

# TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY

Special Meeting Minutes  
May 4, 2010

The special meeting of the Township Committee was held this date at the Washington Township Municipal Building, 211 Route 31 North, Washington, N.J. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Samir Elbassiouny,

SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE - The Mayor noted that this meeting was being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings 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 municipal building. This Agenda is subject to change by the 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.

## SALUTE TO FLAG

### BROKER OF RECORD/BENEFITS

The Mayor announced that Sweat and Walters and Wells Fargo, Insurance Brokers, will each give a presentation on the benefits they could provide to the Township. After the presentation, the Committee would have a short executive session to discuss the proposals.

Wells Fargo and Sweat and Walters gave proposals on their companies. Each proposal was the same, except Wells Fargo provided an attorney each month for an hour free (12 hours a year). Sweat and Walters has been the broker for 15 years and provided excellent service. Bottom line, Wells Fargo was \$600 less. Strunk said that Brian Sweat, of Sweat and Walters, has done an excellent job for the employees.

Brian Sweat, Sweat and Walters, said he has interacted with the employees for 15 years. He has done claims, Went to the employee's homes, if necessary, spent much time over the years working with people and when there was a problem he was there. You know what you have, they are the known entity.

Dave Mobus, Wells Fargo, said it is obvious that price is not the factor. They would have better resources, provide savings plan to get discounts, administrative services, legal service, and provide a hot line for questions. He said Brian Sweat has done a good job, but they could do better.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Strunk made a motion at 6:43 p.m. to approve Resolution 10-75, Resolution Authorizing Executive Session of the Washington Township Committee for a meeting not open in accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act N J S A 10:4-12, to discuss Broker of Record, Kovacs seconded. All were in favor.

Kovacs made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 6:58 p.m., Strunk seconded. All were in favor. The Mayor said both Brokers of Record had been discussed. He asked for a motion that one of the two brokers be the new Broker of Record. Strunk made a motion that Sweat and Walters be appointed Broker of Record for Washington Township for Health Benefits, Klingel seconded. Strunk said they both had good presentations, but he is going on an excellent track record by Sweat and Walters. He also complimented Dina who works at the company that has been so helpful through the years. Klingel said, being one of the new guys on block and not hearing any negative comments, with the small difference in price, this is the way the Township should go, with familiarity. Strunk said both presentations were excellent and he was impressed with the cooperative spirit between the brokers. The Mayor thanked both for taking the time. They were very close. They were looking for good service and cost cutting measures and the difference was not substantial enough and they have a good track record with Sweat and Walters. He liked some of the benefits Wells Fargo had, but not at this time. Again, he thanked both for the great job done.

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

### DEFEATED SCHOOL BUDGET/WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Mayor said, at this there will be a discussion about the Washington Township School Budget. Roger Jinks, School Superintendent was present. The Mayor said that he and Marks had met with members of the board and the superintendent on the defeated school budget and have scrutinized the budget. The tone now is very negative when it comes to contract negotiations, unions, teachers. He personally disagrees with a lot of it, some is accurate, some is not accurate. They are looking at a tight budget. He felt the schools are underfunded, compared to schools in cities, there is not a lot of fat in the budget. He said he and Marks had raised tough questions on the budget. This discussion is on the elementary defeated budget. Committeeman Robert Klingel left the dias at this time.

Jinks said some of the members of the school board were present, staff members and principals. He gave a general tone for what is happening in education in this state and how this district compares to other schools in the state. In March 2010, they were cut \$64,922. They were told in February that they would receive another cut in next years budget of \$399,364. Overall, in 2 month period they have been told by the State they will be losing \$464,286 in aid. With an \$8 million budget, this is devastating. They have two teachers that are retiring and they have replaced them in house. There is an administrator that co-ordinates child study team and the position has been removed. A reading teacher and a special needs personnel service was not renewed. They cut 5 positions before the budget was agreed upon.

He said they have been very conscientious on their spending. They tried to work things out without cutting additional people. However, the governor urged people to vote the budget down and it was. They have only raised township taxes .25 cents in 7 years. He feels people are upset about taxes in general, not necessarily the schools. Karen Graf talked about the contracts, needs and negotiations.

The Mayor asked if anyone from the public wished to be heard.

Randy Foster, 6 Old Canal Road, said if they had willing to take a pay freeze he would have voted for the budget, but its too late now. He does not want to see programs cut for children. He has two children in the system and the teachers and programs are great. The Mayor said when they see what is in the new contract, they will be happier with the concessions on both sides, because it will benefit taxpayers more than a one year freeze.

Jennifer Ostrander, 12 Pleasant View, has twins in first grade and was upset because the cut the reading teacher. They need a reading teacher.

#### Public Session was closed

The Mayor said there was not a lot of cutting to do and with the promise of the contract coming up, they will be in good shape. They did cut \$25,000 out of the budget. Strunk made a motion that Resolution 10-76, Resolution of the Township Committee of the Township of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey in regard to Certification of the Local Tax Levy for the Washington Township School District be approved, Marks seconded.

ROLL CALL: Strunk, yes; Marks, yes; Kovacs, yes; Elbassiouney, yes.

#### Klingel returned to the dias.

#### DEFEATED SCHOOL BUDGET/WARREN HILLS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The Mayor said originally he and Strunk were to serve on committee regarding budget cuts. However, Strunk was ill and unable to attend meeting and Kovacs served on committee. With the Warren Hills Budget, all districts must agree. The Township was proposing a cut of \$500,000 from the budget this evening. Kovacs said the budget has been cut to the bone, it was never loaded. Also, when you cut to the bone, it catches up with you down the road. Kovacs made a motion to approve Resolution 10-77, Resolution of the Township Committee of the Township of Washington, Warren County, New Jersey in regard to Certification of the Local Tax Levy for the Warren Hills Regional School District, Marks seconded.

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

#### PUBLIC QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

Randy Foster, 6 Old Canal Road, said the sports program in the Middle School is suffering and they will end up with nothing. They need to think seriously on this.

Kovacs said he felt sports programs are an important process for the educational process and if it starts falling apart at the lower level, it will fall apart at the top. The schools, in the past, somehow found a way to keep programs running. It may require cooperation with other teams. They have always managed to keep the programs together and they will now.

The Mayor said he agrees with Kovacs, but they cannot dictate where the money comes out of the budget He is also a supporter of sports and children learn much from being part of a team than you cannot learn in any class room. This is an experience that we should not take away from the children. It was his understanding that other elementary schools are also cutting sports, so even if they had a program, they would have nobody to compete with in playing. Karen Graf said once the dust settles, they will check with other schools to see what is happening.

Marks said from her standpoint, it is like a scale of justice, you have to weight sports against curriculum. Children should learn things they will need in the future. Things need to be well balanced Sports are needed, but they must concentrate on their studies. The children need to take care of themselves in the future - not everybody is going to play football.

#### OTHER

The Mayor appointed Dawn Ross to the Land Use Board, to fill the unexpired term of Leonard Artigliere..

There being nothing further to come before the Committee, Klingel made a motion to adjourn at 7:33 p.m., Strunk seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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