

# SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

## December 22, 2009; 4:15 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 4:25 p.m. Present: Mayor Corboy, Committeeman Molnar, Committeeman-elect George Fisher and CFO Luhrs. Also in attendance at various times were Randy Hoagland, Lt. Stephen J. Bartzak, and Jeff Ent.

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 December 14, 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 not recorded.

### **BUDGET WORKSHOP:**

Road Supervisor Randy Hoagland outlined his 2010 budget request as follows:

- 1) Ongoing need for road maintenance materials
- 2) The inclusion of the Orleans development has thrown off his salt projections and he would like to return to the 900 ton level in 2011. There's currently \$31,200 reserved for salt in 2010. The good news is that the cost per ton has dropped from last year.
- 3) Chip sealing of Rocktown-Lamb. Road from the high school to the township line would be approximately \$90,000, depending on oil prices. This treatment will help with traction and, if not done soon, the road will be lost due to the number of cracks. The alternative is to re-pave. This road has been done piecemeal over the years with some sections 20+ years old. There are other township roads that also need to be chip sealed but can wait for now.
- 4) Rocktown Hill drainage project is on hold as no word has been received from the DRJTBC. \$100,000 is needed to complement the \$200,000 grant pending from the State.
- 5) If servicing of police vehicles is to continue, a post lift is needed, which would cost about \$7000. 2010 police vehicle maintenance quotes have been solicited, so this activity could possibly return to an outside vendor in 2010.
- 6) New garage doors. The current ones are shot. Insulated doors are preferred and would cost approximately \$12,000.
- 7) The status of the existing building is that the roof has been tarred to stop leaks. The heater and electric are okay. Heat is kept at 62 degrees and there's some ceiling insulation, although the doors do not seal.
- 8) Spray equipment for weed killing would run \$1500-\$2000. This could be used road-side as well as in the park. Mr. Hoagland did express some concern about this being another problem with chemicals. Also noted was the Calton island weed situation. Use of open space trust money for park maintenance operations is a possibility.
- 9) Equipment – The 1997 dump truck will need be to replaced in a couple years; the grader is currently down due to an injection pump problem caused by lack of certain lubricant in the product. Additives will be looked into to remedy this condition. A new back hoe and grader would be great to have but most of the equipment can be fixed at this point.
- 10) A raise for the DPW crew.

Questioned about 'children at play' signs, Mr. Hoagland relayed that the State no longer permits them. Mr. Ranieri will be so advised. Fuel delivery to the former Perrine residence will be checked as well as the situation with the recent water test that did not happen. Mr. Fisher inquired about scheduled ditch cleaning and was advised that this is done only when they are really bad/running over due to lack of equipment (broom). CFO Luhrs reviewed the 2009 Road budget and money remaining.

At 4:53 p.m., Lt. Bartzak approached the Committee to review his 2010 budget requests, which are similar to those of 2009, as follows:

- 1) Consideration of purchase or lease of two new patrol vehicles to replace ones with \$130,000 and \$150,000 miles. They will not last another year without sinking an enormous amount of maintenance money to keep them on the road.
- 2) Hiring at least two additional offices. The new part-timer is doing well and should end the coaching period soon. A resume has been received from a retired cop who knows the area and is available. Contact will be made as this would help keep the overtime down. A brief discussion about yearly and/or mandatory training and how part-timers fill in the rotation ensued. Previously interviewed part-timers are still in the wings but most are in the same boat as the current patrolman.
- 3) A memo from the police secretary concerning reinstatement of hours was shared. She has a position elsewhere that she retained when the Township reduced her work hours and salary in 2009 and needs to retain that part-time position. She is unable to resume the 35 hours/week schedule and recommends that consideration be given to hiring a part-time administrative/clerical employee to work the remaining hours in order to service the department and the public. If a part-time employee is hired, she is willing to reduce her hours to 30 per week to allow longer office coverage on Fridays. This would also be a savings as a new hire would be paid at a lower rate. The possibility of filling this spot with a current in-house person will be researched for conflict.
- 4) There are two 2003 Crown Vics to be sold. The leases for the 2005 and 2006 vehicles have been paid off. Discussion ensued about vehicle use. It was explained that vehicles are rotated to keep mileage down. The Township has fleet insurance so the spare vehicles are no extra cost. As to purchase vs lease of new vehicles, the Township would need \$28,000 to buy vs \$6000/year to lease. Police vehicles are not capital expenditures as their life expectancy is less than 5 years.
- 5) Patrolman contract negotiations would start in early July.

A brief discussion ensued concerning the need for a Township return to work policy; what this would entail; and, possibility liability issues. Attorney Faherty will be consulted concerning specifics.

Mr. Corboy thanked the lieutenant for giving up his salary increase in 2009; expects there will be a return in 2010; and, reiterated that negotiations for a new patrolman contract should begin in July. He also commented on the Democrat article about a combined police department stating that the article was the reporter's version, not that of the Township Committee. There's another point of view here.

Jeff Ent of the West Amwell Fire Company joined the meeting at 5:15 p.m. The CFO presented a spreadsheet showing the 2008 and 2009 budgets vs the 2010 request. The requested aid for 2010 is \$29,527. There's also \$29,402 in outstanding reimbursement for SCBA upgrade kits that were purchased two years ago.

Mr. Ent relayed information about a County-wide radio system upgrade that is a future, unknown cost. He explained that lots of fire and police departments will receive little notice to upgrade. It will affect police, fire, rescue and DPW communications. The County is trying to get grants but, at the Township level, there are 32 portable radios plus equipment in the various pieces of apparatus that will need to be replaced. Mr. Ent expressed an opinion that the County should be more responsive to townships in this regard. The communications equipment would be a capital expense. To further explain the situation, Mr. Ent noted that the goal is to use a common frequency—ultra high. This is something that the County has been licenses for over three years. The fire company has low band, which is something that the FCC is trying to get back. In addition, a lightening strike at the upgraded County Communications center burned up the new equipment, which has prolonged the process and has resulted in outdated software.

Returning to the budget requests, Mr. Ent commented on some OSHA requirements that the fire company paid for last year from their accounts...money that was allotted to other projects. He also relayed that upgrades have been made to Station 2—lights, insulation and energy efficient doors.

Mr. Corboy inquired about fire districts findings and was given an update on investigations, including estimates of \$200,000 to \$300,000/year plus administrative costs to put a district into operation—something that would need voter approval. The Fire Company doesn't think it is fair to taxpayers to add another tax as well as having to generate more money. Mr. Corboy noted that the rationale was for fire company expense to be outside the Township budget with the Fire Company then able to call their own shots as to needs. A brief discussion ensued about fire commission elections; concern about who these commissioners would be; and, creating a new level of government. Mrs. Luhrs interjected that there's only a certain amount of money that the township can give to the fire company each year. She noted that in East Amwell, the two entities were mutually agreeable to the concept. West Amwell is getting close to the dollar limit.

Returning to the issue of the SCBA upgrade kits, Mr. Ent noted that the Fire Company has willingly spent money in the past in order to save \$80,000 and doesn't have a problem with the money being repaid over time. There's always been a good working relationship with the Township and it was acknowledged that last year was tough. However, the Fire Company cannot continue without funding. Mr. Corboy offered that what the State gives will determine what the Township can do in 2010.

A meeting with the insurance agent will be held on Monday as Mr. Ent noted some discrepancies in what equipment is owned by which entity. He noted that titles were transferred for insurance purposes and that there was supposed to be a monetary savings. This has not happened.

A brief discussion ensued over various equipment, mutual aid and sequence of equipment and command. It was relayed that no municipality in Hunterdon County runs a full time paid staff and that there's a certain pride in keeping to volunteers. The condition of the fire company was noted as 'fine' both in people and equipment. It was relayed that several grants were applied for last year with no award. A compressor is something that would be useful for re-filling bottles. The replacement of a fire engine in 2012 is to be kept in mind.

The recent study concerning moving the police to the municipal building was questioned as to cost savings as the existing building still has to be heated. An energy audit was suggested to see if there would be any savings. Mr. Corboy noted that the study was to look at making some steps; that the current police space is not adequate; and, that it would be nice to have police available at the municipal building, especially with the court. Another suggestion made was for the garage to be spray foamed and plastered for energy efficiency.

Other items:

According to a Mayors Fax Advisory from the League, CMPTRA funds withheld in December will be restored.

Pending approval on January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Township Committee will meet once a month on the first Wednesday. A second meeting in December would be held on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Cost containment in the area of municipal prosecutor is sought. A three month professional services appointment with a possible in-house position after that was the direction given. A line in the temporary budget will be made to provide for this.

Development fees in the Affordable Housing Trust can be used to develop a group home, including appraisals, land acquisition, septic system design and installation and

demolition of the existing unit. This answers the question of funding for a pending appraisal on Block 39 Lot 4.01. Attorney Faherty will be advised accordingly so that arrangements can be made to move forward.

The ranges for the Salary & Wage ordinance were presented together with the accompanying specific salary to be received.

The police secretary's request was discussed. Decision was made for a new hire and a 30/hr week with adjusted salary for the current employee. An ad will be posted in-house for this 1 day/week position; title to be determined.

A recent request for inclusion in the Health Benefits program was discussed and more information provided that appears to show this to be permissible in certain circumstances. However, there still needs to be a salary involved for payroll purposes. A legal opinion would be needed on how to structure such an agreement and that it would have to be re-negotiated every year. There is also the question about the coverage level required; whether the salary received would cover the expense; that the open enrollment period is over; and, that this is not a new employee. Investigation into another municipality that purportedly offered what is being requested revealed that they do not participate in the State health benefits program. Concern was expressed that granting the request would mean that every appointed employee, even part-timers, could be eligible. The determination of the Committee was that the employee in question needs to research all the questions raised.

The garbage and trash bid came in at \$91,780 or \$1765/week, which is a 15% increase over 2009. The award is scheduled for January 1<sup>st</sup> in order to have garbage collection the next day. A brief discussion about purchasing a township garbage truck and working on options early in the year ensued. Whether the bid has a cancellation clause will be checked. Although a determination was made earlier to continue the fee for garbage cards until June, in order to anticipate the revenue in the budget, this fee would need to be collected through the end of the year.

A proposal for the installation of an elevator was received and distributed for consideration.

In order to sell the former Perrine residence, potable water has to be available. The direction given was to pursue a price on a RO unit. Although the water was to be tested last week, it was not. A call will be placed to the County to see if something can be done sooner than March.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:54 p.m. on motion by Molnar, seconded by Corboy.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Lora L. Olsen, RMC  
Township Clerk