

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

November 23, 2011 – 6 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 6:15 p.m. Present: Mayor Molnar (6:15), Committeemen Fisher and Rich. Also in attendance were Assessor David Gill and Democrat reporter Christina Rogas.

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 November 18, 2011. 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 recorded via digital recording system.

DISCUSSION WITH ASSESSOR RE: RE-ASSESSMENT:

The purpose of the discussion was to ascertain the status of the re-assessment effort. Mr. Gill relayed that letters have been sent to residents of Rt. 179, Rocktown-Lamb. Road, and Chimney Hill Drive. The Calton, Orleans, Cedar Crest, Thuman and Connaught Hill developments have been completed. Consideration of filing a compliance plan in lieu of actual visitation to properties has been deemed inappropriate by the assessor as too many changes are being found. An extension until the 4th week of January has been obtained and Mr. Gill assured the Committee that all values will be set by that time, which will insure that taxes will be applied equally throughout the Township.

A brief discussion ensued over how to better inform the populace of re-assessment activities the next time this is contemplated—parameters, rules, etc—e.g., notice on the website or outlined in a newspaper article. It was suggested that the following be placed on the website: A Township-wide, ongoing re-assessment is underway, the results of which will be effective in the 2012 tax book. It was noted that the assessor also sends out letters to residents in advance of the re-assessment activity for their property.

In response to a question from Mr. Rich concerning what is being seen by way of values, Mr. Gill noted that these are down; that there is not enough sales activity; and, that there are only 9 to 10 listings. As for work being found for which there is no permit, it was relayed that the Committee and the Construction Official will be given a list, with complete details, at the end of the project period. This work will be picked up using 2012 values next year with assessments adjusted and recaptured. It was estimated that between 25-35% of properties will fall into this category. Another round of letters will be sent to property owners who have not responded to the initial contact. If still no response, an estimate will be used.

As for payment due, Mr. Gill requested that half be paid in 2011 with the rest in 2012, the latter scheduled dependent on the market movement next year. This was agreeable to all concerned.

The Spectra Energy (Texas Eastern) and United Water facilities were briefly discussed. The former would require the hiring of an expert and the latter cannot be assessed as the reservoir is a natural, not man-made, formation.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Christine Rogas inquired as to why the re-assessment is being done and was advised that this avoids a State mandated re-valuation. Also, when ratios are out of whack, values are affected, which in turn means that property values cannot be defended. This results in Township losses on tax appeals. The overall purpose of the effort is fairness.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:41 p.m. on motion by Molnar, seconded by Fisher.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk