Refinish gym floor.

AIRPORT

In 2008 Ebensburg Borough entered into a fifteen-year agreement with Regional Aviation Conservation and Recreation Association (RACRA) for the lease and operation of the airport. The initial term of the lease ends on December 31, 2023. RACRA had the option to extend the lease for up to two additional five-year terms, but failed to do so within the prescribed timeframe. Prior to the end of the current lease, Council will need to consider granting an

extension to RACRA, which has successfully managed operations of the airport for the past 15 years at no expense to the Borough.

During the course of 2023, it became evident that one of the hangar structures at the airport was in poor condition. The structure was evaluated by a structural engineer, and it was determined that repairs could effectively be made. RACRA has funds available for immediate shoring of the hangar, and intends to utilize grant funds in 2024 to make permanent repairs.

Assuming that the lease with RACRA will be extended, there are no expenses relative to the airport included in the 2024 budget.

CAPITAL BUDGET

Ebensburg Borough has a long-standing commitment to upgrade and replace borough facilities and equipment. This budget provides funding for the ongoing capital improvement program.

Adequate capital reserves are budgeted in each department in order to assure that needed funds are on hand in the future. In 2024, a total of \$658,500 will be transferred from the general, water, wastewater and stormwater funds to the capital improvement fund. The annual transfers are necessary in order to ensure that adequate funds are on hand in the future to meet the obligations of an ongoing capital improvement program. The capital budget allocates \$413,900 toward projects in 2024. We are fortunate to still have the financial capacity to provide prudent investment in the future through capital improvements and projects, which will ensure the sustainability of vital systems and improve overall quality of life.

FUTURE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

This budget contemplates continuing Council's long-standing practice of investing in community improvements. Our Capital Improvement Program will continue to allow us to enhance community aesthetics and improve public facilities. Our residents will enjoy new programs and services and take even greater pride in their community.

Ebensburg Borough remains financially strong and sound. That is largely due to Borough Council's willingness to continue to invest in the borough's future. While many towns are in a state of decline, Ebensburg continues to be active and vibrant. The economic status of our region is struggling with the rest of the country, but a renaissance in Ebensburg Borough is continuing. Ongoing funding of an aggressive capital improvement program is essential to the Borough's future success. The ability to respond positively to unforeseen opportunities without incurring unnecessary debt is an important benefit of such a program.

PUBLIC IMAGE

We expect Ebensburg Borough to continue to experience change in 2024. We will enter 2024 in anticipation of a large waterline replacement project and hopeful that funding for a stormwater project will be obtained and come to fruition.

A resident recently asked a member of Council, “When will Ebensburg be done?” It is our hope that Ebensburg will never be done because the continued process of seeking out and implementing improvements allows us to be adequately prepared for our future so we can continue to thrive. At the same time, we must also aggressively identify and pursue efficiencies and other cost savings measures to offset inevitable increases in expenses over time. With Ebensburg essentially “built out”, we cannot expect that growth in population or businesses will provide the increased revenues needed as we move forward.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Ebensburg is a strong community where the citizens have come to expect responsive municipal services, delivered in an efficient manner by a professional Borough Council and staff. I am proud to have served as Manager of a community that is open-minded, forward-thinking and committed to making improvements. It is with great pleasure and purpose that we serve the citizens of Ebensburg together.

In doing so, we rely heavily upon a cadre of volunteers who serve voluntarily on the various authorities, boards, and commissions. Others provide their time to volunteer for our numerous community events and are invaluable to the borough’s success.

Our employees continue to deliver quality cost-effective service to our residents. Their talents and creativity have proven invaluable, and we are committed to recognizing their dedication and efforts through appropriate compensation and benefit packages.



CONCLUSION

Financial stability will be maintained in the future through the Borough's ongoing efforts to provide the highest quality service in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible. It has been achieved through establishing and following sound financial management policies designed to protect the public's finances and provide accountability to the taxpayers.



This budget, considered a reliable financial plan for the 2024 fiscal year, maintains and enhances our key services while working, to the extent possible, within our financial constraints. It reflects the balance between current economic realities and the desire to provide the best government possible during these current conditions. It is the continuing goal of the staff to produce excellence in budgeting, evidenced by the high standards of financial reporting displayed throughout this document.

I wish to extend my personal gratitude for the hard work of all staff and Councilors in its preparation. Most importantly, thanks to our Mayor and Borough Council for their policy direction, leadership, and continuing support.

I am confident that the upcoming fiscal year will be another year of progress and improvement for our community, with major emphasis on minimizing the impacts of inflation and rising costs. I am grateful to each of you for your leadership and support, and I welcome your comments and suggestions as you review the attached information in the days ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Cook
Borough Manager