



Township of Belleville  
*New Jersey*

Media Contact:  
Chuck O'Donnell  
732-407-4341  
[chuck@jaffecom.com](mailto:chuck@jaffecom.com)

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Township Manager Responds to Mayor. Will Present Drastic Budget Cuts to Mayor/Council.**

**BELLEVILLE, NJ – August 20, 2020** – In response to Mayor Michael Melham's call for drastic budget cuts to offset future tax increases, Township Manager Anthony Iacono has outlined a variety of potential cost-saving measures.

Iacono has identified a number of possible options, such as a reduction in the size of municipal departments where revenue has decreased because of COVID-19, an early retirement incentive program and furloughs to reduce work weeks by two days.

Other possibilities include exploring additional shared service agreements with neighboring municipalities, exploring regional services and selling under-used municipal properties.

The need to continue to identify ways to deeply cut spending has come into focus as Belleville – like many other municipalities across the state – deals with the financial damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposed 2020 municipal budget introduced at Tuesday night's Belleville Township Council meeting calls for a municipal tax increase of \$298 for a home assessed at \$276,000, the township average, to address a \$3 million anticipated shortfall in revenue.

At the Aug. 18 council meeting, Mayor Melham said: "The average assessed home now pays just north of \$10,000 in taxes per year. While this number includes county and school district taxes, the total bill is just too much. As we work toward better services and facilities, must be also work at cutting the budget, until our future anticipated revenue is realized."

The township is facing a 3% increase in general liability insurance and a 28% increase in garbage disposal costs. At the same time, Belleville has sustained a 44% decrease in municipal court fees and a 71% decrease in interest on investments.

Melham was quick to note: “Township employees and their respective compensation packages equal 75% of the budget. In 2019, there were less employees than in 2018 when I took office. In 2020, there are even less employees than in 2019.”

In this year’s budget, the appropriation for “Salaries and Wages” is down \$850,000 from 2019.

“There is no doubt some difficult conversations that must be had, as we review these professional recommendations to reduce spending,” Melham said. “Through it all, we must always keep our obligations to the taxpayers of Belleville as the paramount objective.”

Melham said he will place the Township Manager’s list of possible cost-saving measures on the agenda for discussion at the next Township Council meeting and a formal vote authorizing him to explore these options would likely be held in September.

The municipal budget is scheduled for adoption on Sept. 22.

“The Township could not have anticipated the far-reaching effects of COVID-19 on our bottom line,” Iacono said. “That being said, we must be prepared to face another shortfall in revenue. Hard decisions will be made.”

END