

Budget Statement 2007

Tonight we will adopt a budget that the Finance Committee has been working on for many months. Our Chief Financial Officer Ed Cortright, Finance Chair Councilwoman Maura Keyes, Council President Richard Reyes, Administrator Timothy Stafford have been diligent throughout these efforts. Council members, our professionals, department heads and employees, and members of the public have been sought out and given many opportunities to offer suggestions and ideas. This budget is a culmination of that input.

Tonight we will adopt a budget tonight in which we have labored to provide for and protect the Borough and its residents. Keenly aware of the hardship of a tax increase for many of our residents, we have worked hard to reduce the tax burden on our residents by aggressively and successfully pursuing grants, aid, and sponsorships this year as we always have done. In 2007 alone we have secured close to \$1 million dollars, (\$928,243 dollars at last count to be exact--\$11 million dollars over the last eight years). It has been suggested that we are spending money we do not have when in truth we have gained funding the Borough never had before. This funding has provided vital emergency services, road and park improvements as well as special events at no cost to our residents. It takes a lot of time, effort, and ability to research, apply for and gain funding outside the municipal budget. To suggest we should not do so is foolish. To fail to attempt to secure such funds is to settle for less for Rutherford.

This budget while undertaking all the efforts already referenced by others does not eliminate services or impact public safety. We will continue to explore all avenues to reduce costs, but any further reductions such as in staff would jeopardize our residents and the borough.

We have heard again and again through the Visioning Process and our Master Plan Review what our residents expect from us as we lead Rutherford. They expect us to preserve and protect Rutherford, not allow it to deteriorate and decay. They do not want us to be like any other community but the Rutherford they treasure. They do not want rateables that cost us our character like the Highland Cross development. First and foremost, our residents expect us to provide services from and maintenance of the Borough in the most cost-conscious, and effective way. We have done that in this budget with a reduced work force, limited spending, and an infusion of almost \$1 million dollars in other funding.

Our residents expect us to provide for our Seniors and we have done that in this budget by funding Recreation programs, the mini-bus, Health and emergency services, and the Kip Center. They expect us to do the same for our new families and our old families. They expect us to protect the value our Downtown, their homes and their hometown. We have done that with this budget.

There are difficult choices to make in this budget year. There are difficult choices to make in every budget year and yet the choice is ultimately clear. --Do that which best protects and provides for our residents while preserving the vision for the Borough that has been so clearly set forth for us. I remain dedicated to that purpose and we have done that in this budget.