



# The Borough of Wilson

Office of the Mayor

December 18, 2018

Attn: Residents of the Borough of Wilson  
2040 Hay Terrace  
Wilson Borough, PA 18042

Subject: **2019 Budget Message**

Dear Residents:

After sitting in the audience for many years I often wondered where my tax dollars go and how they are being spent. With the budget I feel it is important to be clear as to making sure that there are quantifiable results to back up the numbers presented to the public. The presentation of this Proposed Budget is an effort to create the best policy document possible for the citizens of the Borough. Over the last year, we have made several significant advancements within the Borough and we are looking to inform you where your money is going and to show you the operating expenses supporting these services. Changes like this represent the shift in theory necessary to budget efficiently and economically in the public trust.

Formatting for this budget document was created to serve, as an operations guide, as a financial plan, and as a communications medium. There have been ongoing modifications to the format of this document in an effort to increase transparency of government and encourage public participation. The greatest benefit to our citizens is that the format presents a clear picture of the operations and the financial plan that is embodied in the 2019 budget.

This message is intended to supplement the numbers and statistical analysis of the proposed budget with a narrative that describes all budgetary recommendations and public policy considerations included in this budget. Responsible municipal budgets fairly and accurately provide for the required basic services as well as the desired services by the citizens. This plan accomplishes that goal. The Borough's highest priority is efficient quality service to the public. The public expects streets to be swept, police and fire to respond quickly, snow to be plowed, the pool repaired and services in general to be delivered efficiently and effectively. The Borough has never permitted the national economic climate to impact the high-quality public services our residents deserve. The Borough of Wilson has continued to move forward during the past year. This administration continues to manage our way through a challenging fiscal obstacle course. To the credit of many contributors to the Borough of Wilson's local government, the Borough has remained in the enviable position of continuing to provide quality services to residents while finding ways to manage and operate with inconsistent revenues.

It would be nice to report that the most difficult financial times are over, but that is simply not true. Tough decisions must continue to be made to fulfill our obligation to the Borough's 7,800 residents. Many of the decisions that lie ahead may not always be popular, but they will be necessary to secure a solid fiscal foundation for the Borough of Wilson in the 21st century. I say this because, although the economy appears to have begun the long climb toward recovery, there are still mixed economic forecasts for the remainder of the decade.

The Borough no longer has the industry and commercial properties to support our tax base. The Dixie plant and Mack Printing (Cadmus) supplied a steady flow of revenue for the Borough for years, and as we see these businesses cease to operate and relocate we need to explore new ways to support and ensure the safety and quality of life our residents are accustomed to.

In 2018 we continue to encourage the owner of the Dixie Building to move forward with converting this building into a useful property. After several court dates, we are currently in the process of fining him and having him repair the broken windows and completely remediate the property. This has been in the courts for several months and we should start to see demonstrable action within 2019. There has been discussion on social media that the Borough should take ownership of the building and use it as a Rec Center or some other beneficial community project. In order for the Borough to pursue ownership of this property it would cost millions in tax payer dollars.

I am pleased to present this document - the Borough's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2019 - knowing that it addresses our citizens' fundamental needs while preserving the important financial reforms that will sustain the integrity of our Borough as we continue to confront the challenges presented by a weak national economy. Borough Council and the Borough staff need to develop a spending plan that safeguards services; and strengthens current reserve balances. As in years past, the Borough Staff approached this next year's budget with the same cautious, fiscally conservative, and "business smart" approach that a municipal government of limited means must pursue in good, or in bad times. This cautious and prudent approach will involve the following actions:

### *Revenues*

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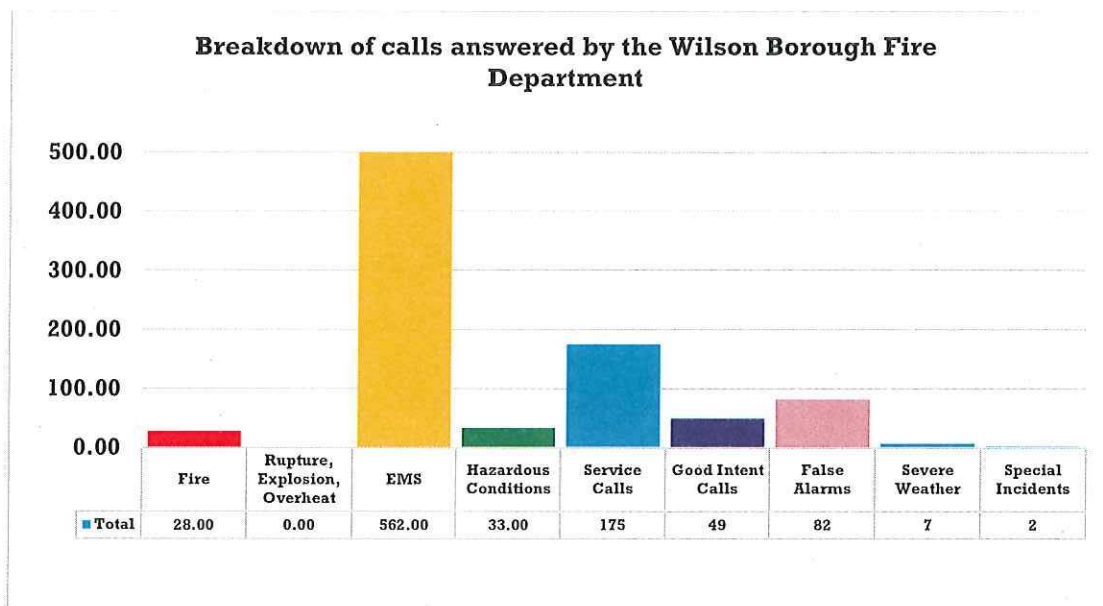
- One of the Borough's major revenue sources is the **REAL ESTATE PROPERTY TAX**. In 2017 this rate jumped to 17.5 mills, or \$96 dollars annually for the average property owner. The previous increase was 6 years prior in 2010 when the millage rate jumped from 11 to 14.5 mills. We do not have the industry in Wilson we had before and need to adjust accordingly. We are trying to avoid a huge increase several years down the road and to keep the increases manageable. By getting ahead of our expenditures we can plan for the future. For 2019 this budget proposes **\$380,000**, meaning the property tax rate will rise to **20 mills**. The Borough Tax is only a small portion of the total Property Taxes paid by our residents each year. This increase will equate to about an \$8.00 per-month increase for a house appraised at \$40,000 (or, \$96 for the year).

### *Expenditures*

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- In 2019, the Borough will continue to fund services such as Police, Road Maintenance, and Parks and Recreation, and events such as the Wilson Centennial Celebration and National Night Out.
- **PUBLIC WORKS** is going to run with the same costs as last year with no increase in the operating expenses. We are looking to get grants for what we can to repave and repair roads as well as use our Liquid Fuels to offset the cost. This year we saw several roads repaved after utility work by UGI and Easton Suburban Water. The frustration was felt by all while these roads were being worked, but in the end the overall resurfacing cost were significantly less with the utilities contributing to the paving.

- The 2019 **FIRE DEPARTMENT** budget reflects an overall increase of **3%** in operating expenses from the 2018 budget. The **WILSON BOROUGH FIRE DEPARTMENT** answered 938 calls at the time this document was being written. Out of the 938 calls 562 were for Emergency Medical assistance. Emergency Medical Services: are provided twenty-four hours a day by our firefighters trained in advanced life support. Requests for medical aid constitute the majority of calls answered by our Fire Department. Fire Department EMT/EMR, operating state of the art medical equipment, respond to most medical emergencies within 4 minutes. The breakdown below will give you a better idea of the calls the department answers.



The response times includes calls in and out of the Borough. We have 6 fulltime firefighters and approximately 20 part-time on call firefighters in the department and in 2019 we are looking to fully train our current and new firefighters to maintain the high standards Borough residents are used to.

Training of Fire Department personnel is conducted in accordance with county, state and federal standards. Firefighters and paramedics receive updates on advances in techniques and technology, and participate in continuing education. To control costs, training is conducted in-house whenever possible.

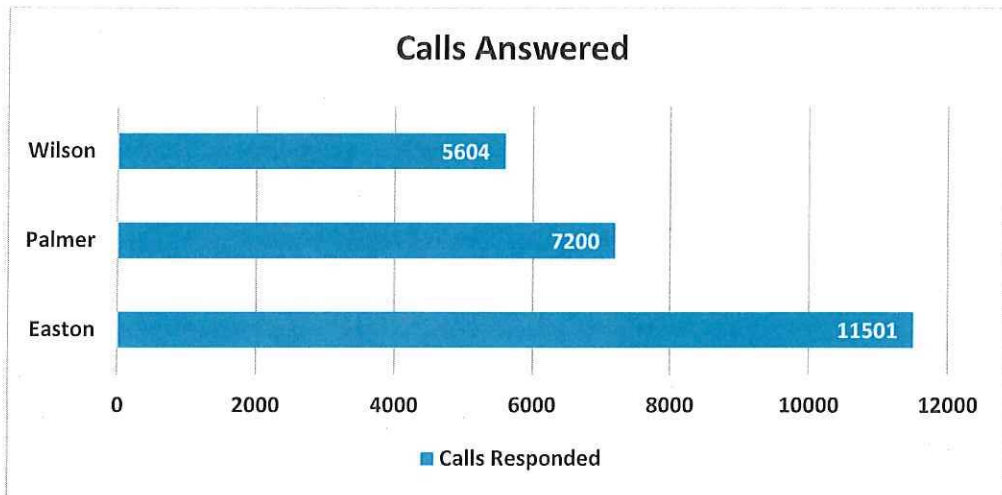
- In 2019, the **POLICE DEPARTMENT** budget proposes to proceed with a full complement of officers. This will help with overtime with a year to date overage of \$142,000. Approximately **42%** of the overtime through September 2018 was due to vacant positions and part time officers failing to fill in for full-time officers. Many of the short-staffed shifts were on weekends and nights which are traditionally busier with more serious calls and crime.

In 2018 the Wilson Police currently have 14 full-time officers, two of which are in field training and not yet assigned to a platoon. There are also 11 part-time officers, one of which is temporarily assigned as the School Resource Officer and two are in field training. The department has two Patrol Sergeants and is in the process of testing for two vacant positions. The Sergeant positions have been vacant due to retirement and because an officer needs a minimum of five years' experience before applying for the position.

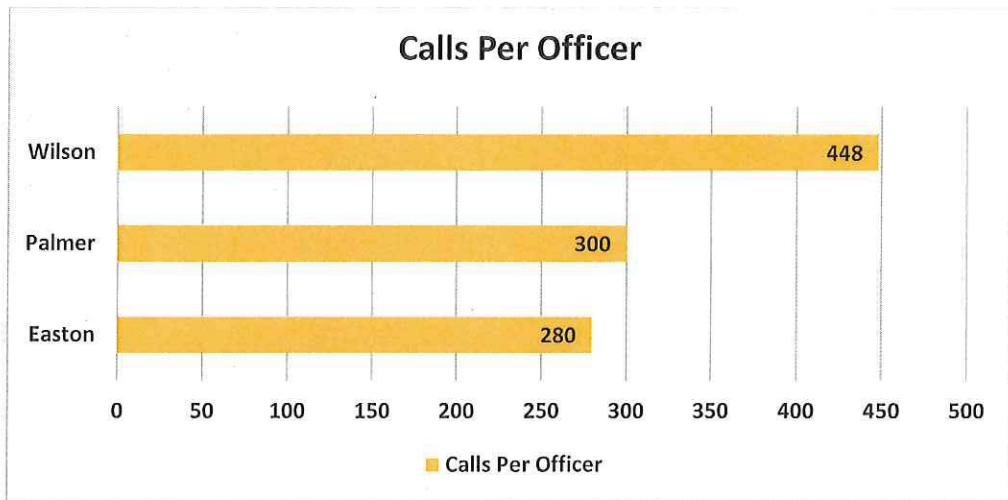
In 2017 Wilson Police responded to 5,604 calls for service. During that same time 230 people were arrested for summary, misdemeanor, and felony offenses. The department also investigated 350 motor vehicle crashes and issued nearly 1,100 traffic and parking tickets.

While there were several highly-publicized incidents in 2018, crime has seen a steady decline in the last several years. Since 2016 we've seen a 34% decrease in Part 1 UCR Offenses. Part 1 offenses include Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson.

To give you a comparison of the amount of calls our police handle. The Easton Police handled approximately 11,501 calls at the time this was written. They have 62 officers and each officer handles approximately 280 calls. Palmer Township has 34 Full-time officers and responded to 7,200 calls averaging out to approximately 300 calls per officer. Wilson handled 5,604 calls with 12 officers with an average of 448 calls per officer.



The above graph represents calls reported by these municipalities

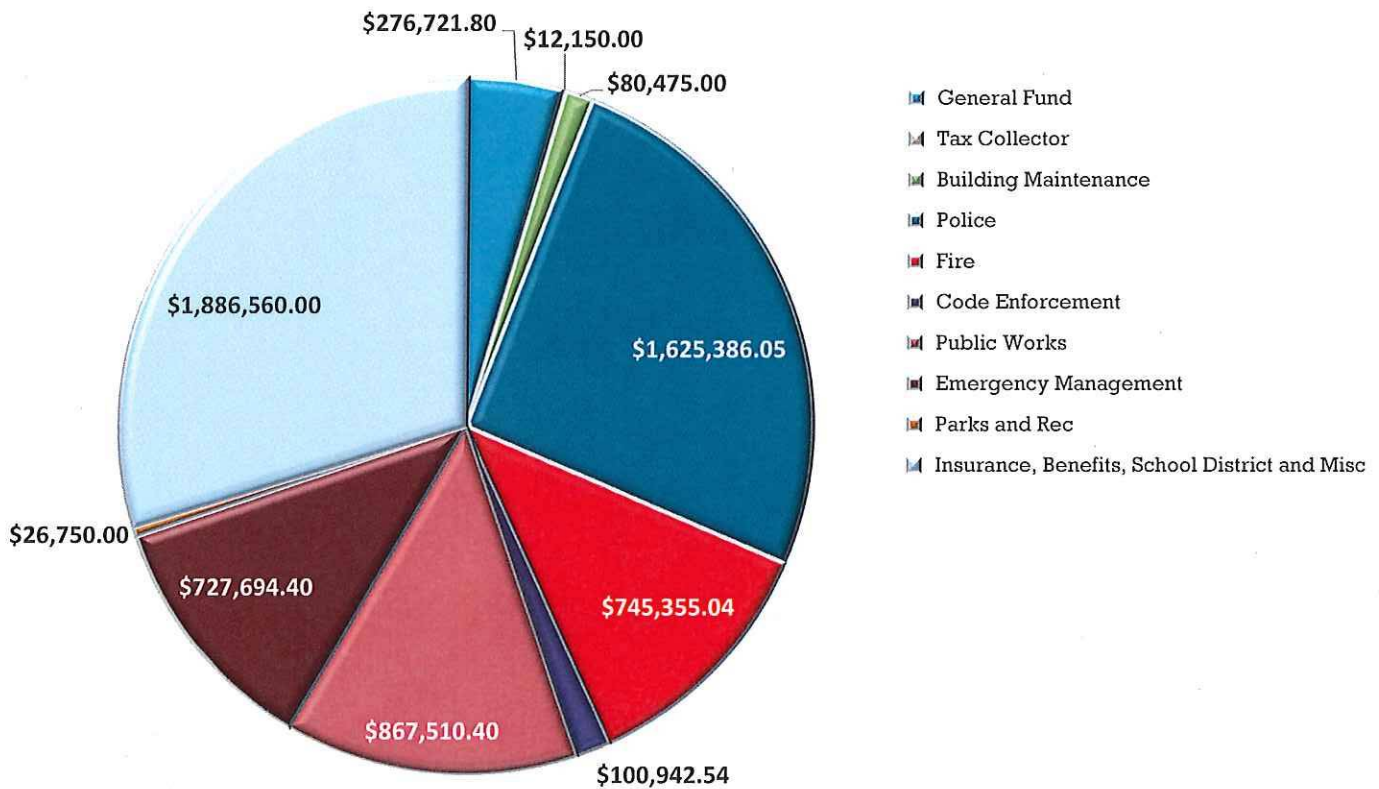


The above graph represents an average of the number of calls reported by these municipalities in comparison to the number of officers

- We consistently hear repeatedly about how if the police were to write more ticket we could see an increase in revenue. After court fees, filing fees as well as several other fees and expenses we make only a few dollars per citation.
- The **SANITARY SEWER BUDGET**, as presented, includes an increase of \$1.40 to sewer customers. The cost will go from \$4.10 to \$5.50. This is the first increase in 6 years and will still keep us on par with other municipalities.

### *Breakdown of Department Budgets*

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### *Summary*

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The Borough continues to take steps to get the most out of existing services. During challenging fiscal periods, opportunities have emerged for making our government more efficient. These times have caused this administration to no longer accept the "same old practice" as the norm and challenge people to ask the simple question- Why? The question "why" takes on new meaning when we look at how we operate various Borough functions. We have implemented a new website as well as distributed a Newsletter to better serve our residents and to keep them informed.

As local decision-makers, our adopted policies have a profound effect on the local quality of life of every Borough resident. By providing a safe, clean community with cultural and recreational opportunities, we can do our part to help re-energize the local economy. After all, the communities attracting new residents are rebounding the quickest and taking advantage of all opportunities available.

In closing, the Borough of Wilson continues to be very vigilant in providing services on a basis of what is affordable to the citizens today, and will avoid burdening residents in the future. The Borough will continue to follow this policy, as it must make a commitment to consider where the Borough is, to consider where the Borough must be in the future, and to be willing to accept and promote the changes that are necessary to be prepared for the uncertainties of the future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Barrett Jr', written over a thin horizontal line.

Donald R Barrett Jr

Mayor of the Borough of Wilson