

# SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

March 16, 2012 – 9:00 a.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 9:07 a.m. Present: Mayor Rich, Committeemen Molnar and Fisher, Clerk Olsen and CFO Carro. Also in attendance at various times were Hal Shute, Rob Tomenchok, Harry Heller, Dave Beaumont, and Tim Lelie.

In compliance with the Public Meetings Act, Mayor Rich 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 February 28, 2013. 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.

*The original order of the meeting was changed.*

## **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:**

Tim Lelie inquired about the status of the George Washington Road project. He was made aware of the 'rip and stone' proposal estimated at \$22,000 earlier and has had conversations with other residents of the road. The major concern is about dust and moving backwards. The need for this road to get ripped and returned to dirt was stressed by Mr. Molnar as patching is a band-aid. A better foundation is sought. The goal is to make this road like Lakeview as it is earlier for the DPW staff to maintain. Mr. Lelie continued that he would like to see the State kick in some money and mentioned the need for passing zones; that the deep culvert by the bridge is dangerous; expressed concern about the proposal as the road is crowned; that luxury cars are parking on the road as they won't drive the park road; there is no room for emergency vehicles to pass; and, that the police department is the only entity that can enforce no-parking on the roadway. Mr. Fisher agreed that the State should have some responsibility and should be aware of the condition of the road. Mr. Lelie is hopeful that something is done soon as there are trees down. In addition, stone and a pipe are needed at the lower end to make the area passable to Coon Path as there are currently a couple of sections with bad washouts. Mr. Lelie also suggested the use of No Parking-Tow Away zone signs. These items will be added to the DPW activities list being compiled by the mayor.

## **BUDGET WORKSHOP:**

The first area to be reviewed was the Operating budget/2013 appropriations. Both detailed budget sheets as received from various departments and a summarized listing by appropriations were provided. The former shows numbers that may have been modified by transfers. The latter provides the actual budget numbers approved for the last budget year and the difference for 2013. Each page was reviewed in turn as follows. *(Note: As this is a preliminary run through, numbers should not be taken as approved and/or cuts final.)*

General Administration	\$ 32,900
Mayor & Council	200
Municipal Clerk	10,200
Financial Administration	4,000
Audit Services	18,000 (this number to be verified with contract)
Revenue Administration	6,800
Tax Assessment Administration	5,000 (includes \$1000 for tax map corrections/update)
Legal Services	25,000
Ag Advisory	500
Farmers Markets	0 (line to be deleted; no longer functions)
Engineering Services	15,000
Historical Sites	300
Planning Board	12,200
Zoning Board/Official	1,500
Zoning Board	3,000
Affordable Housing	10,000 (take from COAH fees instead of budget was questioned)
Other Code Enforcement Functions	4,000
Liability Insurance	82,228
Worker Compensation Insurance	42,903
Employee Group Insurance	247,800
Police Department	41,100
Office of Emergency Management	7,305 (includes non-OEM AED and cabinet for municipal building)

Mr. Heller joined the meeting to review the reason for the requested radios. It was explained that he currently uses County equipment which would have to be returned if/when he retires. The need for the

portables was realized during Hurricane Sandy. Also discussed were the Fire Company vs Police, DPW bands. The number of portable can be reduced but the gang charger is a must. As for a de-fib, there should be one available in the municipal building. It saves lives and the units come with instructions. Fire and PD are equipped with AEDs in at least one vehicle each. Mr. Heller also relayed that he has started the process for generator grant, although these may only go to shore communities. The required Letter of Intent has been submitted to the County who will bundle all requests for submission. The new fire band and County implementation schedule was overviewed. Hesitation to commit \$50,000 before seeing what is done elsewhere in the County with Fire radios was expressed. The fire truck replacement due to age was relayed as a recommendation, not a mandate, although State Fire officials promote it.

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A short break from reviewing the operating budget was taken to speak with members of the Technology committee about the status of equipment and internet connections, e.g., routers and switches, in the basement. Rob Tomenchok relayed that there are both protected and unprotected areas and questioned why. He also noted that one 8 port switch is not operating; the router operates only nominally; and, confirmed that a 16 port router (8 & 8) is needed. A determination will have to be made concerning devices and require protector vs those that do not and a question remains about the password on the WiFi. The Technology committee was charged with working with Brian at JWS to get these things up, running and straightened out. The condition of the basement was noted. Mrs. Olsen was instructed to make arrangements with Mr. Sutch to clean and straighten up the lower level.

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Aid to Volunteer Fire Companies	\$ 26,500	(includes \$5,000 in repayment money from 2008)
Aid to Volunteer Ambulance Co.	9,500	
LOSAP	12,000	
Fire Bureau	400	(reduced-mandatory use of fees was questioned)
Streets & Road Maintenance	70,000	(request total of \$105,000 reduced)
Solid Waste Collection	25,000	
Buildings & Grounds	25,000	
Vehicle Maintenance	50,000	(2 <sup>nd</sup> police vehicle lease not included)
NJDES Stormwater Permit	500	
Public Health Services	22,500	
Environmental Health Services	650	
Community Forestry	300	
Animal Control	2,000	
Welfare/Administration	180	
Social Service Agencies	2,500	
Recreation Services	4,000	(some 2012 money still available)
Maintenance of Parks	0	
Accumulated Leave Compensation	2,000	
Celebration of Public Events	100	
Electricity	30,000	
Street Lighting	5,200	
Telephone	16,000	(includes police cell phones)
Water	4,200	
Fuel Oil	21,000	(Fire House to change to gas furnaces; reduction possible)
Gasoline	55,000	
Recycling Surcharge	1,100	
PERS	52,000	
Social Security	91,800	
PFRS	60,000	
Defined Contribution Retirement	50	
Recycling Tonnage Grant	TBD	
Municipal Court	7,000	
Public Defender	2,500	

An overview of the capital improvement fund balance, bond/note principal/interest payments was given. Mr. Carro relayed that he's allocated more on the fire truck note in order to get it paid off by 2016 to avoid bonding. The reserve for uncollected taxes is up due to the collection rate that fell to 97.3%. Based on the preceding, the budget is \$3.4 million.

The amount to be raised by taxation would be \$1.2 million, a 2% increase or a difference of \$24,000 over 2012.

The surplus balance vs usage from 2009 through 2012 was reviewed. The situation has vastly improved. Although there is no rule on the amount of surplus that can be retained, concern was expressed whether a good surplus would impact State aid numbers at some point. Mr. Carro noted that the Township didn't spend all of 2011 budget and that \$150,000 lapsed into surplus this year.

A debt comparison starting with 2010 through 2013 was presented. Mr. Carro stated that debt is dropping and surplus is up, which are positive trends. There is \$369,100 remaining in fire truck debt. Upping the payments to \$92,275/year will have this paid off in 4 years, with no bonding required. The Open Space trust fund with projected increases in 2013 was overviewed. A projected balance for 12/31/13 is \$1,001,710. A 10 year plan, where revenues equal appropriations, and getting to a pay as you go system is the goal as stated by Hal Shute. It appears that a good long term plan is in place and expenses should decrease by 2023.

Attention was then turned to the revenue side of the ledger. Mr. Carro explained that anticipated revenues cannot exceed what was realized in the prior year. The amount to be raised by taxation is projected at \$1,226,000, a 2% increase, with total revenues of \$3,423,604.12. This results in a tax rate of .263 on a net valuation of \$467,007,527.00. Mr. Fisher lamented that the Township rate will be overshadowed by the schools. The suggestion was made by Mr. Rich that a pie chart depicting the breakdown between taxing entities be created as an insert to the tax bills.

A quick scan of salaries and requested increases was taken. Further review will be undertaken by the individual Committee members on their own. Consideration of moving the public assistance/welfare to the County was suggested.

The goal is to introduce the budget in late April with a May adoption. Further budget talks were proposed for the March 27<sup>th</sup> and April 8<sup>th</sup> meetings.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 12:23 p.m. on motion by Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lora L. Olsen, RMC  
Township Clerk

APPROVED: March 27, 2013