

**BENSALEM TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday
January 12th, 2026**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Tokmajian, Jr., Council President
Jesse Sloane, Council Vice President
Joe Wenzel, Jr., Council Secretary
Joseph Knowles, Council Member

SUPPORTING STAFF PRESENT:

Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo
John Chaykowski, Director of Administration
Debora McBreen, Council Clerk/Recording Secretary
Joseph Pizzo, Township Solicitor
Ken Ferris, Solicitor – Pizzo, Rudolph, LLC
Philip Wursta, Township Engineer

PLEASE NOTE:

The minutes are not verbatim but rather a synopsis of what transpired during the meeting, and while I do my best to attribute remarks and questions to the correct individual, there may be mistakes or omissions because of the “back and forth” dialogue and the lack of the use of their microphone.

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING:

Council President Tokmajian opened the meeting with a moment of silence and/or prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, MAYOR AND STAFF:

Council President Tokmajian introduced the Mayor, Supporting Staff and Council Members.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that Councilman Kisselback was not in attendance due to an illness. **Council President Tokmajian** confirmed Councilman Kisselback’s status.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated Council met in an Executive Session immediately prior to this evening’s Council meeting for approximately one hour. Present for the Executive Session were the four members of Council, the Mayor, the Director of Administration, the Township Engineer

and Solicitor Ferris. A single matter of pending litigation was discussed. No official actions were taken during the Executive Session and no action will be required at this evening's Council meeting as a result of that Executive Session.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Council President Tokmajian indicated the Public Comment will be heard at the time the agenda item is heard. Seeing no one come forward the first of two Public Comments was closed.

4. **APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES:**

Councilman Knowles motioned to approve the Council Meeting Minutes from December 1st, 2025 as presented. **Council Vice President Sloane** seconded and the motion carried 4-0.

5. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RE-OPENING OF THE 2026 BUDGET:**

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he wanted to address the misinformation and fear based messaging that has been circulating over Social Media.

As stated in their last meeting, Council is trying to be fully transparent with the Mayor and Administration in terms of looking at the Budget.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that it was not about cutting services and it is not about raising taxes. That is not Council's intent nor the direction that they are headed.

There was a reference on the Budget to a \$14 million dollar deficit, which is largely a paper deficit driven by accounting assumptions and the timing of revenues and expenses. The 2026 Budget as presented still draws the General Fund down to approximately \$8.9 million. Even if that part of the deficit is on paper, that level of on-going fund balance drawdown is something that Council has a responsibility to take seriously.

The \$14 million deficit was not brought up during the December Budget meeting. Re-opening the Budget, if Council so chooses, will allow them to proactively review those assumptions, focus on non-contractual spending items; and better understand what the Township's true contractual obligations look like in the near term. This is about aligning the Budget with real defensible numbers, not worst-case scenarios or best-case assumptions. Taking that step now will help protect Township services, maintain fiscal stability, and most importantly avoid tax increases in the future.

Ignoring these trends today would only make the tough choices harder tomorrow. For the public's sake and for Council's sake, displayed a historical trend of the actuals. Display was on the overhead and can be viewed on the YouTube Channel 28:08 the actual numbers are from the General Fund, starting from the year 2018 all the way through the projected years of 2025 and 2026.

When Councilman Sloane and Councilman Tokmajian were on the board they had certain issues surrounding the way the Budget was submitted in 2018, they voted against the Budget largely because it included a \$16 million deficit. As a result of that Budget year, they saw a decrease of

the General Fund from \$27.8 down to \$21.9. Thereafter, they voted in favor of the Budget. Largely in part because they saw an improvement in the way that the Budget was being done year-over-year. In 2019 it went from \$21.9 to \$22.5, from 2020 to 2021 it went from \$22.5 to \$27.2 and the year thereafter went from \$27.2 to \$31 million.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that they saw an improvement with the way they were doing things over those number of years. Over these last few years, they were starting to see this trend reverse itself. The figures just simply highlight that and that is the reason they wanted to bring the discussion of the Budget up. In 2024 they landed at \$30 million, the projected was going to land at \$23.5, was is largely a \$7 million drop; and then the 2026 which lands at \$8.9.

Council President Tokmajian thanked Mr. Chaykowski for the time that he took reviewing the Budget with him and Councilman Wenzel.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that the drawdown's not a safe place the Township is in. He had a conversation with Mr. Chaykowski along with Council President Tokmajian and he recognizes where they stand. If they collectively look through the Budget, they can move forward in making better decisions for the Township.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that in the Budget meeting and the subsequent communications that they had with Mr. Chaykowski he had mentioned that the Township has about \$65 million Operating Budget, and about 73% of that is contractually obligated. From his understanding there really isn't much room from the Administration side where they think they can tighten the belt there. There were a couple of areas of uncertainty or opportunities, just from reading the Meeting Minutes from that Budget meeting.

There are a few things that Council Vice President Sloane wanted to ask about and see kind of where they stand; and maybe these are opportunities where they can improve some of this budgeting just on that 73% side, without even getting to those static Operating Expenses.

During that meeting, Health Insurance was brought up and that those were estimated to be about 7 1/2% to 9% increase from the year before. Since we are now in 2026, does the Township know more at this point.

Director Chaykowski indicated that the Township has received the 2026 rates. As discussed in their meeting, the Township belongs to a multi-municipality consortium for the Health Insurance and for the Dental Insurance. As part of this consortium, the consortium allows a rate stabilization credit. What that credit allows is the Township has two options, one they allow it to build up for a number of years and can use it, or the Township can use it year after year. In 2025 the Township did decide to use it. It was probably \$1 million and is what the rate stabilization was up to at that point in time. When looking at 2025 actuals, you are going to see a much larger increase compared to 2026 Budget numbers. The 2026 rates are under 8%, possibly 5% and can determine those figures via email tomorrow.

When they are looking at 2025, and the final numbers come through, they will see a reduction down from 2024 to 2025 and then a drastic increase from 2025 to 2026. Mr. Chaykowski can let Council know what the rate increase was without the rate stabilization. The Township is now letting the rate stabilization build up again. The consortium allocates so much per year to the municipalities based on their size. It can be discussed if the Township will use it every year or

let it build up like they have been doing, but these are those types of scenarios that they can discuss going forward.

Council Secretary Sloane asked if that is an area of the Budget that maybe has been overbudgeted because they know more now on what those rates are. Maybe this can be brought down because they probably budgeted higher thinking that it was going to be the worst-case scenario.

Director Chaykowski indicated that the Township budgeted at the 8%. Could there be a reduction in that line? Absolutely.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that there were a couple of positions left in the Budget in the event it was needed. For example, Deputy Director of Public Works and a Finance Manager. At this time, the Township seems to be functioning okay and it doesn't seem as though the Township intends to fill those positions. What they are really looking at are the paper deficits and trying to better understand what the actual financial temperature is. It is an area in which he would feel more comfortable if they were removed; and then they would get a better number. And then if the Administration knows and they really need this, come back to Council and they would adjudicate it at that point.

There are a couple of incidences like that scattered throughout that is on that 73% side. On the other 27% side, by math, it's about \$17.5 million, \$4.5 million is the Homeowners Casino Rebate, which will not be touched. That leaves a remainder of \$13 million of that kind of static Operating Expenses and then asked what are the actuals, the audited financials of that static category?

Director Chaykowski indicated that he could provide those numbers for the past couple of years as to where it stands. Most departments stay static with their department Operating Expenses. Usually there are only minor increases and that is due to property insurance as discussed, or if there was an increase in utilities' bills. A 3-year comparison is done when preparing the Budget in late July the beginning of August. When it is submitted to Council in November/December there is significant change whether it be an increase or decrease wherever the scenario lies.

There are also Capital items, one year the Township may buy a dump truck out of General Fund and then the next two years they would not purchase a dump truck. The Township can massage those numbers to show it was in 2022 this much, but did not make a purchase of "X" as a Capital that they don't have in future years.

Council Vice President Sloane agreed with Director Chaykowski's logic on that. There will be a higher uptick in some years due to some kind of major expenditure that is a one-off type thing. There is \$13 million budgeted, these kinds of static don't change much. What are the actuals? Is the actual really coming in at \$8 million every year? Is it coming in closer to \$11 million every year? This is the kind of information that will give them a little bit more insight on, are they padding it too heavily? Creating this kind of large paper deficit, the Township tends to budget a larger deficit, but doesn't come out that way at the end of the year, but Council is authorizing that and they are allowing. Even going back to the 73% of that kind of contractually obligated, most of those are contracts that are agreed upon by the Administration; the Council has no say in and Council does not get any word of it until the Budget goes in front of Council and they are handcuffed to this at that point.

Maybe a change to the Ordinance to ensure that Council is part of those contract negotiations and approves the contracts. The School Board actually approves the Teacher Union Contract because it affects so massively on the Budget. Then asked, why isn't Council doing something similar at the Township level?

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that in this instance, it's just because of the form of government the Township has with a strong Mayor. Optional Plan B form of government that the voters adopted back in late 1980's. The Administration is responsible for all of those personnel matters. When all is said and done, if the Mayor in negotiating with the Police Union, the Public Works Union, has to then come to Council at Budget time say, "Well, it is now going to cost this amount of money to run the Police Department." If Council isn't agreeable to the dollar amount that's included in the Budget, then Council has the ability to turn around and say "Well we're not going to approve a Police Budget of \$3 million."

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that the contracts are negotiated and executed before that Budget even gets presented to the Township.

Director Chaykowski indicated in some cases it may not. There are particular issues where the Township has 4 upcoming Unions that are negotiating this year, their contracts expire at the end of this year. The Township could be still in negotiations at Budget time or the Township could be in negotiations next year, as long as they are in good faith negotiations or they could be headed to arbitration for 2 of the Unions. The Township strives not to do that and they haven't had to do that in a good number of years. You never know what is being offered by the other side that could stem wherever they are heading. There have been issues where contract negotiations do run into the next year and have a good estimate as to where they are going to head with it and make it work.

Council Vice President Sloane asked how many years are those contracts for?

Director Chaykowski indicated that it varies. The last contracts were 5 years, that's all negotiated as well. There have been 3-year contract, 4-year contracts, 5-year contracts, it all depends on what the parties agree to.

Council President Tokmajian indicated to Mr. Sloane's point. We are talking the late 1980's, and it is now 2026. Wouldn't it make sense that the governing body of the Township also review and approve those contracts? Particularly because of the fact that the governing body of this Township is ultimately the one that's responsible for approving the Budget which includes those contractual items.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that it was not a question of taking any authority away, it is the collaboration of working together between Mayor and Council to ensure that they are doing what's the most fiscally responsible scenario moving forward.

The Mayor indicated that at some point when the Township is negotiating the contracts, they could bring that in and then say this is what the Township negotiated and Council would say no. **Council Vice President Sloane** indicated that to improve Council's own visibility into 73% of the Budget, that they are locked into for potentially 5 years at a time.

Council President Tokmajian indicated or at least holding them accountable to the point that they're ensuring that the contracts are negotiated in the best interest for the Township and for taxpayers.

The Mayor indicated that he could bring the negotiated contract to Council and if they don't like it, they can vote against it.

Council Vice President Sloane asked if that was something that should be factored into the Municipal Code of Ordinances? Or is that just the way that business is done? It would be great if they could have this codified so that Council could have more clarity on this process moving forward.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that the powers of the respective branches of government and the responsibilities that are spelled out in the Administrative Code flow directly from the Optional Plans and Home Rule Charter Law. Those have been in place since the Optional Plan form of government was approved by the voters and implemented in the late 1980's early 1990's. The structure of the government is laid out by the legislature and is dictated by and through the Second-Class Township Code as modified by the Optional Plan Law. There isn't a ton of leeway for Council and the Mayor to start to make changes to that form of government because it is dictated by statute.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that even the allowed changes are dictated by statute.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that was correct and what Council would be doing essentially is what the conversation that they are having right now with the Mayor. Which is, if Council is asking that before the Township enters into a Collective Bargaining Agreement, that Council would like the opportunity to review it and weigh-in on it first; and which the Mayor is saying is fine.

Council Vice President Sloane confirmed that the Mayor has agreed to allow Council to review and weigh-in on any Collective Bargaining Agreements through the negotiation process. At the end of negotiation process before it gets approved by the Township.

The Mayor indicated that he had no problem with that.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that it is a very fair compromise and appreciates the Mayor willing to work with Council on that. There is still a trajectory of the end of that Fund Balance of the General Fund going down which concerns him over time.

The Mayor indicated that in the Budget if the Township does not spend all of the money, there is a Fund Balance that they carry over. Not everything in the Budget is spent. There is a Fund Balance in every single line unless there is an "Oh my God" which the Township hasn't had.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that he respects that that has been the strategy in the past. He has a concern that the Township is allowing Council who is essentially approving or has approved just a month ago the allowance to spend all of that.

The Mayor indicated that is correct but wanted to emphasize that the Township does not spend all of the funds that are allocated.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that he understood that's the practice but there is nothing that prevents the Township from spending all of that, and that is what concerns him.

Councilman Knowles indicated that Director Chaykowski spent hours on the phone regarding the Budget. The Township has a top Bond rating. There is extra money in departments that could be pushed and not have this kind of deficit on paper. The money is not spent, as the Mayor indicated. The Mayor has a pretty good track record of that besides saying that it is not being spent. There is a trust factor there and he meets with the department heads every week to make sure that that the money is not being spent. If it is not there at the end of the year, they would know it is not there when Budget-time comes around.

In his perspective, the Bond rating was good. Also, according to the figures, there was COVID during this time and why is it down to 8? The explanation Director Chaykowski gave him was that the Township does not want to raise taxes. There is a Savings Fund of \$46 million that the Township saved. The Township borrowed off of that and paid the Township back at an interest rate. Because of the Bond rating being so good that the Interest Rate is so good because the auditors and the banks are so impressed with the way the Township budgets. The Township is not raising taxes and has \$46-47 million in savings that the Township is making money on.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated then his question to that is if they have all of the information and have all of that data, then why are they showing a budget deficit instead of a balanced budget?

Councilman Knowles indicated that since they know the figure for healthcare, they could take that money and put it towards the deficit on paper. The Township doesn't have to buy a dump truck so they can put that back on paper. There is extra money in each department. They can argue they don't want to do that; they want to put all of it on paper and then if Public Works needs a dump truck they would need to come to Council and say I need a dump truck, then Council can discuss if they need a dump truck or not.

If Council wants to do that, that's fine. It is the Mayor's budget and he has confidence in the way the Mayor has presented it.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that conversely, they could argue the interest rate is an added expense and the \$46 million trust fund is there and it helps create that bond rating. All that Council is doing is asking certain questions to make sure that the Township is maintaining a responsible budget.

Director Chaykowski directed his answer to Council Secretary Wenzel's question as to why the Township has this deficit. If you look at the number Council President Tokmajian provided, revenue is flat, the Township instituted the Earned Income Tax which was only a tax to a half of the Township residents, because half of the Township residents were already paying in other places. Basically, it was a change to a third of that half that were not paying in other places. Revenue is flat, Expenditures they have no control over. The cost of a cop car goes up double digits every year because Ford decides to do so; the cost of dump trucks continually rise.

Road repaving that the Township does every two years, those numbers, even if the Township is doing the same amount of mileage, you can't imagine the cost. It is the external struggles that the

private businesses and the private companies have to pass back on to the Township as a municipality for that service that they are trying to purchase from them.

Basically, that is what is causing a large chunk of this problem. Wages and benefits also come in to play. The Township does a very strong comparison when they go out for contract negotiations to see what comparable departments are offering, municipalities are offering and then the Township negotiates accordingly. There are gives and takes. Contributions to health insurance and all of those types of things they do. Elimination of Pension Plans are just some of the things that they do to reduce some of the increasing expenses to the Township salaries and benefits. Ultimately Revenues are flat. There has been a discussion of different possibilities of fees that the Township could develop.

Year after year the Township tries to assert a fee on a program, or something to that extent, or a particular business and such. While you see ebbs and flows of it that could be interest rates caused by the negotiations with the banks as far as what the Townships annual interest rate will be. The Township continually sees the real estate tax assessment reductions from businesses, private houses and the like.

The only true increase is the Earned Income Tax because fortunately mostly everyone gets increases in their wages which in turn the Earned Income Tax increases. Middletown, as discussed, has just implemented a full 1%. That is going to hurt the Township because you have a Middletown resident working here in Bensalem, they pay half to Middletown and half to Bensalem, but now the Township is losing that half percent because of Middletown's increase.

It certainly is not for the lack of trying, there is only so much the Township can do revenue wise.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that Council was not suggesting that, it was just that the charts certainly reflect that the Township does not always necessarily know where they are going to land year-end, and still don't know what 2026 is going to look like. Council is concerned about the downward trend of the lowering of the General Fund and at some point. Council needs to make a decision. The decision is going to either be that the Township borrows from itself and then it is going to create an additional expense to pay themselves back at some point; they will have to take from the Trust Fund or they will have to increase taxes again. Council is trying to avoid that conversation.

Councilman Knowles indicated that as far as last years Budget, in his opinion, that it would be better to concentrate on the 2027 Budget. Furthermore, if you take money and shift it from the departments and make the number look better on paper, it doesn't make it any better, at this point, it is what it is. Three quarters of the Budget is the Police Department. They negotiate with the unions and deserve to get paid because they are doing a good job. At some point, everything is going to have to change eventually.

The Mayor runs a tight ship with the Department heads and watches over things and part of that confidence was his vote for the 2026 Budget. Instead of bringing up all of this and regurgitating last year's Budget, why not concentrate on what the Mayor said about his negotiating with the Unions. That he would come to Council and present what is the best that the Township could do because of whatever reason and ask Council if they feel this is going to work. Will it affect the Budget and possibly have a conversation with Director Chaykowski? Mr. Knowles suggested early meeting to discuss the 2027 Budget.

Council President Tokmajian asked Vice President Sloane if he wrapped up his items for discussion.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that he would like to email Director Chaykowski and talk through some of his questions regarding the Budget. What he would love to see as in prior years, the quarterly Budget numbers, maybe even discuss them at a Council meeting to see how they are tracking. For instance, comparing 2026 1st quarter to that of the 2025, 2024 and so forth. To see if they are really tracking the same way and it kind of goes back to looking at those static costs, some kind of breakdown. It doesn't necessarily have to be that full detailed comprehensive budget that is distributed to Council. It is appreciated and it does give a lot of information. But a way that they can kind of synthesize the data and start to get a better idea of how they are tracking.

Also, start those Budget discussions for next year earlier so that they can get ahead of it. Whether it would be contract negotiations and there could be some restructuring to the Budget. Whereas there is much talk about padding each of these different line items. What if there's margin and there's just a contingency and to dip into beyond "x" amount of that contingency that requires coming back to Council, that way they know what is going on. It is getting a better understanding of the actual budget anticipated to be as opposed to approving something that has so much margin that if the Mayor and Administration chose to spend the full authorized amount; it could really jeopardize their financial position. He knows that it is not the intent, but there's nothing that's going to prevent the Administration from doing that, and that concerns him.

Councilman Knowles indicated that out of the \$10 million that Parx Casino gives the Township, \$300 is given back to each homeowner which equates to \$4.5 million. Bensalem is the only municipality in the State of Pennsylvania that ever gave any money back. They can't predict the future; they are doing the best that they can with what they got planning for the future. Overall, as a team under the Mayor he feels they have been doing a pretty good job.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that is something that Council wants to protect for the homeowners.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that being newer to the board again they just wanted to readdress the concerns and outline some of the items that they had with the budget.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that he is aware that the Township Auditors meet after the budget is already passed by Council. The Township elected Auditors to look at the budget.

Councilman Knowles indicated the elected Auditors do not look at the budget. There are professional Auditors who look over the budget.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that the elected Auditors should look over the budget as well. Can the elected Auditors look at the budget before it comes to Council?

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he believes there are restrictions.

Councilman Knowles indicated that he means no disrespect to elected Auditors but it is more ceremonial. They can look at the budget but the Township has professional Auditors that work for accounting firms.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that there are restrictions to when the Auditors can look at it and turned the discussion to Solicitor Pizzo.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that in a Township where a Township has moved to having professional auditing firms perform the annual budget, all of the powers that are vested in the elected auditors transfer to the auditing firm that is employed by the Township. All of the powers and all of the responsibilities for the Township audit are vested in the appointed auditing firm. In that instance the power that remains with the elected Auditors is that they become responsible in those limited instances where an elected official becomes an employee of the Township. They set the compensation for those elected officials who might become Township employees. That is a power that is granted to elected auditors under the Second-Class Township Code and would remain with them in a Township or a borough where an appointed auditor is in place.

He believes that in Bucks County there's probably one, maybe two at most, communities that still have the audits performed by the appointed Auditors. Almost everywhere in Bucks County, and for that matter, almost everywhere in the Commonwealth that the smallest of Townships and Boroughs, professionals perform the annual audit.

Council President Tokmajian directed his question to Director Chaykowski and asked that when the budget comes out late in the year and publicly available, would there be any issue with providing visibility to the elected Auditors; if they wanted to move their meeting or schedule a secondary meeting later in the year during that time when the budget comes out?

Director Chaykowski indicated that everyone is comparing the Auditors to doing the budget and specifically stated that the Auditors do not do the Township budget. Obviously, the budget is handled internally, the audit is handled internally; however, they handle all of the Gazby, and they handle the financials. By the Second-Class Township Code, the Township has the responsibility that the budget has to be presented to the public and to Council by November 10th of each year. July is the start of scheduling everything, then in August department meetings are held. By September/October there is a good placement as to where the budget is going to be presented to Council and to the public.

Director Chaykowski indicated that his door is open to anyone who wants to come in and discuss the budget, whether it is a resident or the Auditor or any Council member.

Council President Tokmajian indicated they are agreeable on the collective bargaining contracts prior to them being adopted by the Township and by the Mayor and would review them with Council. Quarterly budget reviews during public Council meetings. Council Vice President Sloane will send additional comments over to Director Chaykowski. Section 1703 of the Second-Class Township Code does allow Township to amend its budget any time during the fiscal year, the amendments must be made by ordinance. The amendment must follow the same procedure as the original budget adoption. If the Council so chooses to reopen the budget, public notice is again required for a minimum of ten days so that it is publicly available for inspection and will have to be readvertised.

Things that can be changed when Council reopens the budget, which Director Chaykowski would handle, would be line-item appropriations departmental spending, capital expenditures, transfers and so forth.

Councilman Knowles indicated that he never thought that Council did not have the authority to do it, but just because you have the authority to do it doesn't mean it's a wise thing to do.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he had on the agenda for discussion and he will open the floor if someone wants to make a motion to reopen it; so be it, if they do not, then they can close the portion of discussion.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that he was very grateful for the things discussed particularly that Council President Tokmajian mentioned as far as being involved in the CBA review as well as the quarterly budget review. It really does paint a really positive path forward for future budgeting efforts as well. He will commit to send these questions to Director Chaykowski within the next few days, then proceeded to ask as to when would they have to make a decision regarding opening the budget or not? The reasoning for the question is he would probably want some answers to his questions which are fairly detailed in some instances before saying whether it was worth it or not. There is some uncertainty that he knows the Director Chaykowski will take a look at.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that any amendment to the budget that is performed in January and February following a municipal election has to be completed by February 15th, and that would be the vote on a final amended budget. If an amended budget were proposed to be adopted, what needs to be factored in would be a 10-day public review period. The 10 days begins to run from the day that the notice the public is advertised in the newspaper of general circulation serving the Township.

Assuming it would take Council Clerk McBreen three days to place the ad, typically you place it on a Thursday for a Sunday run. If Council were to vote to amend the budget at Council's meeting on January 26th, there would be sufficient time between then and February 15th. If Council were to accomplish it without scheduling a special meeting on or about the 15th, they would need to work backwards from the 9th. Council would still have time between meetings but it would be tight, particularly the advertising component of it. Council Clerk McBreen would almost have to run the ad prior to the meeting of the 26th in anticipation of that happening in order for Council to do it on the 9th. Or, Council can schedule a special meeting between February 9th and the 15th.

Councilman Knowles indicated that he thinks with Council Vice President Sloane's suggestions and Director Chaykowski's cooperation and watching where the extra money is, and that it is not being spent until next year's budget that they start working on halfway through the year he just thinks that they are almost accomplishing the same thing. If Council is not going to raise taxes, and they are not going to take away the \$300 HAG check from the residents, and Council is not going to cut the police; then they are just like switching numbers around on a sheet to make sure, it doesn't seem like it is worth all of the effort to him. But if Council is willing to reopen the budget, he will try to help out as best he can.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that for him, if he can get some of his questions answered, get a better idea and they will work with Director Chaykowski over the course of the next week to try and get some answers; then they will have a better idea. At that point if there is, and he was not speaking for all of Council, if there is a back and forth and a lot of excess that maybe they would want to tighten up. He hopes that would be a collaborative decision that the

Administration and Council kind of agree and take another shot at it. Does not want to make it argumentative or confrontational in this process, they want to work together in the next several years.

Council President Tokmajian felt the discussion was helpful and thanked the Mayor and Director Chaykowski.

6. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT RESPONSIBLE CONTRACTORS' ORDINANCE.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that the Township has had a Responsible Contractor Ordinance in place since 2009. The Township has made some changes to it over the years as is true of many things. Once it is implemented, you will find out sometimes where the “bugs” are and one of the changes that the Township made subsequent to its initial adoption was to create a pre-qualification process. This helped the Township and the contractors in terms of making sure that those who were bidding on the jobs met the qualifications and requirements. This applies to Capital Projects undertaken by the Township, in all respects, in excess of \$10,000. And there are certain requirements that are applicable to larger Capital Projects where the estimated project value is \$150,000 or more.

In those cases where the project value is anticipated to be \$150,000 or greater, the Responsible Contractor Ordinance requires that the contractor participate in a Class A Apprenticeship Program. Class A Apprenticeship Program is one that has graduated Apprentices to Journeymen status in three of the prior five years. The proposed change that is set forth in the draft would require not only that the contractor participate in the Class A Apprenticeship Program; but further than at least 70% of the craft employees or workers employed on a project, either the Journeymen who have successfully completed a Class A Program or Apprentices who are currently registered in a Class A Program for the trade in which they are to be employed.

Secondly, one of the things they find periodically is that contractors may have craft or trade employees working in jobs for which they are not their craft or trade, but they are being assigned work that would fall for others. Language has been added to clarify that all craft employees or workers employed on a project can only be assigned work for the craft or trade in which they are employed.

From a public safety standpoint, one of the things that was found and believe would be appropriate is that all of the craft employees or workers on a project will have to complete an OSHA 10-hour construction training course for safety. In the case of the prime contractors, at least one of the craft employees on a project would be required to complete the 30-hour OSHA construction training course for safety. The cost for this is nominal to the contractors so it is not going to change the project cost for the Township, but the safety component for the Township and for the workers is believed to be invaluable.

In the case for all of these projects for \$150,000 or greater the project contractors are required to pay what is called Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage. The wage determination is set by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor for a particular project based on where it is in the Commonwealth and the time of year. Whatever the wage rates are for a particular project that are set by the state, the contractor is required to pay them. The way that it is assured is, the project contractor is required to submit certified payrolls to the Township on a regular basis to confirm

that the wages are being paid to the employees at the appropriate amount. One of the things that is happening more and more these days that the Township has found is that a fair amount of the fabrication work for a lot of projects is being done offsite. Components that would be required of a project and are set forth in the project specs, duct work is a good example; where that would normally be done on site by the appropriate trade workers, a lot of that now is being done offsite, then being brought to the job site and installed by those workers.

What the Township wants to make sure is that the same requirements that are applying to the workers on site also apply to these workers who are doing the fabrication work offsite. The proposed amendments to the Responsible Contractors Ordinance would require that as well. The School District implemented them all in late August. Subsequent to that, the Township started the process of looking at making the same changes to the Township's Responsible Contract Ordinance.

The draft of the ordinance was supplied to Council in their packets and certainly the Administration would recommend to Council that they move forward with this ordinance.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that obviously the ordinance has to be advertised.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that what would happen is that the draft that is attached is acceptable to Council. They will authorize Council Clerk McBreen to advertise it. The Solicitor will add the ordinance language at the top and bottom for Council to sign for adoption for the meeting in February.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that they did not have a whole lot of time to review it, and suggested to give time to review it and put it back on the agenda for the second meeting in January and will make a motion at that point. This way it gives them a little bit of time to make any changes. If any of the Council members would like to send their questions to Solicitor Pizzo or can be brought up at the next meeting.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that he was aware that the Township just recently put a 12-mile radius on the Township for hiring. Is there a possibility of adding 50% of employer's labor coming within a 12-mile radius of the Township as well?

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that from a purely practical standpoint what happens is for any of the projects of this size, the Township by statute has to publicly bid them. It would not be uncommon or unheard of for a contractor who is stationed in Delaware County or Lancaster County to be the responsible low bidder on the job. For them to be required to employ 50% of the workforce on the job from a 12-mile radius, that percentage might be difficult for most contractors to meet.

Since this is going to be revisited, Solicitor Pizzo asked for two weeks to have the opportunity to run that by a few contractors and also a few business managers and see what they think how that would impact the ordinance.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that the drafted ordinance reads one person with OSHA 30 training or current equivalent. Can supervision be spelled out there? The reason being is that they can hire one apprentice that went to college and has limited or no experience but he is their 30-hour OSHA person. Somebody who is in a supervisory role that has OSHA 30 then that is in

other municipalities code currently, that's also in private entities like Merc or other pharmaceuticals where the supervision has to hold that accountability.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that was an excellent point and will work in the supervision.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that if any other council member has changes, revisions, to please reach out to Solicitor Pizzo.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that technically this agenda item is just for discussion. The Council President will instruct the Council Clerk what to put on the next Council agenda.

Council President Tokmajian asked Solicitor Pizzo that because some of the agenda items are discussion items does he have to open the floor for public comment?

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that the public had the opportunity to comment at the outset of the meeting. There is nothing to stop President Tokmajian, but the fact that he didn't does not put him in harm's way of the Sunshine Law.

7. **REVIEW OF OPTIONS REGARDING EV CHARGING IN TOWNHOME COMMUNITIES.**

Council President Tokmajian indicated that there was a gentleman at the last Council meeting and had expressed some concern around what the Township was going to do or how they were going to address EV's within the Township.

Currently Bensalem's Municipal Code and Zoning Ordinance does not include the dedicated section that specifically regulates installation of electrical vehicle chargers on private residential property. It is recognized that the transition to electric vehicles is real and growing. Many residents, especially those in attached homes, or don't have access to a private garage face challenges accessing reliable charging options. It is a shared issue across communities across this country.

There are public charging stations across Bensalem, but should take the concern seriously and the Township should be committed to proactively explore options to support the EV charging access to all residents.

There are five areas in the Township, the Coves, Berkley Trace, Judson Meadows, the Valley and Springdale. Down in the Coves he actually almost tripped on charging cords that were going across the sidewalks. It is something he feels that the Township should get a handle on. It begs the question whether it is a liability on the homeowner or the Township.

Director Chaykowski indicated that those individuals did it without permits then as well. The Township's Electric Permit process does require them, even if they have a driveway or garage, they are supposed to come to the Township and apply for a permit in order to be able to add these electric chargers to their homes.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that there is not a dedicated section to EV chargers. That still falls within just the electrical code.

Director Chaykowski indicated that he would assume it is probably addressing the IBC or something like that.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that it is something that is not uncommon now that townships are actually creating their own dedicated section. As being a part of the Bucks County Planning Commission there are resources available to support the idea of how to address this in the best way and to obviously minimize cost. They do not want the Township to shoulder the cost, and had asked the Bucks County Planning Commission to take a look at it.

Council President Tokmajian had invited Mr. Burton from the Bucks County Planning Commission to speak on the matter.

Mr. Burton indicated that he didn't think that the Planning Commission necessarily were experts on EV charging. But they are in the midst of actually doing a program to install EV chargers throughout the County at various County facilities which will also be available to the public.

They are seeing that it is a need that needs to be addressed and issues that need to be researched in terms of demand for EV charging wherever it is. After one of their meetings, Council President Tokmajian and Mr. Burton mentioned that there were communities that were non HOA that had parking but not adjacent to their house.

Before Mr. Burton was a Civil Engineer he had an electrical background, he knew enough to be dangerous about electrical matters. He was not sure but was guessing that these might be actually trickle charging situations. In other words, it is not necessarily a class two but a class one device which is just in line with a cord that you can plug into a regular 120 volt outlet.

If they are installing a class two device then that would most likely be inside their house and then there would be a 220 line which would actually be either directly or by a receptacle inside the house connected to that charger. And then again, they would have to run a line out to near the automobile. They would probably need a 4 x 4 post with the appropriate outlet, with the right capacity and plug facility which would have to be weatherized. The same thing with trickle charging, otherwise, you are back to running extension cords.

Councilman Knowles indicated that these developments that are being talked about they do not have deeded parking. Just because the parking space is in front of your house, out of courtesy most people let you park in front of your house. You can't have people putting electrical chargers in and then that is not their spot. If you put an electrical charger in somehow installed, anyone can pull up to that spot and park there, then the person whose home it is can't park there and charge their vehicle.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that the residents in those neighborhoods are assigned handicapped spots in front of their homes. How is that different?

Mr. Burton indicated that it may not be discreetly in the Township Code but he thinks that the Township would want to have it, so that if they were going to allow charging curbside in these developments that the Township would have an installation that would follow some of the things that he just discussed for safety reasons.

For any of these they're also under another electrical rule, a NEC rule, which is called the 80% rule. If there were a 30% amp that went out for that charging, you would only be able to go up to 16 amps, 80% of that, if you're utilizing that circuit for more than 3 hours. If you are extending it with charging, you're doing that over a longer period of time. Have a facility which is in essence rated to handle more amps than it typically would because it's going to be utilized for more than 3 hours.

It could be utilized for 12, 14 hours, overnight charging. The current requirement for them, the size of the load is generally somewhere between 12 and 16 amps. Most of them try to size at 12 so that if someone would just plug it in with the trickle charger that is usually supplied with the car that would be safe, but not all of them do. What would probably be more ideal if the Township were to put something into their Code with respect to that, he believes it would make sense. If the residents are going to have it installed anyway it is not that much more to have the 20 amp circuit put in instead of the 15 amp.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that some of the challenges that he had mentioned as far as dedicated parking, who is going to own the charger and maintain it? There were a number of different options as a possible partnership with the Township that could happen with a particular EV charging company. They also discussed potentially looking at utilizing some of the public space that was within these neighborhoods; so that maybe we cannot isolate and dedicate a specific spot in front of that residents home, but at least this way they can have at least two chargers that are installed somewhere within a close proximity of walking distance to their home.

Councilman Knowles indicated that there is a program through the infrastructure that offers public funds and it is supposed to be through the states. They put \$5 billion into it and the states which let small areas who had non-access to electric chargers, put chargers in. So far they have placed 40 chargers in the whole of the United States. The Township could get the money through the state, but would have to come up with the other 20%.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he spoke to Director Chaykowski and the Township has taken on someone to handle grants and asked if that is something this individual can look into in terms of infrastructure for EV's.

There is a reason why Council brought on a Special Project Engineer to look into areas and layout what the best option is in those particular neighborhoods to try and at least give an option, and simultaneously have Director Chaykowski for potential grant money to avoid Township costs.

Council Vice President Sloane asked Mr. Burton, the chargers that are going into those neighborhoods are they for public access? Those are the super fast level 3 chargers, correct?

Mr. Burton indicated that the Township should be talking about level 2 chargers, there are level 3 chargers out there but not many. Level 2 chargers are considered fast and you would be able to get a full charge in one evening over night versus a small fraction of that with a level 1 charger. A level 3 charger would have your vehicle charged within hours.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that there are two scenarios, one they leave the charger in the car, and if you partner up with a particular company they would charge you added fees if the charger was left in the car once it is fully charged. Also, enforcing if the car is parked at the charging station not plugged in.

Mr. Burton indicated that it might be contingent upon the App.

Council President Tokmajian asked Director Chaykowski if there was a potential to get grant money and does it make sense to have the Township Special Project Engineer look at some of these neighborhoods such as; the Coves, Berkley Trace, Judson Meadows, the Valley and Springdale. Those are the neighborhoods where there are fixed townhomes that could potentially utilize these EV's.

Director Chaykowski indicated that the Valley would not be an issue because everyone has a driveway. Who would ultimately be paying for the charge, for example if you go to WaWa you're utilizing your credit card. Who is receiving those funds and who is paying the electric bill?

Mr. Burton indicated that the resources that he did was that there's sort of a range of companies that do it a different way. Some companies are paying all of the upfront costs and they take care of everything. They do the installation, they do the maintenance, they do the operation of it, they have the App. But, in most of those instances the revenue from that is all of theirs. It goes down the spectrum all the way to, if it is really a desirous location and if you are going to get a lot of business. And the Township is coming in with maybe even some of the upfront costs as far as the installation; then the Township can take a bigger piece of the pie in which they can actually get revenue from this. It basically depends on what the Township negotiates.

Director Chaykowski indicated that the Township had looked at it a number of years ago to adding EV chargers to the driveway. It ultimately turned out that it was going to cost the Township over \$40,000 just to bring the electric to the two charging stations.

Mr. Burton indicated that was something he looked at when they did their evaluation for the project that they are undergoing with the County, is the accessibility to the power. If it is way far away and you have to actually run lines and you have to put a whole new panel in, whatever you have to do to get that electric. Whereas, if you are right out near the distribution system it makes it much easier to do it. That is one cost that even the company they researched basically almost does it turnkey. The Township needs to be careful of the selection. That could be something that one of the Township engineering firms can do, is look at these sites and kind of determine what the best course would be as far as placement.

Director Chaykowski indicated that when the Township had looked at this a number of years ago there was a grant program out there, but they were only covering the cost of the charging station. Basically, the installation and the charging station, a portions share would be covered through the grant. Bringing the electricity and the ongoing cost of the electricity would be on the Township. The Township could investigate what is out there.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that when the Township looks at new development projects for large tracks of land, for example, the Nesahminy Mall, the Armstrong Middle School property, is there an opportunity to put something into the code to incorporate EV spots; and that way it's built into the infrastructure during that project? You're basically starting with a greenfield or brownfield. Build it in to make it a requirement in the code.

Council Secretary Wenzel indicated that Parx Casino has EV charges and it is free for “x” amount of time and then you have to pay for it afterwards. It may be a good idea to have the EV chargers placed in Township parks then the first half hour would be free, and anything after that you have to pay.

Councilman Knowles indicated that he didn’t personally want to pay an engineer to do a study because Buick just cancelled all of their electric cars and Ford just cancelled their F150 electric trucks. There is \$7 billion out there in federal money floating around somewhere that’s supposed to build more public charging stations. Everybody with a driveway has the capability of putting their own charging station in if they get the proper permits, and they can go to other places to charge their cars.

In a perfect world you could get to a point where they have portable chargers where a person can charge it in their house and roll it out to their car and give themselves a charge just to get to other places to charge them faster.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he did not disagree that the demand is leveling off for complete EV’s. but there is an increase in hybrids which is still going to require a plug-in.

Council Secretary Wenzel asked what would stop the townhomes from boring underneath the sidewalk, putting up a ballard? Most of the townhomes, most apartments, commercial buildings have a sign that says FDC. They could put up a sign with a shut-off outside of their home, neighbor sees a problem, police, fire have to show up.

There is solar panels on his home and a sign indicating where you would shut it off before the fire department comes. What would stop these homeowners from doing that? The spot would have to be deeded to them just like a handicap spot.

8. TOWNSHIP AUDITOR RESIGNATION AND PROCESS TO FILL SEAT:

Council President Tokmajian indicated they could nominate someone to replace that individual that is currently resigning who is Dominic Webster, or provide public notice and receive resumes into the Township; then at a future Council meeting they could go through those resumes and choose who they want.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that from what he can remember, they received resumes and interviewed the candidates.

Council President Tokmajian asked his fellow members if they were okay with him directing the Administration to put public notice on our website to notify residents that the Auditor position is open and to submit resumes for consideration.

Solicitor Pizzo indicated that what Council President Tokmajian proposes is acceptable, and what they should do is to vote to accept the resignation which is a requirement under the Second-Class Township Code which will start a 30-day clock running to fill it. Council could target their meeting of February 9th as the night at which you would vote to appoint a new elected Auditor or at their meeting of February 26th. Council Clerk McBreen can arrange for notices to go on the Township’s various social media platform as early as tomorrow advising people that anyone interested should submit a letter of interest to the Council Clerk. If Council chooses to do it on

February 26th, he would suggest to maybe have the 21st or the 22nd as the cut-off date. That will give the Council Clerk plenty of time to get them to Council prior to the meeting of the 26th.

Council Vice President Sloane motioned to accept the Auditor's resignation. **Councilman Knowles** seconded and the motion carried 4-0.

9. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Council President Tokmajian asked if there was anyone in the audience who would like to speak. Seeing no one come forward the second Public Comment was closed.

10. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Phil Wursta wished the Flyer and Sixers good luck with their seasons.

Council Vice President Sloane indicated that it was really nice being up there working with everybody again. Appreciated the back-and-forth discussions and knew that this was an agenda that was not anticipated to have much to talk about, but found it to be very resourceful.

Solicitor Pizzo responded with "GO BIRDS!"

The Mayor indicated that starting on January 19th it is Martin Luther King's Unity Week and to please try and take part in this event.

Council President Tokmajian indicated that he had visited the Bridge Clinic over the holidays and they are doing a lot of good things for dogs and cats and encouraged the public to check them out.

Also, he directed this to Director Chaykowski regarding making the public aware of the fraudulent emails related to Building and Planning Fees.

Director Chaykowski indicated that there were issues on two occasions where individuals were scamming people about the Building and Planning fees. Any individual attending a Zoning Hearing Board meeting could have possibly received a fraudulent phishing scam looking like an invoice that came from the Township requesting payment. The township did notify the last applicants that an issue had occurred after the Township was notified by one of the applicants. Going forward the Township has made it a point that they will be redacting personal information off of the applications that are being put online as part of the agenda item.

The Township is reaching out to other municipalities to see if they are running into these issues and what they are doing to try and combat it as well. The Township put a blast out on social media today advising the public of this issue.

11. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Councilman Knowles motioned to adjourn. **Council Vice President Sloane** seconded and the motion carried 4-0

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

The Bensalem Township Council Meeting of January 12th, 2026 can be viewed in its entirety at the following websites:

www.bensalempa.gov

or

www.youtube.com

Respectfully Submitted,

Debora F. McBreen
Recording Secretary