

TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, WARREN COUNTY

Budget Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2014

The budget meeting of the Township Committee was held on this date at the Washington Township Municipal Building, 211 Route 31 North, Washington, N.J. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Mayor Robert Klingel.

SUNSHINE LAW COMPLIANCE – The Mayor noted this meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Law of 1975 in as much as a notice has been published in the Star-Gazette and transmitted to the Express-Times, posted at the Municipal Building and a copy is on file in the Clerk's office. This agenda is subject to change by order of the Washington Township Committee before and/or during the scheduled meeting.

ROLL CALL

Iacobucci, present; Klingel, present; Kovacs, present; Rossi, present; Willan, present

STAFF PRESENT

Anna C. Godfrey, Township Clerk; Peter deBoer, Township Administrator/Certified Public Works Manager; Dave Evans and John Mooney, Municipal Auditors; Kevin McCarthy, Chief Financial Officer; Deputy Chief Cicerelle, and Jeff Cooper, Assistant Municipal Supervisor of Public Works

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Mayor Klingel opened the meeting to the public.

Joel Schnetzer, 240 Cemetery Hill Road, wished to thank Mr. deBoer and Chief McDonald as he appreciates the professional manner in which a snow plow incident his neighbor had was handled.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Klingel closed the public portion of the meeting.

2014 BUDGET DISCUSSION

K. McCarthy stated this year's main budget concern is revenue from tax collection. The budget as it is now presented will be at a tax increase of 1.9 cents per hundred over last year.

D. Evans stated the Township is in compliance with both the levy cap and the expenditure cap. Surplus is down approximately \$270,000 and the tax collection rate is down approximately \$260,000. The 1.9 cents K. McCarthy spoke about would equate to approximately \$4.00 per month for the average taxpayer. Mr. Kovacs stated there is one taxpayer who owes over \$200,000 in back taxes. D. Evans stated if the Township had that money, there would be a next to nothing tax increase. Mr. Kovacs feels this one taxpayer is driving this year's budget.

The Committee discussed the budget line items with K. McCarthy and D. Evans. Mr. Kovacs and Mr. deBoer explained the on-going well testing in Port Colden. Mayor Klingel would like to see if this is still required as it tests clean and has been tested for the past twenty-four years. Mr. Kovacs feels a Senator or Assemblyman may need to get involved. Mr. Kovacs feels "Police - Outside Overtime" should be taken out of the budget and placed in escrow. The Committee agreed. Mr. deBoer explained the Wastewater Management Grant that he was authorized to apply for at the last meeting. D. Evans stated the budget could be amended should the grant be approved prior to the adoption of the budget. The Committee discussed the Economic Development's request to hire professionals to assist them with various studies. The Committee was in agreement to lower the budget amount of that line item from \$10,000 to \$8,000. J. Cooper explained the need in the 47% increase in "Gas and Diesel". Trucks have been filling up constantly this winter. The Committee discussed the gas cards with J. Cooper and Mr. deBoer. K. McCarthy and D. Evans explained the Township's share of Mansfield Court. The Committee discussed. K. McCarthy will break down the line item. The Committee discussed the "IT" line item and agreed to decrease it to \$16,000.

D. Evans stated the increase is now a little more than 1.5 cents, or \$3.26 per month to the average taxpayer. He stated the County and School taxes are driving the Township's property taxes. The Township is over the State average in total taxes but well below State average in local taxes and below many comparable towns in the County.

The Committee's discussion of the budget continued. Mr. deBoer stated the Township has been affected by the weather including fuel, salt, and overtime costs. The Township's infrastructure has been greatly compromised as roads will need major repairs. Mayor Klingel stated the need for better communication with the residents became apparent after Hurricane Sandy. He would like to have e-mail and text alerts sent via the Township's website. The Committee was in favor. The Committee discussed the property owner owing over \$200,000 in back taxes with D. Evans.

Police Capital Purchases

Deputy Chief Cicerelle stated the department will replace one vehicle this year rather than two. He would like to lease two smaller SUV's for the detectives. The Committee discussed. Mr. McCarthy would like to wait until later in the year before committing to this. Mayor Klingel and the Committee agreed.

DPW Capital Expenses

J. Cooper stated he was looking to replace the Administrator's car as well as a pick-up truck, both of which are well used. The Committee discussed and will continue the discussion at the next budget meeting. J. Cooper stated the department is in need of a storage building. The Committee discussed with J. Cooper. D. Evans discussed the financing and stated this would have no impact on the 2014 budget. Mr. deBoer explained why the building is necessary. After further discussion, the Committee was in agreement to begin the process. Mr. deBoer will have a resolution prepared for the next budget meeting.

D. Evans discussed the introduction of the budget and State Aid numbers.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Mayor Klingel opened the meeting to the public.

Joel Schnetzer, asked for clarification on a Township property that hasn't been closed on since 2008. Mr. Kovacs explained. J. Schnetzer noted the Township is losing tax money on this property. J. Schnetzer asked if the property owner owing over \$200,000 in back taxes is an on-going problem. Mr. Kovacs replied it is.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Klingel closed the public portion of the meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session at this meeting.

ADJORNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Committee, a motion was made by Rossi, seconded by Willan, to adjourn the meeting at 11:55 a.m. All were in favor. Mayor Klingel noted the next budget meeting will be held on March 8, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna C. Godfrey, RMC
Township Clerk