

TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY

Budget Meeting
January 24, 2009

The budget meeting of the Washington Township Committee was held this date in the Washington Township Municipal Building located at 211 Route 31 North, Washington, N.J. . The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Mayor Samir Elbassiouny.

SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE - The Mayor noted that this meeting was being held in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law of 1975 in as much as a notice had been published in the Star Gazette, transmitted to the Express Times and posted at the Administration Building.

ROLL CALL: Elbassiouny, present; Horensky, present; Kovacs, present; Mueller, present; Strunk, present. Also present were Mary Ann O'Neil, Township Clerk, Peter de Boer, Certified Public Works Manager, Police Chief James Mc Donald and Barbara Emery, CFO.

SALUTE THE FLAG

There was discussion on the escrow accounts and how they are handled. The Mayor said that a policy must be developed that the professionals check to see if there is money available before they do the work. Horensky made a motion to approve a resolution be approved that a form be developed that has to be submitted to each of the professionals for them to review and sign off on that would basically state that if their work in the Township is covered under escrows, that they are to verify prior to commencing any work that there is sufficient funds in escrow account for them to go forward, Strunk seconded. They are also to understand that if they do not do this they are going forward at their own risk and there is no guarantee of payment. Strunk said he supports the concept, but wants to see it in writing. The Mayor said he would like the Township Attorney to prepare the resolution Horensky amended his motion to include that when escrow is down 50%, the Land Use Board Secretary, will send letters and asks to have escrow account replenished.. Horensky withdrew his motion and Strunk withdrew his second. Strunk made a motion in concept that they authorize Lavery to put a resolution together on this discussion regarding payment of escrow, Horensky seconded. Lavery is to call Horensky on this matter should there be any questions, because he is liaison to finance.

ROLL CALL: Strunk, yes; Horensky, yes; Kovacs, yes; Mueller, yes; Elbassiouny, yes.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Peter de Boer, Certified Public Works Manager, said he realized they are looking at a difficult year, but agreed to work within budget provided. He said, on salt, the last order was placed yesterday, which probably used up the salt budget. If a bad winter persists, it could be a serious problem and a concern for him. He also has a personnel matter to bring before the Committee.

de Boer said he would like to concentrate on the roads. He would like to see a bond put in place for improvement to roads. He will be tar and chipping this year and has already talked with the Township Engineers about it and he has road rankings.

De Boer said there have been drastic changes in his position since he started. He would like to, if the Committee will allow him, is to create a new position in his department. He is looking to create the position to help him, because he is no longer able to be on the beat, so to speak. He offers this as an area this year as soon as possible. This person would be an assistant to him. This could be done without effecting his budget. This person made over \$50,000 last year, so position should be \$55,000, plus paid comp time for storm emergencies. The base would be \$55,000 and if he worked 100 hours, the most he could make would be about \$3,000. Kovacs asked how this would effect the budget. de Boer said it should come around the same number as last year.

Strunk said something that could save the Township money and they should have been doing it for years. Take the park for example, it is in the contract, put in against his will, that they can only hire two people during summer. Union people must take trips into park on weekends just to empty the garbage. The Mayor said he is aware of this and this will not be in the next contract. Strunk said this would effect the budget. The Mayor said the contract ends this year. Strunk said this should be a priority, using seasonal help, and it would save the taxpayers a lot of money.

The Mayor said there had also been discussion last year on Chief Mc Donald bringing in help to empty the trash on weekends. de Boer said this is a difficult thing to do, because they have to be supervised. de Boer will do a report on the overtime at the park. Strunk objected to have a DPW employee being called out to pick up trash at about \$30/hour. Mueller asked if this could be done by volunteers. de Boer will check to see if volunteers could empty trash weekends. Mueller was asked to pass this suggestion on to the Recreation Commission.

There was discussion on the roads in Township. de Boer had presented an 8 year program to the Committee at one time. de Boer will go over this concept with Finelli Engineering and put something together. They will revise the list of the worst roads.

de Boer said he would also like to trade the 1980 truck on a mason dump truck. The big mower at the park is almost 10 years old and needs to be replaced. The broom needs to be replaced. However, he will live within his budget if he has to do so.

Strunk said, to make the Committee aware, he just did some quick calculations. The debt is \$6.5 million dollars, at 4% over 20 years, they would have to pay \$470,000.00 a year, divided by 67, it would be a seven cent increase on current taxpayer load.

Chief Mc Donald said it was his understanding that there would be a 5% cut in budget. His budget request in 1997 was \$60,000.00 and in 2008 \$64,800.00 and he ended up getting \$62,600.00. The budget he submitted this year is \$62,600.00 and if they cut 5%, it would be impossible to live with. The County keeps changing things with the communications systems, which means more must come out of his budget.

This is the first year he has ever run over on his budget, but according to his records, he had between \$8,000.00 and \$9,000.00 left in his budget.

There was discussion on the vehicle maintenance for all vehicles and where the money should be taken from to do repairs.

There was discussion on the 5 year plan that had been put in place for Police Department, which has not been done for some time. Elbassiouny asked the Chief to put together a list of vehicles with break down of miles, year, etc.

Emery said the various departments must be careful what they spend, because they are working with a temporary budget. She has asked they do not get anything that they don't need, just what they need to run their department. Strunk said the CFO or Clerk should put out a memo to every department telling them not to spend any money unless they absolutely have to do so. The Chief said they are already under those restrictions. de Boer said he would like to comment, because he has not had that mind set. He has treated this year like every other year. He is running a Public Works Department so there are certain things he must do to accomplish what needs to be done.

There was a brief discussion on the shared service with Washington Boro and setting up another meeting.

de Boer said he wanted to advise the Committee that there are two employees out that have been injured. Officer Phillip Smith broke his arm in locker room while putting on his gear, fell and hit arm on bench, and Tom Marks fell off the back of a trailer while unloading file cabinets.

There was a discussion on the email system in the Township. de Boer said on the email, he can go in and change passwords. He has temporarily set himself up as email person. He suggested that each Committeeman have an email address for the Township. The Mayor said he would like another employee to do this, possibly Officer Thomas Cicerelle.

The Mayor asked for a motion to open the meeting for public comments. Horensky made a motion to open the floor to the public, Kovacs seconded. All were in favor. Nobody from floor wished to be heard. Kovacs made a motion to close the meeting to public comments, Horensky seconded. All were in favor.

Horensky made a motion to adjourn at 11:55 a.m., Kovacs seconded. All were in favor.

Horensky made a motion to withdraw his motion to adjourn, Kovacs withdrew his second.

Kovacs made a motion that Budget Meetings for February 14, February 28 and March 14 be scheduled for 9:00 a.m. and not 10:00 a.m., Horensky seconded. All were in favor.

Kovacs made a motion to adjourn at 11:57 a.m., Horensky seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann O'Neil RMC/CMC/MMC
Township Clerk