

# SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

## March 23, 2011 – 5:00 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 5:08 p.m. Present: Mayor Molnar, Committeemen Fisher and Rich. Also in attendance were: David Gill (5:09), Steve Bartzak (5:30), Jeff Ent (5:50), Randy Hoagland (6:00), Lonnie Baldino (7:10), Chris Rose (7:17)

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 March 14, 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 and a copy of the CD is on file in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

### **BUDGET WORKSHOP – Meeting with Department Heads:**

Assessor Gill advised that a reassessment is needed for next year due to the amount of tax appeals this year, especially in the developments. The last time a reassessment was done was for the tax year 2005, which was a rising market. This endeavor finds work done without permits, which yields a 25% increase from added assessments and fines when the appropriate permits are obtained. The tax rate will change but will yield the same in taxes to the township, plus the added assessments. Mr. Gill would perform the reassessment for a cost \$24,000, less than what would be obtained by hiring an outside firm which charges by the line, and would be funded through a five-year special emergency appropriation. The cost includes the database update, inspections of every house as per State rules, and the math recalculation of assessments to market value. A brief discussion ensued over number of houses; the value of same after a reassessment; and, the \$200,000 loss problem to the township. Another item for a special emergency appropriation is the much needed update to the township tax maps. Mr. Gill estimated the cost to be around \$7,500.

Lt. Bartzak gave a brief update on a possible new hire; relayed that alternate route candidates can only be hired full time; and, that there's a two month training period involved before new hires can work on their own. However, as the contract is not yet completed, hiring is still on hold. The lieutenant relayed that the cost of outfitting a new police officer is approximately \$2000, excluding the bullet proof vest which is covered by grant money. The proposed yearly uniform allowance of \$700 per officer will increase that line to \$13,200. Cell phones for official use are to be obtained. This cost would not increase the police department expenses per se but would be added to another area of the budget. Projections on overtime costs could not be made due to the hiring situation. No other additions to the budget sheets were noted.

Fire Chief Jeff Ent acknowledged that 'times are tough' but stated that the operating budget presented of \$18,265 is for the basics as required by PEOSHA and good practices standards. Specifically, Mr. Ent noted that their 5" inch hose failed and needs to be replaced at a cost of \$2,840. As for their trucks, the fire company is looking into refurbishing an existing one at half the cost of new. The proposal is to use the existing chassis, tank and pumps but acquire a new cab for more seating, add air conditioning, re-do brakes, electric and upgrade to new National Fire Association guidelines for lighting, and new paint. The engine and transmission are good. This direction is dependent upon whether a full 15 year replacement cost, as with a new truck, can be obtained under the insurance. Basically, the question is if the truck, with a new cab, can be re-titled as a new vehicle for insurance purposes. Otherwise, the feasibility is questionable. The truck under consideration has only 12,000 miles but 'use' hours is the driving number. Mr. Ent relayed that past practice was to put money away yearly towards the purchase of a new engine to replace one reaching the 18 year mark. The older truck would then be sold to another state.

The 2008 Fire Company loan of \$28,402 to the Township was mentioned and that a repayment effort would be appreciated.

As for capital requests, Mr. Ent seeks replacement of 6 sets of turnout gear (\$14,820) and air bags (\$8361) as they have outlived their life expectancy. There are currently 26 usable and assigned sets of the former, with three sets purchased last year by the Fire Company. The latter is under State contract, the number to be provided. Mr. Ent noted that the Township is obligated to supply turnout gear as fire company members are considered employees. The air bags are emergency lifting devices for vehicles; come in a set of varied sizes; are self-contained; easy to move; and, needed as the Fire Company is doing vehicle rescue in the area. As a full rescue company, every item on the two submitted sheets is important.

Mr. Ent relayed that their 10 year plan is ready for a re-do, with the engine being last. The Township past practice of putting money aside yearly is no longer done; however, he is relaying the engine replacement needs in advance for budget purposes.

Other items discussed:

- Electricity and related issues – It was explained that the heat is kept up in the bays to dry the engine, hoses and gear. Also, that usage numbers cover more than just their area. As for saving on heating costs, neither the original block building nor the three sides of the new building are insulated. (Their building on 518 was spray-foamed and plastered to help with this particular issue.) The new addition is cracking and the floor sinks with the engine weight—the footing was specifically mentioned. The roof condition was also noted in that nails are popping; that the dining room leaks; and, that Stober only fixed the roof over the meeting room and flashed the joint between the old and new buildings.

- The idea of selling the current police/fire building and bringing the emergency services, and the DPW, to the municipal complex was floated. The better access to the 179 corridor for both calls and manpower and the septic issue were mentioned as downsides. Although a new pole barn would be energy efficient and provide work bays, there would have to be showers and other amenities to align with current standards. The Glen Gardner pole barn firehouse was mentioned as an example. As for the current kitchen equipment used by the Auxiliary, most items are old. Mr. Ent noted that although the 179 location is better than the municipal complex, access-wise, the building is a wreck and a cost to operate. He will look at the current building and prepare a list.

- The recent purchase of a 2008 Tahoe command vehicle was noted. This is a used demo vehicle; was obtained at a good price; and, came loaded and lettered for \$38,000. The interior boxes can be moved to new vehicles as needed. Mr. Ent will prepare a letter stating that the vehicle is owned by the Fire Company but titled to the Township for insurance purposes.

- The Fire Company will participate in the high school career day as a recruitment tool for new members.

- A representative from Texas Eastern speaks with the Fire Company once a year, which is considered sufficient. If a situation occurs there, the pumps are turned off elsewhere. The fire company has to be escorted through the property should an incident occur as Texas Eastern is under other jurisdictions.

- The fire official notification situation is under control and everyone is on the same page.

DPW Supervisor Randy Hoagland reviewed his concerns about deteriorating road conditions. The chip seal vs mill and pave options were discussed. The cost of each is dependent on oil prices and the latter would have to be bid out through the township engineer. Roads specifically mentioned for work include: Rocktown-Lambertville, Rocktown Hill, Connaught Hill (specifically Kearney and Jackson), Kari Drive, George Washington, Gulick, Mill, Old York, Wilson, Goat Hill and Hewitt. The most heavily traveled is Rocktown-Lambertville due to the high school and access to Route 31. Mr. Hoagland has submitted a chip seal request to the County for the three miles from Lambertville to the school. The possibilities of milling the rest of Rocktown Hill Road was briefly discussed as was doing an overlay, without drainage work, from Rocktown to the high school. Mr. Hoagland and Mayor Molnar will schedule a road tour.

For the 25 speed limit signs and posts for the Calton development, \$2000 would need to be added to the operating budget. Mr. Hoagland suggested that signage be included in future contracts.

The salt line should be increased by \$5,000 over current.

Capital requests include replacing the 2002 Mason dump as it is rotting away and needs a new oil pan. Replacing the latter involves removing the motor. The transmission has been replaced twice. An estimated cost of \$80,000 was given for a new truck with plow and stainless steel spreader. Another dump truck will be needed in 2012. A two post, installed lift is requested for a cost of \$10,000. Another backhoe was also requested, which could be a used model.

Mr. Hoagland's request to carry five vacation days until April 30<sup>th</sup> was approved.

Zoning Officer Lonnie Baldino has requested additional salary and \$700 for expenses. However, he would also like to take classes for Floodplain Management (\$225) and Zoning Administration (\$725). A line increase to \$1100 was proposed. As these classes run during the week, he'll take vacation time from his full-time job at West Windsor. The zoning classes are once a week for three weeks in the fall and flood plain classes are scheduled for September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

Construction Official Chris Rose requested additional OE money to cover the purchase of Code books. Funds will be shifted from mileage expense to cover the \$1150 request. Mr. Rose relayed that the department brought in \$56,000 last year, which covered their costs, and that \$15,000 has been received so far for the first quarter.

The following Administration-related requests were relayed by the Clerk:

- Restoration of longevity for 9 full time, non contract staff members (\$6,000 +/-)
- Consideration of a court security person for \$100 per session
- A security key pad for the basement (\$300)

Also noted was that the inspection fees owed to Van Cleef due to Calton work will not be covered by the company as they were charged after the release of the performance guarantee, according to a letter dated February 8, 2011. The amount due to Van Cleef is almost \$6500 and there will be additional inspections to complete the project. The bills will be pulled to verify dates and Attorney Faherty will check the referenced statutes (NJSA 40:55D-53.2d and NJSA 40:55D-53).

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:**

Sean Pfeiffer spoke about the Planning Board budget as to conditional use standards, the economic plan, and review and changes to the energy ordinance. The conditional use section needs to be looked at. It is not enforceable as written as there are no standards. This could make a conditional use a permitted one if there's no ordinance in place. A draft will be prepared in-house and reviewed by the professionals. Mr. Pfeiffer noted that this review is crucial as the 'time of decision' ruling takes effect soon. A cost breakdown was provided to the Planning Board and an estimate received from Carl Hintz. A copy will be forwarded to the Clerk.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:35 p.m. on motion by Fisher, seconded by Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lora L. Olsen, RMC  
Township Clerk