



West Amwell Township
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**RESOLUTION
TOWNSHIP OF WEST AMWELL
COUNTY OF HUNTERDON
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
RESOLUTION #109-2017**

**Authorizing A Nonbinding Referendum On The Question Of Whether The
Township Should Pursue Contracting Police Services**

WHEREAS, prior to FY 2009, 44% of our Township budget was funded through State Aid while local municipal taxes funded 25% of the budget; and

WHEREAS, since FY 2009, annual State Aid has been reduced by \$551K; and

WHEREAS, now State Aid only funds 25% of the budget while municipal taxes fund 37% of the budget, and

WHEREAS, Township services have been maintained but continuously evaluated and adjusted as necessary to minimize rising costs; and

WHEREAS, as successful as cost savings measures have been, maintaining Township services as they currently are, has become unsustainable without additional revenue to cover the loss in State Aid; and

WHEREAS, several much needed projects have been on hold for lack of funding that have now become critical to complete, which include for example, much needed repairs and improvements to our roads and municipal buildings; and

WHEREAS, as the Township Committee begins the process of developing a balanced 2018 budget later this year, they have identified two options to address the revenue shortfall. Either further reduce the cost of services to compensate for both the loss of State Aid and fund needed projects OR significantly increase municipal taxes going forward; and

WHEREAS, in order to avoid significantly increasing municipal taxes or avoid drastically reducing or eliminating other beneficial services; and

WHEREAS, Police Department costs currently account for 31% of the operating budget, the Township Committee is proposing that Police Services could be contracted out to another municipality at a lower cost; and

WHEREAS, the governing body feels that the residents of the Township should have a say in whether contracting out Police Services should be pursued; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 19:37-1 provides that:

"When the governing body of any municipality . . . desires to ascertain the sentiment of the legal voters of the municipality . . . upon any question or policy pertaining to the government or internal affairs thereof, and there is no other statute by which the sentiment can be ascertained by the submission of such question to a vote of the electors in the municipality . . . at any election to be held therein, the governing body may adopt at any regular meeting an ordinance or a resolution requesting the clerk of the county to print upon the official ballots to be used at the next ensuing general election a certain proposition to be formulated and expressed in the ordinance or resolution in concise form. Such request shall be filed with the clerk of the county not later than 81 days previous to the election."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the governing body of the Township of West Amwell in the County of Hunterdon, New Jersey, the following nonbinding public question shall be submitted to the voters of West Amwell at the November 7, 2017 general election:

PUBLIC QUESTION

Should the Township Committee pursue a Contract with neighboring municipalities to provide Police Services to West Amwell?

The following statement interpreting the nonbinding public question shall also be placed on the ballot:

INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT

Prior to 2009, 44% of our Township budget was funded through State Aid while local municipal taxes funded 25% of the budget. Beginning in 2009, annual State Aid has been reduced by \$551K and now only funds 25% of the budget while municipal taxes fund 37% of the budget.

Through aggressive and diligent cost containment efforts by the Township Committee since the loss of State Aid, the budget has only increased by \$342K or 1% per year on average. Township services have been maintained but continuously evaluated and adjusted as necessary to minimize rising costs. As successful as cost savings measures have been, maintaining Township services as they currently are, has become unsustainable without additional revenue to cover the loss in State Aid. In addition, several much needed projects have been on hold for lack of funding that have now become critical to complete. They include for example, much needed repairs and improvements to our roads and municipal buildings.

As the Township Committee begins the process of developing a balanced 2018 budget later this year, they will be faced with two choices to address the revenue shortfall. Either further reduce the cost of services to compensate for both the loss of State Aid and fund needed projects OR significantly increase municipal taxes going forward.

Given that Police Department costs account for 31% of the operating budget, the Township Committee is proposing that Police Services could be contracted out to another municipality in order to avoid significantly increasing municipal taxes or avoid drastically reducing or eliminating other beneficial services.

A Yes vote means the Township should solicit proposals from neighboring municipalities for them to provide all Police coverage to West Amwell residents, similar to the coverage and services the Police currently provide. The anticipated cost savings, which must be significant in order to be considered, will be used to maintain a reasonable municipal tax as well as fund needed repairs and improvements to our roads and municipal buildings.

A No vote means, the West Amwell Police Department should remain intact in its present form. But the local municipal tax will need to be increased over the next several years resulting in an estimated average homeowner tax bill increase of approximately \$400 per year.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Township Clerk is authorized and directed to submit a certified copy of this resolution to the Hunterdon County Clerk and request that the nonbinding public question and interpretive statement be placed on the November 7, 2017 general election ballot.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of a Resolution adopted by the West Amwell Township Committee at their regular meeting held August 16, 2017



Lora L. Olsen, RMC
West Amwell Township Clerk