
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: February 21, 2006
Time of Meeting: 7:30 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 3

Mayor Joseph Di Donato called the Special Meeting of the West Milford Township Council to order.

Adequate Notice Statement

Mayor Di Donato 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 advertised in the Herald News in its issue of February 19, 2006; copies were provided to the Record, Star Ledger, Suburban Trends and Greenwood Lake News 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.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Di Donato led all in attendance in a salute to the flag.

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers, Joseph Smolinski, William Gervens, James Warden,
Carmelo Scangarello
Mayor Joseph DiDonato

Absent: Councilmembers Philip Weisbecker, Robert Nolan
Also Present: Township Administrator Richard Kunze, Township Clerk
Antoinette Battaglia, Township Chief Financial Officer Arthur Magnotti

Budget Overview

Mayor DiDonato advised that the Council will be reviewing the capital budget today and that action may be taken at this meeting.

William Drew, Planning Director, and Kurt Wagner, Construction Official, came forward to speak about their respective budgets. Mr. Drew began with the Planning Board budget and noted that there is an increase for school for employees because of new State mandates that planning board members attend a five-hour course each. The State is still finalizing the course content. There is also an increase for legal fees which has been calculated based on the average increases over the past three years. The fees for services pays for other litigation. There are currently two matters in litigation. The O'Shea matter is before the appeals court and there is litigation from a developer who sued over the Highlands Act and development of a property. The Township is also named in that suit but because the Township is named in a subordinate role, the Planning Board attorney is handling the matter. There are no other increases reflected in the budget as presented.

The Comprehensive Planning budget reflects a decrease from last year primarily due to a reduction in staff. This budget is generally used for department operations. The Zoning Administration budget pays for the Zoning Officer's salary. As presented, it is the same as last year but we are awaiting the settlement of guild negotiations. The Board of Adjustment budget reflects an increase in school for employees because the State mandates that apply to the Planning Board members also apply to the Zoning Board members. The Historic Preservation budget totals \$1,000 for official business and conferences. There may be an increase in this budget requested in future years because we are applying for a number of grants that may require ancillary fees in future budgets.

The Tourism Budget, while under the Planning Department, was not formulated by the Planning Director, and he had no involvement in its structure. Therefore, he cannot discuss this budget. Councilman Warden asked if this budget increased this year and the Administrator answered in the affirmative. The Council instructed the Administrator to ask the Chairman to attend a meeting to discuss this budget. The Environmental Commission budget remains the same with the exception of a proposed increase to reflect the secretary's salary.

Mr. Drew provided an overview of the department's accomplishments over the past year. He advised that we have received \$616,600 in ten grants which will be implemented and managed by the Planning Department in the coming year. This is in addition to the two grants they are currently managing which amount to \$368,000. Some employee costs are paid for through these grants. In the coming year, the Highlands Council will complete its Master Plan and then municipalities will have eighteen months to update their Master Plans to make them consistent with the Highlands Plan. Through the Planning Department's efforts, West Milford has established a positive working relationship with the Highlands Council as well as with the D.E.P. The Planning Department will be applying for more grants in 2006 and Mr. Drew listed some of the applications he anticipates. Mr. Drew provided an overview of fees taken in by the Planning and Zoning Boards in 2005. He discussed historical figures from 2003, 2004 and 2005 and

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: February 21, 2006
Time of Meeting: 7:30 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 2 of 3

compared those numbers. When asked by Councilman Warden why there is a need for two planners, Mr. Drew advised that the volume of applications submitted and reviewed necessitates two planners. He explained the process for review and processing applications. Mr. Drew is directly involved in the grant process, manages the office, and is the Zoning Administrator. The Planning Department is a multi-functional office. The West Milford Planning Department expends a significant amount of time on the Highlands Act by comparison to other towns because West Milford has more at stake. Other towns that are partially in the Highlands are not paying as much attention because they are not directly affected. Preservation areas like West Milford need to have a strong relationship with the Highlands Council. He expects that the return on this investment in time and resources will ultimately have significant benefits for the municipality. If we can demonstrate that we are focused on implementing local safeguards and are working locally to maintain enhanced water quality, we will benefit from the faith the Highlands Council invests in us. That will parlay into us maintaining local control, to a certain extent, on land use matters within our municipality. Such local control will pertain to future redevelopment in town. We currently have three areas that meet the criteria for redevelopment. They are the business district in West Milford, Hewitt, and Oak Ridge. In the short term, the Planning Department will work on the Master Plan. Beyond that, there is sufficient work needed on water quality. Greenwood Lake is a major feature and asset in the Highlands region. Both the D.E.P. and the Highlands Council want to improve the water quality of Greenwood Lake and they will need local support and assistance for that. Only two towns in the State received a 604B grant this year and West Milford was one of the two. Councilman Warden expressed surprise at Mr. Drew's support of the Highlands Council and stated that he viewed the report prepared by the Planning Department last year as damning. Mr. Drew stated that the report was an objective review of Highlands's legislation intended to assist the D.E.P. in highlighting areas where there were inconsistencies between D.E.P. regulations and the Highlands Master Plan.

Kurt Wagner advised that, in the Building Department, revenues consistently exceed total expenses. There has not been a decreased workload as a result of the Highlands Act. The department has seen a decrease in applications for new construction. However, applications for improvements have increased. He advised that the Building Department issued 2,071 permits in 2004 and 2,161 in 2005. The Council thanked Mr. Drew and Mr. Wagner for attending tonight's meeting.

Renee Palermo and Joanne Donohue came forward to discuss the Recreation Department's budget. Ms. Palermo introduced Bill Remia and acknowledged that he has recently been voted Chairman of the Recreation Commission. Ms. Palermo provided an overview of the department's purpose, the organizational chart, and the services provided to residents. The Parks and Recreation Department provides senior services, teen services, and program services. Their goals for 2006 include improving their ability to meet their maintenance needs, expand community events, improve their software, improve family night, move recreation projects to completion, expand senior programs, and improve senior and disabled services. She recapped the full budget, grants, cash matches, and revenue generated in 2005. She advised that she anticipates that revenue will increase by at least 10% in 2006. Ms. Palermo noted that, if you subtract grant funds from her proposed budget, the Parks and Recreation proposed budget reflects an increase of 1.2%. For non-sports programs, the Township did not spend as much as anticipated in 2005. \$23,000 has been moved to all other programs. Instructors are now being paid by voucher instead of salary & wages thus necessitating the need for an increase to the all other programs line items. She reviewed the salary & wages as they relate to personnel dedicated to specific programs. These program costs are covered by the fees collected. In the Bubbling Springs budget there is an increase to salary & wages of \$5,000. This is due to a proposed \$0.50 cent per hour increase for certified staff (lifeguards, etc.). She noted that weather impacts revenue at Bubbling Springs.

The Parks and Recreation budget line for salary & wages is confusing because it is a combination of two departments: administration and staff for programs. She plans to have titles changed to better reflect individual functions but this must be accomplished through finding appropriate civil service titles. There is a slight increase in this line item but it is due to a reallocation of staff. The increase here is offset by a decrease in the senior services budget. Ms. Palermo advised that it is estimated that approximately 24,600 people use Hillcrest each year. More than 5,000 more people use that building for programs. The Hillcrest Community Center is used for various programs and events. There is a tenant in that building who pays rent. The Passaic County nutrition program is run out of Hillcrest and the Board of Education utilizes three rooms. Hillcrest is an emergency management shelter and is used for many Township health programs. The budget reflects a minor increase to monitor's salaries and a slight increase for equipment. The Parks Department maintains all the fields in town, they also set-up and maintain Bubbling Springs, and remove all refuse from all recreation sites throughout the town. They are responsible for hiring grass cutting contractors, inspecting the parks, and providing support for all recreation events. The staff is comprised of two laborers and a foreman. Westbrook Park is now included in the Parks budget. Ms. Palermo is requesting that one new laborer be hired for the

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
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Minute Page No: Page 3 of 3

Recreation Department. There is an ever-increasing demand on the manpower in this department. She reviewed all the responsibilities of these personnel as well as outlining how the seasonal help is utilized. Because of manpower shortages, parks are not adequately maintained at the height of the season. Ms. Palermo cited statistics from a survey conducted in surrounding towns where the parks and recreation staff have greater resources and fewer responsibilities. Administrator Kunze noted that recent savings realized through attrition throughout the Township would help offset the cost of this laborer position. Discussion ensued about the possibility of cross training and using laborers between DPW and Recreation. Ms. Palermo advised that this is a current practice between both departments. However, the peak season for both departments begins and ends at almost the same time. She provided an overview of the laborer's accomplishments in 2005 and advised that they have some major projects scheduled for the near future. Ms. Palermo reviewed the services offered through our Senior Services. There is a salary reduction here as previously discussed. This is a reallocation of a staff member. She reviewed the line items in this budget. In the Veteran's Budget, there is a slight increase for the officer's salary and an addition of \$200 for memorials. Parks and Recreation no longer manage Public Assistance programs. The County has assumed these functions. The Council instructed in 2005 that there be an increase considered in celebration of events for the Memorial Day parade. There is a \$500 increase in this budget for all other events. She provided an overview of these events. The Transportation Budget is funded mainly through grants but there is some funding through the Township. Ms. Palermo explained the Transportation program. The Township's expense is \$125,754 and all other funding comes from grants. The CFO and Administrator will provide the Council with a detailed outline of this program and its funding sources. Ms. Palermo noted that state and federal transportation funding has increased for the 2006 year. She also noted that her department has applied for grants for new vans and has been working with the Freeholders to determine if we can expand on our services. The Council thanked Ms. Palermo, Ms. Donohue and Mr. Remia for attending tonight's meeting. Ms. Palermo offered to speak with any Councilmember who has questions about the Parks and Recreation budget.

Richard Kunze advised the Council that the budget has been adjusted in the past two years to have descriptions accurately reflect services being funded. This may be somewhat confusing when conducting comparisons but it will eventually provide the Council with a more accurate historical comparison.

Mayor DiDonato noted that Saturday's meeting will focus on Health, DPW, and Tourism budgets.

Public Comments

Mayor Di Donato opened the meeting to the public. No one expressed an interest in being heard.

Councilman Scangarello made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting.

Moved: Scangarello Seconded: Smolinski
Voted Aye: Smolinski, Gervens, Warden, Scangarello.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the Township Council adjourned the meeting at 9:22 P.M.

Moved: Weisbecker Seconded: Scangarello
Voted Aye: By voice vote the Council gave unanimous consent.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.

Approved: March 1, 2006

MAYOR JOSEPH DIDONATO
PRESIDING OFFICER

ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA
TOWNSHIP CLERK