



## Bridgewater 2024 Budget Mayor's Message

The Bridgewater 2024 budget reflects the town's commitment to providing essential services to its residents while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Despite the headwinds of budget realities from both the state and federal level, this year's budget includes a balanced approach to spending, with a focus on infrastructure improvements, public safety, transparency initiatives, enhancing our parks and recreation spaces, and ensuring that the services that our residents expect and deserve continue with diligence and excellence.

### Key Budget Priorities

- **Investing in Infrastructure:** This year's budget continues to allocate resources to upgrading and maintaining our roads to ensure safer and more efficient transportation. Additionally, the Township allocates funds for the continued improvement of the sewer utility.
- **Public Safety:** The budget prioritizes the safety of Bridgewater's residents by increasing funding for the Police Department, including the addition of new officers, training programs, and equipment. Investments are also made in the acquisition and use of license plate readers across the municipality.
- **Transparency Initiatives:** To foster greater trust and engagement with residents, the budget includes initiatives for a revamped, user-friendly town website. It also supports the continuance of livestreaming town meetings, ensuring that governance processes are accessible and transparent to all community members.

### Budget Realities and Unfunded State and Federal Mandates

- **Affordable Housing:** Compliance with state mandates for affordable housing requirements places additional financial obligations on the Township. Recent new initiatives from Trenton place increasing burdens on municipalities throughout the state, and Bridgewater is not alone in our mandatory burdens. The 2024 budget accounts for these mandates by allocating resources to meet the stipulated criteria without compromising other essential services.
- **Stormwater:** New state and federal initiatives require that Bridgewater addresses stormwater runoff and related infrastructure - a significant budget consideration. Funds

are allocated to enhance drainage systems and mitigate flooding risks, ensuring the town is better prepared for severe weather events.

- **Inflation:** Inflation has led to an increase in the standard operating costs for the municipality, affecting various budget areas such as healthcare, utilities, vehicle maintenance, and other routine expenses. The budget aims to address these rising costs by implementing efficient spending practices and ensuring that essential services are maintained without compromising quality.

### **Other Budget Highlights**

- **Master Plan:** The budget includes funds for the implementation and adoption of the Master Plan, a comprehensive framework designed to guide the town's growth and development over the coming years. These funds will support strategic initiatives in town planning, zoning, and community development. By investing in the Master Plan, the Township is committing to a forward-thinking approach that balances economic growth, environmental stewardship, and quality of life for all residents.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Capital improvements are a major focus, with funds dedicated to upgrading existing parks, adding new recreational facilities, and enhancing green spaces. These efforts aim to improve the quality of life for residents and promote a healthier community. Funding in the 2024 budget includes considerations for Camp Cromwell, KidStreet Park, Municipal Turf Fields, and the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.
- **Human Services:** The budget allocates funds for the Bridgewater Senior Center, focusing on enhancing the facility to better serve our senior community. This includes investments in physical improvements to the center's interior, such as updated furnishings and modernized activity spaces. Additionally, the budget provides for the repaving of the center's parking lot, ensuring safe and convenient access for all visitors.

### **Conclusion**

The Bridgewater 2024 budget is a comprehensive plan that addresses the town's immediate needs while laying the groundwork for future growth and sustainability. By investing strategically in infrastructure, public safety, transparency, economic development, parks, and human services, Bridgewater is committed to enhancing the well-being of its residents and maintaining a high quality of life. The budget reflects careful consideration of current realities and mandates, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively to benefit the entire community.



Mayor Matthew C. Moench