

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

March 22, 2014 – 9:00 a.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 9:15 a.m. Present: Mayor Rich, Committeemen Fisher and Dale, CFO Carro and Clerk Olsen.

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, 2014. 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.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:

A binder of budget information was provided to the Committee members. The first item up for discussion was the capital budget. A listing of possible projects was provided and a proposed capital ordinance for items to be purchased from the capital improvement fund presented. Discussion ensued over process; if additional money should be allocated to the capital improvement fund line item; and, whether there might be additional items for inclusion in the proposed ordinance. Items that would fall under a bond ordinance, e.g., roads were also discussed and Mr. Carro suggested that the 2011 bond ordinance could either be rescinded or amended as there is \$400,000 sitting there that could be re-allocated to another road project. A survey of the five worst township roads was suggested. A new application for State grant money for Rocktown-Lamb. Road work is under consideration. As the Township has not received any money for the past two years, this may improve chances for funding another section. The introduction of the proposed capital ordinance will be held.

An overview of available revenues was undertaken. The surplus as of December 31, 2013 was \$833,654. For purposes of this initial budget work, Mr. Carro projected the use of \$350,000 from surplus for 2014; \$1,280,460.00 to be raised by taxation; and, an overall tax rate of .266, or a penny up from last year.

Line item appropriations based on department budget requests were reviewed individually. Not included in the enumerated appropriations was a request for restoration of money lost by employees in 2009 due the Township's budget situation at the time. Included, however, in the accounting is a 2% salary increase for 2014. Items with specific discussion included:

- Vehicle maintenance – breakdown between police and roads line items and whether the total should be increased; number of leased vehicles
- Streets and roads – proposed projects include crack sealing parking lot and chip sealing Gulick Road; questioned if \$80,000 would be sufficient as the number includes salt
- Fire prevention – the State wants this to be a dedicated line, not general budget; the requested salary increase will reflect what is given other staff
- Welfare administration – line item deleted; savings of approximately \$1500
- Public health – capping the former salt pile area estimated at \$20,000; item would fall more to buildings & grounds; not funding in 2014. Ongoing costs involved with remaining RO system
- Solid waste – number of clean up days to increase in 2014; will incur disposal costs
- LOSAP – number of eligible recipients down to seven in 2013 to be funded in 2014
- Legal services – the possibility of a couple of lawsuits was mentioned
- Clerk – extra election costs due to County Committee year; advertising dependent on number of ordinances, especially revision to Woodlands
- Administration – reduction in ordinance codification amount may be possible
- Fire company – ongoing reimbursement request noted; some funding provided in temporary budget
- Debt service – Township saved \$63,000 in interest due to the refunding of bonds; allowed total expenditures to increase; bonds paid off in 2017
- Police – Salary & wage line needs to be reviewed in line with contract; increase in OE of \$7000 questioned, especially uniform line
- Zoning board – request for laptop computer unresolved
- Municipal court – salary line request is to increase violations clerk to 2 days/week; requested salary increase will reflect what is given other staff; salary & wage line up with OE line down
- Public defender – mandated by State; per session cost increased to \$300 for 2014
- Planning board – planner work on ordinances estimated at \$4000; increasing the OE line to \$8000 to cover other items not itemized was suggested

- Pensions – revised bill received from State reflecting reduced contribution rate for PERS; increase for PFRS
 - Group health – employees kick in on cost which is a refund to the Township; line item could either be lower to reflect this or left as is with the refund becoming MRNA
 - Capital improvement fund – whether to increase line by \$50,000 was questioned
- The Selective accident policy for fire and auxiliary was questioned and copy will be provided to the Committee for review.

Discussion turned to bonding for capital projects, including DPW equipment and needs. A 5% down payment is needed for bond purchases which will require additional funding in the capital improvement fund line. Maintenance issues were also mentioned as a concern, including police car oil changes and scheduling. DPW staffing needs, duties, and organization were touched upon and will require additional study.

Whether the road situation on Kari Drive can be addressed by the DPW was raised and that the Township Engineer has been contacted for an opinion noted. Also suggested was that a priority listing of roads for repair be developed. The chip sealing of Gulick Road may run in excess of the \$25,000 spent on Mill. A length comparison will be checked. There is also a request from Orleans concerning repair of cracks and Belgium block.

The mayor indicated that he is not in favor of a 1 cent increase to the tax rate, although the other committeemen were not as opposed, with Mr. Fisher commenting that he could not see where another tax point could be cut. Mr. Carro noted that there was only \$100,000 left from last year's budget; that this was cutting things close; and, that the budget cannot be kept flat forever. The CFO also commented on the re-assessment whereby lots of things were caught that were not on the books, which has helped revenues; and, that \$50,000 can be added to the CIF by adjusting the revenue side by using more than the 90% figure provided earlier. The other option is to cut \$50,000 and keep the budget flat for the second year.

The goal is to introduce both the 2014 budget and capital ordinance at the April 14th meeting. To that end, the request was made that the appropriation sheets be reviewed. Comments concerning budget line items are to be forwarded to the CFO as quickly as possible so that adjustments can be made prior to the special meeting on March 26th at 6:30 p.m.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

No public was in attendance.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 12:00 p.m. on motion by Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk

APPROVED: March 26, 2014