

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

February 3, 2010 – 4:15 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date. Present: Mayor Molnar, Committeemen Masterson and Fisher, and CFO Luhrs. Lt. Barzak joined the meeting from 4:45 to 5:35 p.m. Also in attendance were the following members of the public: Hal Shut, Zach Rich, Betty Jane Hunt.

In compliance with the Public Meetings Act, Mayor Molnar announced that this Special Meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act with notices faxed to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times on January 28, 2010. A copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

The meeting was not recorded.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:

Mrs. Luhrs reviewed the two 'caps' that affect the budget--a 3.5% cap on operations and a 4% cap on the amount to be raised by taxation (levy). The latter is determined through a 10 page workbook process. The maximum the Township can levy is \$995,900. The wish list budget is \$300,000 over that amount. Cuts are needed to get under the 3.5% cap on operations; with no cuts, there's a 6 ½ cent tax increase. Legal and Police are the biggest areas of the budget and a dollar figure is needed for the Prosecutor line as the Court wants to hold more sessions.

A resolution recently received from the League calling for the elimination of the levy cap was reviewed. The CFO found it to be well written and addresses problems faced by municipalities with this arbitrary contrivance. This cap has crippled municipalities for two years and needs to be eliminated. The resolution will be considered for adoption at the regular meeting.

The budget packet distributed to the Committee members last week for their consideration was reviewed page by page, with actions as follows:

Page 1 – General Administration: Postage was reduced to \$8500; Planner Services reduced to \$500; Cable Services reduced to \$3000; Conferences/Meetings/Due reduced to \$1000; Codification of Ordinances reduced to \$3000). Added was \$500 for Open Space Expenses. This is for the annual newsletter. The law will be checked to see if it requires mailing to all residents for if another manner of distribution would be permitted.

Page 2 – Mayor and Council: No change

Page 3 – Municipal Clerk: Extra meeting reduced to \$3000; Advertising-Legal reduced to \$4000.

Page 4 – Financial Administration: Auditor Services reduced to \$4000. The line for Auditor Services was at the request of Charles Case. Mr. Molnar to speak with the Auditor concerning this reduction.

Page 5 – Audit Services: No change. The need for a single audit is determined after a review of the grants and based on cash received over a certain dollar number. If not required, the \$2700 can be removed.

Page 6 – Revenue Administration: No change.

Page 7 – Tax Assessment Administration: Supplies-Office reduced to \$1000

Page 8 – Legal Services: Reduced to \$100,000 with the caution that the \$80,000 in the temporary budget is part of the total.

Page 9 – Agricultural Advisory Committee: Reduced to \$100

Page 10 – Farmers Market Committee: No change.

Page 11 – Engineering Services: Reduced to \$5000.

Page 12 – Historical Sites Office: Reduced to \$100.

Page 13 – Planning Board: Master Plan/Zoning Ordinances reduced to \$8000 (original number was \$17,500 per quote from planner); Legal reduced to \$4500 (attorney is paid “x” amount per meeting and the 2009 number is reflective of 10% cut); Planner Services reduced to \$5000; Engineering Services reduced to \$800.

Page 14 – Zoning Board of Adjustment: Zoning Officer Expenses reduced to \$100.

Lt. Bartzak arrived and discussion skipped to the Police portion of the budget.

Page 20 – Police Department: Longevity is fixed. The police get a percentage of their vacation time if not used. Salaries are set by contract. The overtime was based on last year's number. There's only money for one PT patrolman listed.

Lt. Bartzak was questioned about coverage without overtime costs. He relayed that the patrolmen are working for comp time in lieu of OT. However, this will take a bite eventually. There's a lot of cooperation going on in the department as one officer is on sick leave and the long time PT officer was lost last November. The current part-timer is employed by the County Sheriff's department so can only work a limited number of hours. Weekends are okay but work days are a problem which makes it difficult to cover shifts. Given this fact, the dollar number listed for the part-timer won't hit, so there may be some savings to put towards another part-time officer—one who is available all the time, like the one recently interviewed. It was generally agreed that changes need to be made in order to get a new officer. There will be some savings on hourly rate with a part-timer when covering a shift as a part-timer will be paid straight time. The high January OT and holiday rotation was mentioned. Contract officers get 1st dibs on the rotation or a grievance gets filed. The lieutenant noted that the former PT officer worked scheduled shifts but then the power shift was cut due to budget constraints. This leaves just one man on duty and to call in another officer, it's a minimum of 4 hours at time and a half. Also mentioned was that traffic detail at the elementary school is being done for no pay and that police presence at the high school football games has been eliminated. Lt. Barzak would like to see another patrolman to help out with the OT situation because having one man out is hurting the department. The 12 hour shift, as proposed by the merger consultant, would require more officers. Also noted was that the \$45,000 on the OT line is not a real number due to the use of comp time and that upcoming retirements will place a strain on budgets due to use of accumulated time.

The Police Administrative Secretary line was increased for Friday Office Assistant by \$3000; the part-time patrolman line was reduced to \$15,000; and, second part-time patrolman was added for \$15,000. OE was reduced to \$2500. Education/training was reduced to \$1000. Police supplies/equipment was reduced to \$4000.

The lieutenant will interview the applicants for the Friday slot and make a recommendation. The position will pay \$12.17/hr for 5 hours/week.

Page 30 – Vehicle Maintenance: The newest vehicle has 68,000 miles. Police Vehicles Maintenance was reduced to \$18,000 and purchase of police car was reduced to \$14,000. This will allow the lease of one new vehicle. The temporary budget will have to be amended to allow for the lease.

Page 15 – Affordable Housing: OE reduced to \$6000. This line pays the planning consultant and covers advertising costs.

Page 16 – Other Code Enforcement Functions: OE reduced to \$500 and Mileage Expense reduced to \$750. Discussion ensued about possible closure of the Construction Department and going with an inter-local agreement, if another town can be found, or turned the work over to the State. With the former, the Township would get revenues. This year's fees were flat. All positions are eligible for pensions but not other benefits. George Fisher offered to speak with other municipalities for a possible partner.

Page 17 – Liability Insurance: No change/fixed.

Page 18 - Worker Compensation Insurance: No change/fixed.

Page 19 – Employee Group Insurance: No change. New rates are in effect for 2010. A possible change to employee contribution in the future was mentioned. This should be kept in mind when negotiating the new police contract.

Page 20 – Police Department: Completed earlier.

Page 21 – Office of Emergency Management: No change.

Page 22 – Aid to Volunteer Fire Companies: No change.

Page 23 – Aid to Volunteer Ambulance Companies: No change.

Page 24 – LOSAP: No change.

Page 25 – Fire Bureau: Fees cover costs.

Page 26 – Municipal Prosecutor: No change but the prosecutor needs to be brought in. A better breakdown of charges is needed to align with those of other professionals. The amount currently budgeted will not be enough.

Page 27 – Streets and Road Maintenance: No change.

Page 28 – Solid Waste Collection: No change. The money from the recycling tonnage grant is used to pay Lambertville for the truck and there should be enough to cover.

Page 29 – Buildings and Grounds: OE was reduced to \$4000; Maintenance and Repairs reduced to \$16,000. New garage doors can be a capital expense. Other quotes and an ordinance are needed. The fire house roof is leaking and the cost of the repair is unknown at this time.

Page 30 – Vehicle Maintenance: Discussed earlier.

Page 31 – NJDES Stormwater Permit-Street Div: No change/fixed. There are still some catch basins to label but the materials have been purchased.

Page 32 – Public Health Services: Soil witnessing reduced to \$5000. O&M remediation covers the quarterly reports required by DEP as well as repair and maintenance to the existing RO units.

Page 33 – Environmental Health Services: OE reduced to \$350.

Page 34 – Community Forestry: No change.

Page 35 – Animal Control: No change. Dog fees are used first to pay the salary but do not cover it completely.

Page 36 – Welfare Administration: No change.

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Page 37 – Social Service Agencies Contribution: No change. Last year's number was used.

Page 38 – Recreation Services and Programs: No change. Open Gym has not billed for last year.

Page 39 – Prior Years Bills: There's an outstanding bill from Heritage Consulting Engineers as Heritage Builders has not replenished their escrow. The default falls to the Township.

Page 40 – Accumulated Leave Compensation: This is what Michael Cappabianco spoke about at the police meeting. When retirements hit, there won't be enough money put away to cover the cost.

Page 41 – Recycling Surcharge: No change.

Page 42 – Electricity: No change but saving can possibly be obtained by locking in for 'x' number of years with a broker. The savings could be as high as \$4500 over 3 years. With rates spiking in the summer, this would be a good time to lock in for a guaranteed rate. The only change would be in the generator of the electricity; JCP&L would still deliver. Fisher will continue to investigate.

Page 43 – Street Lighting: No change.

Page 44 – Telephone: No change. There's been no word from Mr. Allibone on the audit.

Page 45 – Water: No change. This covers the hydrants in the Calton development.

Page 46 – Fuel Oil: No change. It was suggested that the Township might not be getting what it is paying for and that the tanks should be measured with a stick after a delivery. It was also noted that the biggest expense is the fire house for both heating and cooling.

Page 47 – Gasoline: OE reduced to \$35,000.

Page 48 – Public Employees Retirement System: No change.

Page 49 – Social Security: This number is based on salaries and will be adjusted if a new cop is hired. Once all salary numbers are determined and the cop matter decided, an estimated real number will be entered.

Page 50 – Consolidated Police and Fire Retirement System: No change/fixed.

Page 51 – Defined Contribution Retirement Program: No change. The number is a place holder.

Page 52 – Recycling Ton Grant: No change.

Page 53 – Body Armor Grant: No change.

Page 54 – Community Forestry Grant: No change. A grant has been awarded. Whether a cash match is needed is still to be determined.

Page 55 – HC Open Space Trust Fund Program: No change. Application is made yearly.

Page 56 – Click It Ticket It Grant: None

Page 57 – Drunk Driving Enforcement Fund: This comes later in the year.

Page 58 – Clean Communities Grant: Last year's number was used but this entry is a wash.

Page 59 – Matching Funds for Grants: Place holder for any required match.

Page 60 – Municipal Court: No change. The Court lost almost \$25,000 in revenue last year. This line only reflects the court office. Prosecutor and Public Defender are separate.

Page 61 – Public Defender: No change. He's paid only when used.

Page 62 – Capital Improvement Fund: Last year's number was inserted. Capital is a separate account.

Page 63 – Reserve for Purchase of Fire Truck: There used to be funds put away in reserve for this type of purchase but those days are gone.

Pages 64 through Page 71 are Debt Service and fixed.

Notes will be provided to all Boards of these first round cuts.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:50 P.M. on motion by Molnar.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk