

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

February 12, 2009 – 4:30 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 4:35 p.m. Present: Mayor Corboy, Committeeman Molnar and CFO Luhrs. Absent: Committeeman Masterson. Also in attendance were Betty Jane Hunt, Cathy Urbanski and Ron Shapella.

In compliance with the Public Meetings Act, Mayor Corboy announced that this Special Meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act with notices faxed to the Lambertville Beacon, the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times on February 6, 2009. 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 and a copy of the CD is on file in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:

Cathy Urbanski came forward to request that the Environmental Commission budget be reduced to \$500. The \$1500 reduction means that there will be no newsletter this year. The Commission is only requesting enough funding to cover dues to ANJEC, etc.

Mrs. Luhrs presented a packet of revised budget sheets. The Appropriations Summary reflected the \$70,000 in cuts made previously. The proposed pay reduction of \$47,000 and the addition of \$20,000 in 2008 legal bills bring the total appropriations to \$3,411,646.77. There were also adjustments made to the Social Security line to reflect the 8.45 percent reduction in salaries and \$500 was taken from Buildings and Grounds to cover the Stormwater assessment, which is outside the cap. The operating budget is now just under cap. If full State funding is received, the tax rate would increase by \$.035. This, however, will change as the calculations are based on last year's numbers. Once State numbers are released following the Governor's March 10th address, the budget can be firmed up, introduced, and a determination made about applying for extraordinary aid.

Mr. Corboy instructed the CFO to proceed with the salary & wage ordinance as there is no choice but to cut. He remarked briefly about the employee meeting noting that they were concerned; handled the situation well; and offered several ideas presented for saving money. As for police overtime, Lt. Bartzak provided a letter indicating his implementation of a plan to cut a minimum of \$40,000 from salaries and operating costs. How to monitor and what would be an acceptable amount of overtime needs to be determined.

Follow up on items from previous meetings included: 1) no election district changes needed until 2011; 2) an application to DRJTBC for Rocktown Hill improvements will be on the 2/18 agenda; 3) a bond ordinance for Rocktown-Lamb. 13 will be introduced on 2/18 and the engineer has started survey work; and, 4) Community Forestry is ok with a \$500 budget.

Although the PBA has voted no on foregoing the 2009 raise without re-opening negotiations, the door is still open to have meaningful discussions to restructure the current contract, if so desired. The Clerk was instructed to write a brief letter to this effect. The draft letter to South on their need to budget and pay for police coverage at school functions will be on the 2/18 agenda for approval. Lt. Bartzak is to contact ESC concerning payment for police calls to that facility.

Letters to vendors and professionals requesting a 10% reduction have gone out. One vendor has made a verbal commitment to giving the Township a better discount. A notice has just been received that first class mail will be increasing by 2 cents in May. Hopefully, the Farmers Market will reimburse the Township for the \$400 in postage used for their recent mailing.

A list of possible areas for savings was compiled following the employee meeting and reviewed. Actual dollar savings to be applied to the budget will be supplied to the CFO. Total elimination of the cleaning service was not considered in the best interest of maintaining the building. A further reduction of fire company funding was made in light of other payments on their behalf—LOSAP, insurance, debt service, new fire truck, etc. The line was amended to \$10,000.

A survey was done of Hunterdon County municipalities involved in soil test witnessing to see how payment is made to the witness. None have the witness paid directly by the client. An escrow/trust fund is not an approved method per the State. In addition, if no fees are collected there is no fee/permit revenue to appropriate the following year. Although new construction is not anticipated, there may be testing for alterations. The line was increased by \$3000.

Construction is down and there was an \$18,000 loss in 2008. A suggestion has been made to turn this office over to the State. No action taken but can be looked at again in 2010.

The Zoning Board requested that \$200 for the deputy be re-instated. Approved.

Lt. Bartzak's contract is still pending. Updates are needed to finalize.

A chart of police car basic maintenance cost was presented. Road Supervisor Hoagland has indicated that his department can help reduce costs by doing oil changes in-house. There would be 24 oil changes per year for the six vehicles involved. Fifty five gallon drums of oil can be acquired for about \$520/each and cases of filters for around \$55/ per case. Mr. Molnar will speak with Mr. Hoagland concerning the type of oil priced out. No action taken.

Discussion returned to employee cut backs. One idea presented at the recent meeting was to close on Friday's to save on heating and cooling costs. Mr. Corboy relayed that the schedule has been left open. A question concerning the effect on future pensions was that this is based on the highest three years pay. The possibility of further reducing police OT was discussed but no action taken. The situation, however, will be monitored to see if hours start creeping in as it might be necessary to leave shifts uncovered. As for the new salary and wage ordinance, Mrs. Luhrs presented a two column scenario that has been discussed with Auditor Case showing wages January through February and March through December. The net reduction would be 8.45 percent over 2008. If the Township fares better than anticipated, adjustments can be made through a new resolution, although no retro would be applied.

Capital budget needs: 1) The Rocktown-Lamb. Road Section 13 ordinance will be for \$490,000 including a \$485,000 grant receivable and \$5000 from the capital improvement fund; 2) The Rocktown Hill work will not be funded through the Township but hopefully by DRJTBC. The projected funds for this project and the chip seal program were eliminated from the capital budget. The available capital surplus is \$163,127. A settlement purchase on Perrine would have to be bonded,

The Court request to restore funding for interpreters in the amount of \$500 was approved.

An employee has offered to reduce health benefit coverage if the Township would split the difference in savings with an annual stipend. Whether such a change would be allowed during the year has to be investigated. A change to the policy manual would be required in order to give yearly stipends, although it was noted that this could be a savings to the Township. The sharing of health benefits costs for employees working similar positions in other municipalities was suggested for exploration in 2010.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:48 p.m. on motion by Molnar, seconded by Corboy.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk