

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

January 13, 2009 – 6:00 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 6:05 p.m. Present: Mayor Corboy, Committeemen Masterson and Molnar and CFO Luhrs. Betty Jane Hunt and Ron Shapella were members of the public in attendance, with Lt. Bartzak joining the meeting at approximately 7:23 p.m.

Mayor Corboy announced that Open Public Meetings Act has been complied with by special notice having been faxed to the Lambertville Beacon, the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times and posted on the Township bulletin board on January 8, 2009. The Municipal Building is handicapped accessible but the Office should be contacted 24 hours in advance for any special accommodations.

The meeting was not recorded.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:

Mayor Corboy requested that information on how to process lay-off notices be researched. Updated budget packets were provided, including actual budget requests received. Questions concerning the budget cycle and how surplus is determined and used were reviewed. The amount of surplus is determined by the Auditor when the Financial Statement is prepared. As surplus goes down, there is less money available for balancing a new budget. Revenues are down, State aid is shrinking, and the Township has no other revenue coming in; therefore, without surplus and revenue, taxes have to be raised. However, even this has now been restricted with a 3.5 cap on appropriations and a 4% cap on tax rate. A brief discussion on how these caps might be explained to the public ensued.

The new sheets were briefly reviewed. Preliminary budget calculations have determined that the maximum allowable amount to be raised by taxation is \$1,085,473. The budget as projected stands at \$1,251,708 which means that the levy cap has been exceeded by \$166,000. The options are to cut expenditures, chop appropriations or find revenues. It is also possible to apply for a cap waive and/or extraordinary aid but before that can be done, the budget has to be adopted.

Attention turned to the packet of line item budget sheets. A separate packet of specific budget requests received was also available for reference. Mrs. Luhrs noted that there are no salary increases included except for the 4% increase for police. The following actions were taken and/or discussions held:

Page 1 – General Administration: Overall OE line reduced by \$7100. Request for Deputy Registrar compensation was held.

Page 2 – Mayor & Council: The decision was made not to take the Elected Officials course at \$125 per person. No change

Page 3 – Municipal Clerk: The start date for a third election district will be determined. OE line cut \$3100

Page 4 – Financial Administration: The Auditor has raised his rate by 6%. Charges cover such things preparation of the Financial Statement and Debt Statement. No change

Page 5 – Audit Service: The projected Single Audit figure of \$2700 may be eliminated but is currently an unknown. It depends on whether there are grants with expenditures over \$500,000. No change

Page 6 – Revenue Administration: Assistant Tax Collector line reduced to \$500. Data processing for Vital now falls completely in this line item although a lower fee has been negotiated.

January 13, 2009 Minutes
Page 2

Page 7 – Tax Assessment Administration: Maintenance of tax map was reduced to zero. There's no longer a Data processing charge for this category.

Page 8 – Legal Services: Environmental claims reduced to \$6000. Litigation line reduced to \$240,000.

Page 9 – Agricultural Advisory Committee: Request reduced to \$250.

Page 10 – Engineering Services: Reduced to \$1500.

Page 11 – Historical Sites Office: Reduced to \$500.

Page 12 – Planning Board: Extra meetings reduced to \$600. Master Plan/Zoning Ordinances line reduced to \$10,000; Legal reduced to \$5500; Planner Services reduced to \$6000; and Engineering Services reduced to \$1500. It was suggested that the Planning Board produce the Master Plan and have the Planner just review their work. There will be a Special Planner for the Farmland Element. Mr. Corboy requested that the professionals attend meetings only when necessary.

Page 13 – Zoning Board: The Deputy Secretary line was reduced to zero. Zoning Officer expenses were cut to \$700.

Page 14 – Affordable Housing: Reduced to zero.

Page 15 – Other Code Enforcement Functions: Substitute Inspector line reduced to \$500; TA line reduced to \$15,000; Substitute TA reduced to \$200. Other Expenses reduced to \$800 with Mileage Expense reduced to \$200. The latter will be discussed with the Construction Official.

Page 16 – Liability Insurance: No change

Page 17 – Worker Compensation Insurance: The number is set according to payroll and rates. No change

A brief break was taken. Lt. Bartzak joined the meeting to discuss his Department's budget needs.

Page 19 – Police Department: A discussion over how to reduce OT yielded information about the provision of security to SHR for football games. Lt. Bartzak stated that in the late 1970-80's, this was paid by the Athletic Association and was required by the NJ Sports Association. It is rare that problems are encountered but it does produce OT. Mr. Molnar was requested to speak with the high school about picking up the police cost, especially as South is a regional school, and would be a four hour minimum at the OT rate. Approaching ESC for reimbursement for a police call at the 4 hour OT rate was also mentioned. Lt. Bartzak will approach Mr. Cox. The situation with outside contracting for off-duty police coverage, like that currently occurring with Elizabethtown Gas, might be a better way to handle the proposed matter as the money would not have to be in the Township's budget but both the Township and the officer would receive a portion of the proceeds. Another possibility would be to eliminate the current power shift, although officer safety could be affected. Mr. Masterson noted that FBI statistics on scheduling found officers are more aggressive when two are on duty. The possibility of having the night-time officer confined to the station and only answering calls when needed was raised but the down side is that taxpayers see the patrol as a deterrent. Lt. Bartzak relayed that local police units help each other out--Hopewell Township on Route 31 and Lambertville on Route 179. The particulars of the Police Department budget sheet were reviewed. The salary lines are based on the contract; however, a meeting is needed with the Patrolman Ennis concerning the 4% increase. Lt. Bartzak's salary line does not include the 4% projected increase at this time. This will be added

but may be re-visited. Folding the lieutenant's longevity into the salary line is under discussion and any promotion would require a revision to the ordinance. The need to find a replacement for the part-time officer, who is mandated to retire later this year, was briefly discussed. So far, there has been no success in locating part-time officers. Lt. Bartzak will contact the Somerset Academy for a list of possible alternate route candidates for police work.

Page 29 – Vehicle Maintenance: Discussion ensued over the replacement of the two 2003 Crown Vics. Each has over 124,000 miles and is becoming a maintenance drain. These are the only non-leased vehicles in the fleet. Using one for parts and obtaining one new leased vehicle was the direction taken. The lease will need to be in the temporary budget, if possible, in order to be able to obtain a car early on and reduce maintenance costs. Police Vehicle Maintenance cut to \$22,000. Purchase of Police car was reduced to \$15,000, reflecting only one police car lease.

Page 18 – Employee Group Insurance: A brief discussion ensued over the health benefits portions, with the note that this needs to be looked at in the future. Also that perhaps some percentage needs to be paid by the employee. It was suggested that this be instituted with new hires as it wasn't fair to existing personnel. A policy change would be needed. Medical/Dental Reimbursement line was reduced to \$13,000

Page 20 – Office of Emergency Management: Line reduced to \$100

Page 21 – Aid to Volunteer Fire Companies: It was noted that this line is not the only aid to the Fire Company. Insurance, LOSAP, and the truck purchase provide a bigger picture. The Fire Company will be contacted for an accounting of income and expenses for 2007 and 2008 as well as balances in all accounts. The requested \$29,402 reimbursement for SCBA Upgrade kits was held. Line reduced to \$18,000 pending a response to the request.

The Lambertville Fire District has upped their payment to the Township for computer services to \$1200 for 2009.

The Ladies Auxiliary has re-done the kitchen. There are new counter tops, sinks and a new dishwasher. Their donation to the Fire Company this year will be less than that previously given.

Page 22 – Aid to Volunteer Ambulance Companies: Aid to the Amwell Valley Squad was eliminated. Lambertville/New Hope Squad donation increased to \$10,000

Page 23 – LOSAP: Contribution unknown. Rick Carmosino will be contacted for the number to be funded.

Page 24 – Fire Prevention Bureau: Mr. Donnerstag covered his costs last year. No change

Page 25 – Municipal Prosecutor: No change

Page 26 – Streets and Roads Maintenance: Salary requests included 4% for supervisors and 6% for truck drivers. No action taken. OE for Line Painting was reduced to zero pending receipt of more information. Questions include what roads will be stripped and whether it is required for safety. Committeeman Molnar will explore this and the stone situation with the Road Supervisor.

Page 27 – Solid Waste Collection: Clean Communities money has been used in the past to offset the cost of clean up. The \$10,000 proposed for clean up was eliminated. A brief discussion about charging per vehicle/per load will need to be devised. Man-power and volunteers will be needed to run the program. Mr. Corboy will speak with the Recycling Committee about this. Pre-purchasing a permit would provide a needed head

count for dumpsters. Mr. Corboy proposed that in order to keep the Saturday depot, residents pay for a permit to dump their trash. An annual fee of \$150 to begin July 1st was agreed upon. An amendment to the fee ordinance will be needed.

Mrs. Luhrs commented that Lambertville has not billed us for the use of the truck. She will follow up.

Page 28 – Buildings and Grounds: The situation with the dirt filter in the basement was mentioned. A valve is needed to eliminate the need to drain the whole system. Supervisor Hoagland will be contacted. Maintenance and Repairs reduced to \$15,000

Page 29 – Vehicle Maintenance: OE was cut to \$12,000, which is the line for Roads vehicles. Other areas of vehicle maintenance were discussed earlier.

Page 30 – NJDES Stormwater Permit-Street Div: No budget submitted. Line item reduced to \$100.

Page 31 – Public Health Services: No change

Page 32 – Environmental Health Services: OE reduced to \$1200

Page 33 – Community Forestry: Reduced to \$500

Page 34 – Animal Control: Dog licenses fees do not cover expenses. The Animal Control trust is used for salary with the difference coming out of the budget. No change

Page 35 – Welfare/Administration: No change

Page 36 – Social Service Agencies Contribution: Donation to Freedom House eliminated; donation to Visiting Homemakers reduced to \$500. A request will be made of the latter for services to the Township.

Page 37 – Recreation Services and Programs: No change

Page 38 – Maintenance of Parks: No request submitted. \$5000 was allocated in the Open Space Trust fund for park maintenance in the past. The baseball league is doing most maintenance work on the ball field.

Page 39 – Accumulated Leave Compensation: This is part of the police contract where sick time can be accrued for payment at retirement. No change

Page 40 – Celebration of Public Events: No Country Fair this year. No request

Page 41 – Electricity: No change

Page 42 – Street Lighting: No change

Page 43 – Telephone: No change

Page 44 – Water: No change

Page 45 – Fuel Oil: No change

Page 46 – Gasoline: No change

Page 47 – Public Employees Retirement System: Both PERS & PFRS are at one-half their total and legislation is pending to permit this. It is possible to fund at 100% and reserve 50%. PFRS is no longer outside the cap. No change, for now

January 13, 2009 Minutes

Page 5

Page 48 – Social Security: The calculated number includes the 4% police increase with zero for the other employees.

Page 49 – Consolidated Police and Fire Retirement System: No change

Page 50 – Recycling Tonnage Grant: Pending receipt of number from DEP.

Page 51 – Body Armor Grant: No request

Page 52 – HC Open Space Trust Fund Program: No change

Page 53 – Domestic Violence Training Grant: No change

Page 54 – Drunk Driving Enforcement Fund: No change

Page 55 – Clean Communities Grant: A chapter 159 mechanism is used to add money. No change

Page 56 – Matching Funds for Grants: This line is matching grants. Reduced to \$100

Page 57 – Define Compensation: This line is for new employees not eligible for PERS. The Township matches 3% of salary every pay. The new judge is slotted here and Mr. Molnar will need to waive participation.

Page 58 – Municipal Court: Overall OE reduced to \$3500

Page 59 – Public Defender: Reduced to \$1500

Page 60 – Capital Improvement Fund: Line funded at \$40,000 and awaits projects. No change

Page 61 – Reserve for Purchase of Fire Truck: No change

Page 62 – Bond Principal: No change

Page 63 – Payment of Notes: No change

Page 64 – Bond Interest: Pre-calculated. No change

Page 65 – Note Interest: No change

Page 66 – Green Acres Loan Payment: Pre-calculated. No change

Page 67 – Special Emergency: No change

Page 68 - Deferred Charges to Future Taxation: This line is from the purchase of a dump truck. A certain amount is raised each year to repay Township coffers. There's a \$33,788 balance. Possible reduction to \$12,000 pending discussion with the Auditor.

Page 69 – Reserve for Uncollected Taxes: No change

Mrs. Luhrs will re-do the budget sheets and send out to all departments by the end of the week with a note to contact the mayor with any mitigating circumstances. She noted that there will be no State aid numbers until March and things may be quite different. The cuts made this evening should help with a waiver request. At this point, the tax collection rate is needed. The advice given was to wait for the financial statement to be prepared and for State numbers before running through the budget again.

Mrs. Olsen inquired about the status of the Township dinner. The decision was to cancel due to the economic climate and other issues.

The next budget meeting will be January 21st at 6 p.m. with Patrolman Ennis of the PBA.

As for the status of the Temporary Budget, the decision was to add more to the legal line but to leave pensions at 50%. If the legislation doesn't pass, a special meeting may be needed.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Betty Jane Hunt commented that the Committee had done a good job although she disagreed with adding more to the Legal line.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:50 p.m. on motion by Molnar, seconded by Corboy.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk