

TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY

Budget Meeting
February 27, 2010

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, posted at the Municipal Building and a copy is on file in the Clerks Office. This agenda is subject to change by order of the Washington Township Committee before and/or during the scheduled meeting.

ROLL CALL: Elbassiouny, present; Klingel, present; Kovacs, present; Marks, present. Strunk, present. Mary Ann O'Neil, Township Clerk, Peter de Boer, Certified Public Works Manager/Township Administrator; Barbara Emery, CFO; Suzanne Heerwagen, Deputy Treasurer; Dave Evans and John Mooney, Auditors and Chief James Mc Donald were also present.

SALUTE THE FLAG

BUDGET DISCUSSION

The Mayor asked if there were any questions at this time. Strunk asked the status of the police budget and the issues of the crossing guards. The Mayor said they will be meeting with the Borough next week on this issue. The Township only has one crossing guard and the Borough has 17 or 18. Kovacs is running numbers and working with the CFO on pensions, etc. The Mayor said the pensions are up 25% this year.

Evans advised they are currently within the CAP. They must deal with the issue of the crossing guards, state aid allotment and decide whether to proceed with permanent bonding and how much they are going to bond. Strunk asked for a breakdown on costs on the bond per resident. Evans talked about rates and cannot see it going much lower, but increasing within the next 18 months.

Klingel discussed the condition of Pleasant Valley Road and the water issues. The residents have complained for years about this road, it is not a safe road at all. The engineers have walked the road and the first thing that must be addressed is drainage. Some poles would have to be moved and then resurfacing would have to be done. He said the work will exceed the \$150,000 grant. They might even consider doing the entire road.

Marks asked how they arrived at Pleasant Valley Road being a major artery that really needs to be looked at. There is Rymon Road, which is narrow, dangerous and totally falling apart to Route 31 and they constantly use it. Why isn't it being addressed? Klingel said the issue approached to him was Pleasant Valley Road, every time it rains you have puddles all over the place. Marks said there are puddles on a lot of streets. Klingel said not like this, Marks has been down the road. Klingel said not like this and it has been that way for many years and they know they can correct the problem. Another problem is Bowerstown Road, Marks agreed.

The Mayor said he saw what they were saying. Kovacs said the reason they went ahead and got section I of Pleasant Valley Road is because the State only approve projects that involve safety. The fire department sent a letter and the school had walkers in the area. They did get approval on section one up to Meadow Breeze Lane. Trying to get approval to do projects with the State, you really have to have a good excuse. They managed to get part of Port Colden Road done years ago. Bowerstown Road doesn't have anything, they would not get approval. Marks said, what do they need to do to actually look at the problems internally as far as this town goes to keep up with infrastructure so that some of the roads do not fall into such disrepair where it will cost, perhaps \$1 million dollars at some point to actually do something with. You are talking about \$150,000, plus other expenses. On a road that is probably a secondary road used for getting to school, not used all year round, the parks, school, but again, why is that road more important. She didn't want it to seem like she is going off base here, but they have a former township committee person that lives on that road. Klingel said this doesn't matter. Marks agreed, this does not matter. Klingel said they were approved for the first section by grant and they did the work up to the fire department. Then they got approval for the second part, but what he was getting at, to do this road right they need more than \$150,000. The State has already approved this money for the project. Marks asked what he meant by doing it right. Klingel said that comes in after the study. Marks asked how much the study is going to cost. Klingel said \$8,000. de Boer said this only covers the survey of the road so it can go out to bid, survey, recommendations and costs are not known yet.

de Boer said Marks has asked about Bowerstown Road and Rymon Road, when they made application through Engineers Office to state, they included all the roads. The State picked certain roads. However, getting back to the original question and this will not come as a surprise, but this is why they should take \$2 million dollars and put it aside for improvements to roads. Every one of these dollars has to come back to the Committee for approval for a major road improvement project and this is a conservative number.

de Boer said he would like to address five areas alone, Pleasant Valley, Rymon Road between Asbury Anderson Road and Route 31, the traffic has increased, it needs drainage, base and widening.

They have had residents at the meeting with pictures of that road and pleading with the Committee to do something about it before something happens. Marks said there is a creek there that floods. There is Bowerstown Road, Castle and Dale. There is a law suit there, because it was only done half way. There is Jackson Parkway, old development by high school and Hillcrest, which needs some major renovations, which alone would chew up \$1 millions dollars. There are other roads less traveled, but they still need some major renovation done to them. This is a conservative number.

Now is the time to put \$2 million into permanent bonding, so they can aggressively address some of these roads.

Kovacs said some of roads have been put into the State and were turned down. Once you get approval on a particular road, Pleasant Valley had school and fire department. If you do not use the money, next time you put in application, if you do not use it, even though State want you to take it, you will not get money in future. Marks said, if we concentrate on just what we are getting from State, o.k. , the Committee needs to really think about what they need to do as a Township. Lets forget about the State and what we are getting from them. Eventually things are going to fall apart to the point where it will cost millions of dollars to repair, catch basins, roadways, everything else they need as a Township to draw people in to buy homes here. If everything looks in disrepair, why would you want to live here. If you cannot take care of the Township you cannot take care of the people. They need to address the future use without depending on State. They are not going to get money from State, they will be cutting back. They need to cut back on things they do not need in the Township. People cannot afford entertainment, they cut it out of your budget.

You have to look at putting money away to take care of major problems that are going to happen here. People are not going to be getting a \$77 or \$102 increase, they will be looking at a \$500 increase just from municipality alone. They need to address real issues they are going to have. Yes, they need to cut taxes yes they need to address problems, real problems that they are going to have.

Klingel asked Marks if she would support the \$2 million request made by de Boer. Marks, personally, said yes and the people have a problem in increased taxes, when they never see anything for those taxes. Taxes go up and they never see where their money is going, because they do not see any major improvements. If you are improving something and there is evidence of that people will see it, they are not stupid. People in government think they are stupid, but they are not stupid. We need things, it needs to be done, lets show the people that live in the Township, yes, we care about you and we are going to take care of the problems that we have here.

de Boer said they could still go on applying for State Grant Money. Klingel said it is not just roads, it is equipment as well. He would like to see a Five Year Capital Plan, they must plan for the future. de Boer said this had been done at one time, but there was never an avenue to go out for a Five Year Improvement Plan. de Boer said if they bond for \$2million dollars, 90% should be used to improve the infrastructure, but include equipment.

The Mayor asked the CFO if there was money available in other bonds. Evans said there is \$72,000 under recreation, master plan and there was \$36,000 for road improvement and drainage improvement. The CFO said to use the money they would have to amend the original ordinance. Klingel made a motion to authorize Finelli Engineering to do a study on Pleasant Valley Road for a cost not to exceed \$8000. Evans said you cannot authorize an expense until money is in place. Klingel withdrew the motion.

Evans said they should consider a bond sale of \$8.5 million. They could get the DPW and Township Engineer to look at major costs on prioritizing infrastructure, roads, etc. to see where they are at on attacking the most difficult roads. Then they should go on a pay to pay basis on the equipment that they have to buy.

The Mayor asked if they redo the allocation of the \$36,000 to roads, can they use \$8000 for the study by Finelli. Evans said yes. The Mayor asked Evans if he could prepare a resolution. The CFO said it must be done by the bonding attorney. The bonding attorney must amend the ordinance and should include the additional costs. Evans said when debt is involved, the bonding attorney must really do this so it is done properly.

de Boer said all they really need to do is amend the ordinance on Pohatcong Drive Drainage and Bowerstown Road to include Pleasant Valley Road. Evans said, assume there is a timing issue, make the motion that the \$8000 will be a preliminary cost to be taken from Capital Improvement Fund, it can be done by resolution, it would not impact the budget. Klingel made a motion Resolution 10-44, that Finelli Engineering be authorized to do the study on Pleasant Valley Road in an amount not to exceed \$8000, funds to be taken from the Capital Improvement Fund for preliminary costs, Kovacs seconded.

ROLL CALL: Klingel, yes; Kovacs, yes; Marks, yes; Strunk, yes; Elbassiouny, yes.

There was discussion on records of township projects. There had been work done on the roads by Studer and Mc Eldowney, but the Township does not have all the records. de Boer said they will have to go out into the garage to see if a copy of the survey and plans would be there. When bid specs are done, there should be a clause in them that all records are the property of the Township. At the end of the professionals term, all records should become the property of the Township. There was discussion on off site storage of records. de Boer will check to see if the server for administration is being back up off site.

Evans said there is not much more they can do until the crossing guard issue is resolved. de Boer said he did talk with Attorney Vex and if necessary, the Township could fire and rehire the crossing guards. All crossing guards would receive the same rate. This could be done at the end of the school year. The Mayor said they are paying for crossing guards because the Borough has no buses. This is an issue that must be resolved.

There was a brief discussion on oil and chipping the roads and pot holes. Marks asked if DPW could use what they have and not appropriate funds for additional hiring of temporary help during the summer. The work must be done in summer and it costs less with summer help.

There was discussion on whether the budget would be ready for the next meeting which would be March 6, 2010. Kovacs made a motion to cancel the budget meeting of March 6, 2010 and reschedule for Saturday, March 13, 2010, Marks seconded.

ROLL CALL: Kovacs, yes; Marks, yes; Klingel, yes; Strunk, yes; Elbassiouny, yes.

The Mayor asked Evans to get the best rates and the amount of the bond, does it make any difference, would the rate be better if it was higher? Evans said they are looking about at 3-3/4% right now. The Mayor asked how long it would take to put it together? Evans said once they make a decision on the amount, it takes about 45-60 days (end of April - beginning of May). Evans said de Boer and the engineer must review the road situation and put something together in the way of request so they know how much they are going to bond. de Boer said he will have this information ready for the next meeting.

There being nothing further to come before the Committee, Klingel made a motion to adjourn at 11:12 a.m., Marks seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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