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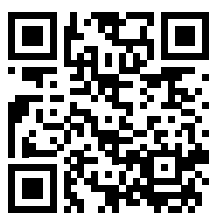
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We spoke with the people
behind placing this
“Opioid Bench” in front
of the Senior/Communi-
ty Center, as a way to
raise awareness about the
opioid epidemic.



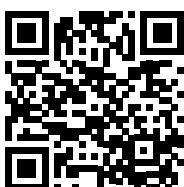
The Franklin High
School Aviation Club
had a chance to experi-
ence aviation close-up
when they went up in a
hot air balloon, piloted
by a veteran airman.



A celebration of the
Muslim holy month of
Ramadan was held at the
township Senior/Com-
munity Center. We spoke
with the organizers and
township officials.



A commemoration of
the two-year anniversary
of Russia's invasion of
Ukraine was held at the
Ukrainian Cultural Cen-
ter on Davidson Avenue.



Budget Discussions Point To Tax Hikes

Health Care Cost Hike Spurring Tax Increase

Township property owners can expect a tax increase this year that's larger than hikes in the past several years, Mayor Phil Kramer said during the Township Council's March 11 budget virtual hearing.

One of the bigger factors in the increase is the looming \$2.5 million increase in the cost of employee health insurance costs, he said.

*Township may raise water rates ...
Page 2.*

The Mayor's sudden announcement came during a discussion of the Conferences and Meetings budget line item in the Township Council budget.

Some Council members

were advocating raising the \$5,750 allocation, something that didn't sit well with the Mayor.

“We're going to be raising taxes, probably more than we have in the past 5 or 6 years,” Kramer said. “This is probably not the best time to be adding travel expenses.”

“Employee medical costs are going way up,” he said.

Township Manager Robert Vornlocker said the costs were set to increase by \$2.5 million.

The municipal portion of township property tax bills – which is the only part of the bill controlled by the township – increased 1 percent in each of the 2023 and 2022

Continued on Page 7.

School Board Deals With ‘Steep’ Aid Cut

A steep cut in state aid and a multi-million dollar increase in charter school tuition presented stiff challenges, but school district officials said the proposed 2024-25 budget should only result in a minor increase in the school portion of township property tax bills.

Schools Superintendent John Ravally said the tax rate should be what he called “stable,” meaning it should not cost the owner of a home assessed at the township's average rate more than \$100 for the year.

The Board of Education on March 20 approved the district's preliminary 2024-25 spending plan, which now

goes to the Somerset County Executive Superintendent for review and approval.

The preliminary budget's total \$194,074,956 general fund is powered by a \$162,114,985 tax levy, a 2.7 percent increase from the current year.

Among the “challenges” enunciated by Ravally during the budget presentation were a decrease in state aid of about \$400,000 and a 12 percent increase in charter school tuition.

“That's a big number for us,” he said. “That's about \$3.2 million.”

“So when we talk about a limit of 2 percent growth on a tax levy, that eats up 75

Continued on Page 7.

Franklin Food Bank Awarded \$1 Million ‘Yield Giving’ Grant



A LOT TO SMILE ABOUT – Franklin Food Bank Executive Director Derek Smith said he was “humbled” when notified that the organization was awarded a \$1 million grant (File photo.)

A \$1 million grant to the Franklin Food Bank from a foundation founded by MacKenzie Scott, the ex-wife of billionaire Jeff Bezos, will be put toward a new, larger facility, according to the organization.

The grant was part of \$640 million Scott's foundation, Yield Giving, awarded to 361 non-profits on March 19.

“From a pool of over 6,000 applicants, each of these 361 community-led non-profits was elevated by peer organizations and a round-2 evaluation panel for their outstanding work

advancing the voices and opportunities of individuals and families of meager or modest means, and groups who have met with discrimination and other systemic obstacles,” Scott wrote on her web site. “Grateful to Lever for Change and everyone on the evaluation and implementation teams for their roles in creating this pathway to support for people working to improve access to foundational resources in their communities. They are vital agents of change.”

Scott, who with Bezos founded Amazon, vowed to give away half of her wealth

to charity when she and Bezos divorced. Scott's net worth has been set at \$40 billion.

“(F)or the Franklin Food Bank to be recognized by Yield Giving as one of the impactful organizations doing transformative work in the food security space, that really means the world to us,” Franklin Food Bank Executive Director Derek Smith said in a press release about the grant.

In a separate email, a Food Bank representative wrote that the money would be used toward a new, larger facility the organization hopes to be active in three years.

“As a result of the enhancements made to the Franklin Food Bank's programming over the past two years combined with our ability to deliver these programs in a positive and stigma-free atmosphere, and finally the very real economic landscape our neighbors face each and every day which cause people to experience food insecurity at alarming rates, we have outgrown our building,” the email reads. “Bursting at our concrete seams, we are now visioning and planning to move to a larger facility in the next three years.”

Continued on Page 6.



Empty Bowls Brings Large Crowd To DoubleTree

Approximately 300 people gathered at the DoubleTree Hotel on Atrium Drive March 10 for the sixth annual Empty Bowls fundraiser for the Franklin Food Bank.

The attendees were able to sample food from a handful of local restaurants and shop for one-of-a-kind handmade pottery and crafted items.

Bob Cherill, one of the fundraiser's organizers, said that this year's turnout was the best in the event's short history.

“We walked in here with \$22,000 raised,” from advance ticket sales, he said. He said that total did not count whatever proceeds were made

Continued on Page 6.

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Township Council Budget Hearing Reveals Possible Water Rate Hike



BUDGET TALKS – Township Council members held the second of two virtual budget sessions on March 19.

A hike in township water utility rates may be in the offing.

If it comes to pass, the rate hike would be the second such increase in two years.

A discussion about the water utility budget during the March 19 Township Council budget hearing revealed the same problem facing the Council in 2023: current revenue will not cover the increases in what the Township pays for water from its two main suppliers, New Jersey American Water and the City of New Brunswick.

When asked if the increase would require a rate hike by Councilman Ram Anbarasan (D-At Large), Township Manager Robert Vornlocker would not commit to recommending such a

move.

The potential of a hike in what township water customers pay is “a discussion we’ll have at another Council meeting,” he said. “But that’s a discussion being held at the (Council’s) Financial Oversight meetings, yes.”

Vornlocker said that in 2023, the Township used 108 percent of the allocation for water purchases.

“This reflects a rate increase and an allocation increase” from both providers, he said.

The township spent \$10.1 million on water in 2023, Vornlocker said. The 2024 recommended allocation is \$11.8 million.

“It’s necessary to supply all of our customers with water,” he said.

Among the departmental

“The rate increases for 2023 did not compensate for the increases in 2023 for the purchase of water,” he said. “The water utility has increased the budget, primarily due to the costs of water and personnel costs, by \$3.3 million. That rate increase of 2023 would not cover this increase in the budget,” he said.

The Township has also had to increase the amount of water it buys from the providers, Vornlocker said.

Public Works Manager Carl Hauck said the Township has increased its allocation from New Jersey American Water from 4.8 million gallons a day to between 5.25 million gallons and 5.75 million gallons a day.

The allocation from New Brunswick has been increased from 2 million gallons to 4 million gallons a day, he said.

“The town has gone in the past 10 years from 6.8 million gallons per day to closer to 8.8 million gallons per day,” Hauck said.

Council members and Township staff spent three hours discussing a number of budget requests from various departments.

asks was \$188,000 for four Explorer/pickups, \$120,000 to replace bullet-proof vests, and \$70,000 for a Virtual Reality training simulator.

Public Safety Director Quovella Maeweather said the four Explorers were needed to make up for a shortfall in vehicles.

“Previously we had cars approved and we were behind 17 vehicles,” she said. “We budgeted for 17, but we were only able to purchase 13” because of general lack of inventory and price increases for the vehicles.

“So I’m asking for four more to get us to that bottom line number because of the price increase and the unavailability of vehicles,” she said.

Maeweather said the bullet-proof vests have to be replaced because they have reached their five-year lifespans.

The Township’s costs for liability and health care insurance will increase by \$166,000 and \$1.8 million, respectively, Vornlocker said.

Vornlocker said the health care increase is about 24 percent over last year.

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Council Debates Partnering With BOE On Training Program

A nearly hour-long, sometimes heated discussion on partnering with the Board of Education to provide a construction trades training program ended March 12 with the Township Council agreeing to discuss the issue in April.

At issue was a proposal for the Council to give the school district more than \$300,000 of American Recovery Program funds to pay for a program targeted for up to 24 students in the Road To Success alternative high school program.

The program would be offered to RTS students during summer school, and also in the 2024-2025 school year. The course would be delivered at Franklin Middle School – Hamilton Street campus.

The idea was brought to the Council by Township Manager Robert Vornlocker; it was previously favorably discussed by the Council's Financial Oversight Committee.

While Councilwoman Kimberly Francois (D-At Large) spoke favorably of the plan, other Council members expressed reservations about its cost, its future sustainability and what the outcomes of the course would be.

The school district would contract with North Brunswick-based Brenshirer Training Institute, a workforce development company.

The company provided a similar course for Franklin Middle School students last year, Vornlocker said. He said the success of that program spurred district administration to contact the Township for a partnership opportunity.

The program "was met with a great deal of positive response after the course was completed, and Councilwoman Francois was contacted by Orvyl Wilson to see if there was any opportunity for the township to provide future funding to continue the course ... with a target being the Road to Success program for high school-aged students," he said.

Upon completing the course, students would receive a certification from National Center for Construction Education and Research, Vornlocker said.

He said many meetings were held with schools Superintendent John Ravally and Orvyl Wilson, the District's Director of School Management to fine-tune the program and come up with a reasonable cost.

The cost – \$301,012.84 – "would cover all costs associated with the program, the lumber, the sheet rock, the electrical they would have the hands-on training for," he said. "All the equipment they would need."

Students would attend the program two hours a day, five days a week, Vornlocker said.

The money would come from the Township's \$7,735,000 American Rescue Plan grant, Vornlocker said. Of that, "\$2 million has been appropriated for water system improvements in the 4th and 5th wards, \$2 million was appropriated for sewer main improvements in that same area, \$1.5 million has been appropriated for a health care facility on the grounds of the Middle School to serve the school population and in the future the general population of the township for those in need," he said.

Francois said the program would be a way to do some good for the RTS students.

"The RTS students are at risk, and most of them have dropped out of school," she said. "When they take this course, they'll have a skill set, then they can potentially get job placement."

"If we invest in a few students and one, two, three, or four come out with a skill

where they can be a construction trade worker, we've done something good in our community," she said.

But other Council members weren't sold on the idea.

"I don't sense there's anybody who doesn't support the program ... but I think it's our responsibility to see that we get the biggest bang for our buck," said Councilman James Vassanella (D-Ward 5).

"Why would the school board (not) look at putting whatever space is there to have a teacher ... if this is a worthwhile program, why wouldn't we want to create the framework through which children every year would be able to benefit?" he said. "... why wouldn't there be discussions on how this could be done on a long-term basis?"

"We don't have all these details or the cost analysis of how the program could be more long-term," he said.

Councilman Alex Kharazi (D-At Large) wondered if the money could be used to build shop classrooms so the instruction could be offered in-house.

Vornlocker told him that ARP money could not be used for that purpose.

Deputy Mayor Ed Potosnak suggested that "economies of scale" could be applied to save money and offer the program to more students.

"The setup costs for 25 students is the same whether you have three classes of 25 students ... so that money can go a lot longer if you have three consecutive courses," he said. "You might not be able to do that in Franklin, but you might be able to do it if you do it at the county level, in Bridgewater, or in Hillsborough."

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Masjid-e-Ali Ramadan Iftar Brings Together Many Faiths



NJ HOMELAND SECURITY CHIEF – Laurie Doran, director of the state Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, speaks during the Masjid-e-Ali Interfaith Iftar March 22.

Representatives of multiple faith traditions gathered at Masjid-e-Ali on Cedar Grove Lane March 22 for the mosque’s annual Intra- and Interfaith Iftar.

The event is held during Ramadan, a month-long Muslim observance of fasting and purification. Ramadan this year runs until April 9.

During the month, Muslims fast during daylight hours, breaking that fast with a meal known as the iftar. Masjid-e-Ali annually invites the community to join in on one of the dinners.

One of the event’s featured speakers was Laurie Doran, director of the state

Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

Prior to her remarks, Doran said that her office makes it a point to visit “the interfaith community when they’re having their various holidays throughout the year. This is a wonderful time for us to be together and collaborate and celebrate with members of the Muslim community.”

In her remarks to the assembled, Doran said, “In the spirit of this sacred month, our agency joins you in reflecting on our own journey, recognizing areas for growth, and reaffirming our commitment to ensuring that New Jersey remains a safe place to visit, live, worship and work.”

“It’s not a commitment that we take lightly, it’s an undertaking that can only be accomplished when we earn the trust of those we aim to protect and serve,” she said.

The theme enunciated by the religious speakers was the importance of unity.

The rev. Sonya Redd, of the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, told the assembled that, “So much is going on around the world, it is a blessing for us to be here.”

“Thank God for Franklin Township, where there is such a diversity of races, ethnicities, religions,” she said. “But the blessing is, we have come together for a good reason, and all around this town

we come together.”

“We have to continue to work hard,” she said. “There are so many things happening around the world that can pull us apart if we don’t stay vigilant and work together. As long as we continue to talk with each other when we have concerns, when we have issues.”

“Let’s continue to work hard in this community to maintain our unity,” Rev. Redd said.

Imam Jawad Ahmed of the Islamic Circle of North America said that “it does not make a difference what color we have, what ethnicity we have, what culture we have, since we all are children of Adam and Eve, we should all come together, pray together, worship God together.”

The evening’s keynote speaker, Maulana Rizwan Rizvi, the Imam of Masjid-e-Ali, implored the congregation to commit “righteous deeds.”

Among those deeds: Standing up for justice. Standing up against injustice. Standing up for those struggling in the world in general, regardless of their background.

“At times we feel helpless, we can’t really do much,” he said. “Let’s channel our frustration into meaningful and impactful actions. First, we have to get rid of our hostility, our words, our actions as well as our behaviors.”

Township Councilman Alex Kharazi, one of the mosque’s founders, presented a \$10,000 donation to the Franklin Food Bank. The money was raised from the Muslim community, he said.

“Food insecurity in Franklin Township is a challenge,” he said.

Derek Smith, the Food Bank’s executive director, said the staff and volunteers at the Food bank are “so proud of

the opportunity to serve this community.”

“We would not be able to serve this community without the support of everyone in this incredible town,” he said.

Also on hand to speak were Mayor Phil Kramer and state Assemblyman Joe Daniels.

“Tonight, as we break bread together, we are reminded of the beautiful tapestry of faiths which enrich our township,” Kramer said.

Danielsen said that he and his Democratic colleagues “love you all.”

“We’re here to worship our creator with you, we’re here to raise our families with you, we’re here to protect you and support you, and whatever you’re going through, we want to go through it with you because as I always say, your family is my family, and I know my family is your family,” he said.

\$10M In Township Cannabis Sales In 2023

Sales taxes paid by the township’s four operating cannabis dispensaries totaled to more than \$200,000 in 2023, a Township official said.

That translates to a township cannabis industry worth \$10 million.

Township Manager Robert Vornlocker said the Township received \$201,076 from the four cannabis retailers operating in 2023. Vornlocker estimated that the Township could see more than \$300,000 by the end of 2024.

Cannabis retailers pay 2 percent of their gross receipts to the Township.

The four cannabis dispensaries operating in 2023 were BLOC – Somerset and Leaf Haus on Easton Avenue, Unity Road on Elizabeth Avenue and Silver Leaf on Route 27.

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Township Council Hears Applications For Community Development Block Grants

A public hearing on applications for nearly \$350,000 in Community Development Block Grant money was held at the March 26 Township Council meeting.

The public hearing is part of the process of awarding the grants, the money for which comes from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Deborah Mitchell, administrator of the Township's CDBG program, told the Council that she won't know how much the Township will receive from HUD until after May 5.

Last year, the program received \$348,561 in grant money.

This year, 16 applications were filed, asking for a total of \$347,225.63.

The money can be used for three categories: Public Service projects, Public Facilities projects, and Housing projects.

Several applicants showed up at the public hearing to make their case to the Council for their grant applications.

Allie O'Brien, from the Franklin Food Bank, told the Council that the \$100,000

her organization is asking for would go toward a trailer to help them bring more services to their clients.

She said that in addition to food, the Food Bank is providing clients with "wrap-around" services, such as monthly health screenings.

Many of these wrap-around services are only offered outdoors, she said, and while there are tents provided, "our clients are receiving these services outdoors in the sun, the heat, the rain, the cold, and the snow."

A trailer, she said, "would enable the Franklin Food Bank to deliver on our promise to deliver these additional services, but also on our mission of serving in an atmosphere of dignity and respect."

"We would be able to spend this money immediately and report on it in a timely fashion," she said.

Sharon Clark, Executive Director of the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center, said the \$14,459 her organization applied for would in part help the 168 Franklin families that use the center.

"We have a huge shortage of housing," she said. "It's in a critical state for our clients."

Peg Wright, CEO of the Center for Great Expectations, said her organization applied for \$20,000 "to augment the cost of providing services in Katy's place. Katy's Place is our child development center, which serves the residents that live in the adolescent and adult residential center, as well as children from supportive housing."

CGE also applied for \$20,000 to provide daycare and educational programs to 36 children, and \$21,129 for a sump pump/sewerage ejector and other improvements to their houses on Dellwood Lane.

Other applications were for:

- \$24,978 for Middle Earth for its Journeys Program for Franklin Center Program school students.
- \$20,000 for HOPES CAP for expanding ESL classes, financial literacy and home ownership training.
- \$10,000 for Homesharing, Inc. for staffing assistance for a shared affordable housing program.
- \$12,008 for Hillsborough YMCA for its Swim Around program.
- \$5,000 for Sister2Sister to provide staffing support

counseling for low- and moderate-income breast cancer victims; \$29,595 to build a wheelchair access ramp for the parking lot's main entrance, and \$7,000 for building and grounds cleanup and plumbing repairs.

- \$10,000 for Somerset County Community Action Program for improvements to a facility providing childcare.
- \$9,062.63 for the Franklin Township Environmental Commission to restore the Common Grounds Community Garden at Pine Grove Elementary School.
- \$45,000 for the Arc of Somerset for reconstruction of driveway paving and sidewalks and correction of yard drainage for a group home.

Franklinite Leads SCVT In Bringing Music To Bridgeway

A township woman was among the members of the Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School Band Club who recently spent an afternoon helping local senior citizens celebrate the start of Spring.

Club vice president Margaret Kim of Somerset, and club president Vaanya Salwan of Bridgewater, were joined by several other Band Club members at the event, held at Bridgeway Senior Healthcare in Bridgewater.

The students played a selection of music from a wide variety of eras and styles, from Elvis and the Beatles to Tom Petty and the theme from the movie La La Land.

In addition to bringing

music to the residents of Bridgeway, Club members arrived bearing handwritten letters for the residents. At the suggestion of the center's staff the writing on the notes was large and colorful, which helped make them easier to read and reinforced the positive messages contained on the pages.

The advisor for the SCVTHS Band Club, Spanish instructor Guillermo Reina, said he felt that no matter what stage of life one is, music is a gift that anyone can enjoy.

"It was amazing seeing some of the seniors in the audience crying and smiling while our students were playing," he said in a press release about the visit.

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Food Bank Gets \$1 Million Grant

Continued from Page 1.

“This gift is the beginning of the fund for that new building,” according to the email. “It’s incredible and amazing to be seen as a changemaker, a valuable trail-blazer and as a solid choice to invest real dollars in – but the truth is, this is just the beginning. We hope you will join us in celebrating this awesome achievement of recognition at a time when there truly are countless individuals and organizations doing incredible work out there.”

Smith said in the release that the Food Bank employees and volunteers “wake up each and every day, committed to serving our neighbors in need, and we’re so grateful for the many volunteers, partners, and supporters that dedicate the hard and heart work to our mission.”

“There are so many individuals and groups out there doing incredible work to serve the most underserved among us,” he said in the release. “We’re both humbled and inspired by their efforts

...”
The foundation issued an open call to non-profits to submit grant applications in 2023. The original plan was to award 250 grants of \$1 million each.

During the course of reviewing the applications, the Foundation decided to expand the number of awards and the amount of the grants to \$2 million and \$1 million.

Yield Giving has awarded more than \$16.5 billion to more than 1,900 non-profits.

The money will go to buying turnout gear for the firefighters in the departments, said Bryan Hermann, Fire District 2’s clerk.

‘Empty Bowls’ Draws Hundreds

Continued from Page 1.

form the sale of the pottery and other craft items, and people who paid on the day of the event.

The Empty Bowls idea is simple: attendees receive a hand-made pottery bowl with their admission, then visit any number of restaurant stations in the ballroom to get a taste of their offerings.

Derek Smith, the Food Bank’s Executive Director, said he was “humbled” by the turnout.

“This turnout to me is reflective and representative of the support we always get from this town,” he said. “It doesn’t matter, rain or shine, people come out and support

the work that we do. It’s humbling, it’s inspiring, every year this thing continues to grow and to me what makes this year even more special is people are staying.”

“It’s not like people are coming to get some food, pick up some artwork and peace out,” he said. “People are staying which means we’re building community.”

The Food Bank serves between 90 to 100 families a day in its self-serve market on Churchill Avenue, Smith said.

“But if you look at the entire year with all the programs that we run, we see about 30,000 visits, and that number continues to grow, both because for some, this

economy is awesome, but for others, it’s nowhere near awesome, especially when it comes to groceries and rent,” he said.

“The number also continues to grow as we let more people know that we are here to help them,” he said. “We want people to feel comfortable and confident that they can come to the Franklin Food Bank, hold their heads high, and get some food.”

Restaurants participating in the event were Masala Bay, Taphouse Twenty/20, Sophie’s Bistro, Uncle Tank’s, Mediterra, BAM Desserts, Samudhra, Dearbon Market, LaBon, Confectionately Yours, Dunkin’, Stop & Shop, Costco, and the DoubleTree.

Fire District 2 Receives \$75,000 Grant

The three volunteer fire departments that comprise Fire District 2 will benefit from a \$75,000 grant the District re-

ceived through the American Rescue Plan.

The District was one of 353 firefighting organizations receiving grants.

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Board Of Education Dealing With Steep State Aid Reduction

Continued from Page 1.

percent of that before we even do anything else,” he said. “That’s a big challenge for us.”

Other challenges, Ravally said, were a health care cost

increase of more than 10 percent and anticipated increases in transportation costs.

The district is currently bidding out the transportation contracts, so a final cost was not available.

For the presentation, Ravally aligned expenditures with the district’s goals. Those items and their price tags are:

- Support district initiatives that ensure the physical

and mental well-being and safety of students and staff, for a total of \$1,018,250.

- Support the expansion of Pre-K-12 specialized programs, for a total of \$2,217,500.
- Support the continued professional development of staff consistent with the district’s equity goals, especially in the area of culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, technology and content specialization, for \$150,000.
- Foster, encourage and ex-

pand relationships with the community at large for \$122,000.

Another goal, to promote sustainability and decrease energy consumption, was primarily being reached through the district’s solar panel program, Ravally said.

He said the district’s revenue from solar panel stock sales was \$85,000 yearly, while the electrical cost savings amounted to about \$83,000 yearly.

Among the larger projects being undertaken through this budget is the addition

of 85 Pre-K seats, at a cost of \$1,350,000. The program is grant-funded, but the money must be accounted for in the budget.

The budget also provides \$265,000 for an expansion of the elementary school Autism program, \$150,000 for World Language programs, \$110, for an expansion of bilingual programs, and \$220,000 for new teachers.

The district is scheduled to approve the final budget at its April 25 meeting.

Council Tackles Health Costs

Continued from Page 1.

budgets. The local portion of the property tax bill remained steady from 2018 to 2021.

“This might be a good time to hold back,” Kramer said.

But Deputy Mayor Ed Potosnak disagreed.

“I don’t know if a conference is a place to hold back, if you can go there and learn something that might help you save money somewhere else,” he said.

Councilman Ram Anbarasan pointed out that the Council never uses all the money that has been allocated for conferences in past years.

“Last year, we spent less than 50 percent,” he said.

In the end, the Council decided to take \$909 from the training line item and add it to the conferences line item.

The Council heard from

a number of departments, most of whose projected 2024 budgets were unchanged from 2023.

Some of the bigger expenditures were found in the IT Technology capital program budget.

Included in that category was \$156,300 for mobile radios and portable radios for Fire District 1, \$85,000 for the IT Department’s computer/printer/server/iPad replacement program, and \$40,000 for upgrades to the municipal network system.

Vornlocker said the radios will be needed if more personnel are brought into Fire District 1. He said the equipment will only be purchased if “an agreement is reached between the township and fire district.”

“If it does go through, the initial discussions are that these costs would be borne by reimbursement by the fire district,” he said. “We need to include them in our budget

because we need to purchase them and be reimbursed.”

The IT Operating Budget is \$490,301, an \$83,995 increase.

Department head Robert McQueen told the Council that the biggest increase is for software licensing.

Also, he said, “one of contracts we have for vehicle tracking software was a 5-year agreement that came due this year,” he said. “That was a substantial portion of that increase.”

Vornlocker said the budget for township prosecutors’ salaries will increase by \$10,900.

Vornlocker said the Township, Assistant and Per Diem prosecutors have not received raises in several years.

“We came to that by looking at neighboring towns and matching what they pay,” Kramer said.

Church Approved In Veronica Plaza

A 1,600-square-foot retail space at Veronica Plaza will become a house of worship following a March 21 approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

The approval for ECG New Jersey came with con-

ditions, including no more than 49 people in the church during Sunday worship, no more than 15 people in the church during Wednesday Bible studies, and no food preparation or consumption during worship services or Bible study.

The space is located at the end of the strip furthest away from Route 27.

The church needed several variances, including a use variance because houses of worship are not included in the retail zones.



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