



**Press Release – For Immediate Release – Feb 7, 2018**

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### **Lower Township Introduces 2018 Budget with Zero Tax Increase**

Manager Jim Ridgway presented the Lower Township Council with the 2018 budget introduction at the Feb. 5 council meeting with no tax increase. The following is a statement from the manager:

Good Evening Mayor and Council:

I am required to deliver a working document of our proposed 2018 budget to council by February 16, 2018 and council must approve the budget by April 20, 2018. The council has received a copy of the proposed municipal budget for 2018. The tax levy is \$20,863,365.82 compared to last year \$20,797,190.63 which is an increase of \$66,175.00. We are below the legal spending cap by \$990,518.56.

The township completed 2017 with a surplus of \$7,146,359.87 of this \$3,002,000 is being applied to this year's budget leaving a balance of \$4,144,359.87.

Our projections anticipate fully restoring the balance used in this budget. We are confident using this surplus as it has increased again to an all-time high in Lower Township due to increases in BOCA and increased ratables.

Projections indicate that savings from our county Cooperative and Shared Service agreements with neighboring communities along with this year's conservative budgetary approach is allowing the township to have no tax increase this year in this initial budget. We will have a zero increase. The use of caps in our union contracts has allowed us to stay financially strong.

The total assessment value of real property upon which the tax rate is based in Lower Township is \$3,634,439,452 vs. \$3,625,260,471 in 2016 or an increase in ratables of \$9,178,981.

Every \$363,443 of the amount raised by taxation for 2018 Budget equals one cent on the tax rate. This budget uses 97.16% rate to compute the reserve for uncollected taxes.

This budget plans for fully funding our Independence Day Festival, additions to our police department as well as a new fulltime secretary in planning and construction and taxpayers will see no reduction in other township services provided.

We have begun our shared service agreement with county dispatch which in the future we project strong savings with other municipalities coming on board with the county and reducing our payments as per our agreement with the county. Our utilities should decrease greatly in the public safety building in 2018 as we are only heating and cooling approximately 50% of the previous renovated building.

We have a well-planned capital program planned for 2018. We have made sure that these capital projects don't affect the taxpayers in a negative fashion.

This meeting is not for the adoption of the Townships Budget. This is a working document that belongs to the Township Council and our CFO Lauren Read has worked diligently the last three months assisting me with the presentation of these documents. Our department heads are also to be commended for keeping in line with their 2017 Budgets and understanding that these are times to do more with less.

The public hearing for the budget is scheduled for March 19, at 7PM. A budget summary will be published in the Cape May Star and Wave. Copies will be available on the township website, townshipoflower.org as well as in the clerk's office at township hall, located at 2600 Bayshore Road.

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