

---

**TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY**

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting  
Date of Meeting: January 30, 2015  
Time of Meeting: 6:00 P.M.  
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 2

---

Mayor Bettina Bieri called the Special Meeting of the West Milford Township Council to order.

**Adequate Notice Statement**

Mayor Bieri read the following statement:

Please note that in accordance with Chapter 231, Public Laws of 1975 of New Jersey, adequate advance notice of this Special meeting was published in the Herald News on January 18, 2015; copies were provided to the Record, Star Ledger, Suburban Trends and posted continuously on the bulletin board in the main corridor of the Town Hall and on file in the Office of the Township Clerk.

Please also make note of all fire and emergency exits – located to the left, right, and rear of this room - for use in case of an emergency. Thank you.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Bieri led all in attendance in a salute to the flag.

**Roll Call**

Present: Councilmembers Ada Erik, Vivienne Erk, Michele Dale, Marilyn Lichtenberg, Mayor Bettina Bieri.  
Absent: Michael Hensley, Luciano Signorino.  
Also Present: Township Administrator Kenneth Gabbert, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia, Ed Steines, OEM Coordinator, Michael Moscatello, Fire Marshal

Agenda No. II

**Purpose**

Review of the proposed 2015 Municipal Budget.

Agenda No. III

**Review of 2015 Municipal Budget**

OEM Coordinator, Ed Steines addressed the Council saying there have been few increases in OEM. The Township spent a considerable sum of money on generators. He has been asking for years for funding for maintenance for those generators and has not received that funding. That is a cause of great concern for him. He is asking for \$14,000. Currently we are repairing the generators on an as needed basis and the Township mechanic checks them regularly. The administrator is recommending \$12,000. Mr. Steines said he originally asked for \$20,000 for maintenance and for fuel. Last year he obtained an estimate of \$12,000 to maintain the generators. He said there is a transfer switch at town hall that needs to be replaced and that will cost \$1,400. He expressed concern that they have not been maintained. Administrator Gabbert said there was a maintenance contract in 2013 and Mr. Steines confirmed that. Administrator Gabbert reviewed additional line items that have minimal changes. Discussion ensued about non-emergency equipment.

Administrator Gabbert asked Mr. Steines to provide an overview of aid to fire companies in his capacity as fire commissioner. The CFO confirmed that generally the payments are made quarterly to the fire companies for a total annual payment of \$15,000 to each. Mr. Steines said this equates to \$90,000 in direct aid and it covers the utilities & maintenance for firehouses. The fire companies have asked on a number of occasions to have that increased. We require fire companies to supply financial statements & tax returns before disbursing the funding. Mayor Bieri said we do not control their spending of their funds but we request the data to ensure that they are complying with filing requirements. Mr. Steines said the Township agreed to give Apshawa an additional \$2,000 for their additional assistance this year. That payment has been made. Councilwoman Lichtenberg asked if the Township pays insurance for the fire companies. Mr. Gabbert answered that it is offered to each and 3 have chosen to join the JIF. Councilwoman Dale said the Township bills the fire companies for the insurance coverage but it is less than private insurance. She said it appears that Township officials do not understand the true expenses around the fire department. We need to understand those expenses for everyone not only the fire departments. Administrator Gabbert said that first aid squad funding is only approved with the submittal of bills whereas the fire companies receive quarterly disbursements to do with as they deem necessary. Councilwoman Dale questioned if we are properly funding the fire companies. If one fire department has more funding in donations then they may have less of a need. Councilwoman Erik agreed saying that UGL and Apshawa have cell towers that generate income. Mr. Steines said this subject has been broached on many occasions but it has been difficult to determine a fair method. Discussion ensued about repairs to vehicles, municipal owned and fire company owned. Mr. Gabbert said there is a line item for parts that are funded in the DPW budget for fire companies. Mr. Steines said he tries to minimize

---

**TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY**

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting  
Date of Meeting: January 30, 2015  
Time of Meeting: 6:00 P.M.  
Minute Page No: Page 2 of 2

---

town-funded repairs to deputy or assistant chief cars because it is at the discretion of the fire company to purchase these. Mayor Bieri said there should be a uniform policy and Mr. Steines said he agrees and it should be limited to chief vehicles only. Mr. Steines asked if the parts under DPW can be returned to this department's budget for better control and the CFO said it is in DPW because they purchase the parts. Administrator Gabbert will review this process and make a determination.

Mr. Steines said NFPA testing is state mandated to test equipment. Mayor Bieri asked about funding for the turnout gear that was the subject of a meeting last year and Councilwoman Dale said we may have to budget for the initial testing of the turnout gear to be compliant with the State mandate. Mr. Steines suggested using the funding for replacement of turnout gear. He said we have applied for a grant for turnout gear too. Council agreed the funding should be increased to facilitate the purchases if the study determines it necessary. If the grant comes in then the money need not be spent. Administrator Gabbert reviewed additional line items. Councilwoman Dale said that the history shows good management and she suggested leaving the budget flat even though they don't spend all the money each year. She said she would like a commitment from the Council to let volunteers know that the Council is committed to meeting their needs. They save us because they operate with volunteers. She recommends keeping funding equal to last year. Mayor Bieri said that she has not seen any Council cut fire & first aid budgets and Councilwoman Dale said the fire companies say the Township is constantly cutting their funding. She also recommends an additional \$10,000 this year for the turnout gear. Mr. Gabbert said last year there was a 4% tax increase even though the Council made significant cuts. There are huge increases forthcoming this year in insurance and hard costs. That is why he has recommended some cuts. Mayor Bieri said that there should be uniformity. There should be some methodology for example vehicle repairs. Councilwoman Dale said she agrees but she does not like the perception if we cut a budget where they have kept spending in check. They have not exceeded funding allocations and cutting the budget by \$10,000 is not worth it. Council agreed to keep line item flat but agreed with the Mayor that there should be policies to ensure fairness and equality to each fire company. Mayor Bieri asked Mr. Steines and Mr. Moscatello to prepare draft guidelines to achieve balance & fairness. Mr. Steines said developing the policy is no problem but it is the aftermath that causes difficulty. Councilwoman Dale said she will work with him as she did with the funding guidelines and she will support him.

Agenda No. IV

**Public Comments**

Mayor Bieri opened the meeting to the public after advising that there is a five-minute limit for each speaker.

There being no comments from the public, Councilwoman Erik moved to close the public portion of the meeting.

---

Moved: Erik                      Seconded: Dale  
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

---

Agenda No. V

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the Township Council adjourned the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

---

Moved: Erik                      Seconded: Dale  
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

---

Approved: April 22, 2015

---

MAYOR BETTINA BIERI  
PRESIDING OFFICER

---

ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA  
TOWNSHIP CLERK