

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Anesh: Budget cuts should not increase class size or cut programs

South Plainfield – In the wake of last week’s budget vote, Council President Matt Anesh has asked the Borough’s Administration and Finance Committee to review the defeated budget and make recommendations to the full council on ways trim costs.

In announcing the move, Anesh challenged the committee to find reductions that won’t hurt education by increasing class size or cutting programs.

“We need to hold the line on taxes,” he said, “but it’s also vital that we come up with reductions that won’t have a negative effect on education.”

Councilman Ray Rusnak, who chairs the committee, said he’s already met with school officials and will be working on a plan.

“We’re working to come up with reductions that bring down taxes but won’t hurt the students,” said Rusnak.

At its last meeting, the Council voted to appoint Suplee, Clooney & Company, the Borough’s auditor, to analyze the budget and work with the committee to develop recommendations.

According to Rusnak, he’s asked the auditors to look for savings that won’t affect the classroom: “We already have some ideas, and so far, none of them will mean cutting more teachers or programs. That’s our goal.”

Anesh said he also wants the committee to work with the board. “It makes sense to work with the board, because the board’s has to live with the budget after we decide how much to cut.”

“These are hard decisions,” explained Anesh, who has twin boys attending Riley School. “Residents sent a clear message when they voted, and the Council has a responsibility to listen to that message, but we also need to make sure what we do keeps the needs of the children in mind.”

By law, a defeated budget goes to the Council, which can make cuts or leave the budget as is. If it chooses to cut the budget, the Council decides the amount, which is binding on the Board of Education unless the Board appeals to the Commissioner of Education.

In addition to the overall reduction, the Council must recommend individual line-item cuts, which the Board may accept or reject. Either way, the total reduction is binding unless appealed.