
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: February 24, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
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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 transmitted to the Herald News on January 24, 2010; 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 Bieri led all in attendance in a salute to the flag.

Agenda No. I

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Philip Weisbecker (arrived @ 8:30 p.m.), Joseph Smolinski, Michael Ramaglia (arrived @ 7:07 p.m.), Robert Nolan, Marilyn Lichtenberg, Daniel Jurkovic, Mayor Bettina Bieri.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Township Administrator Kevin Boyle, Assistant Clerk Denise Loeffel, Chief Financial Officer Arthur Magnotti.

Agenda No. II

Purpose

Mayor Bieri advised that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to further review the proposed 2010 municipal budget. Tonight the Council is scheduled to discuss the following departments.

- Finance Department
- Engineering Department
- Department of Public Works

Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

Mayor Bieri turned the meeting over to the Administrator and CFO to address Council.

Agenda No. III

Review of 2010 Municipal Budget

Finance – Mr. Magnotti reviewed the various line items in the divisions in the Finance Department which include audit, tax collection, tax assessor and finance. He advised that the proposed budget reflected reductions in both tax assessor and tax collection divisions. Mr. Magnotti stated that he expects utilities to decrease also if the telephone system is changed. Administrator Boyle concurred adding that he will be sending the Council a memorandum seeking approval to modify the cell phone policy for Township personnel. Council discussed various proposed options. Mr. Magnotti and Mr. Boyle jointly recommended that the Council not make adjustments to the appropriation for natural gas, gasoline and diesel. The Council discussed the cost of electric service for Westbrook Park and Bubbling Springs, ultimately reducing appropriations for utilities at these facilities by \$40,000.

Administrator Boyle provided Council with pension information and Council discussed the related increases which are statutory and beyond their control. These statutory obligations amount to \$2.6 million. Mr. Magnotti advised that he and Administrator Boyle have proposed restructuring the finance department due to certain retirements. They are proposing to replace the retired personnel administrator by combining those responsibilities with the payroll clerk's functions thus providing the services without hiring additional staff. This would realize a savings of \$78,000. For two consecutive years a staff member in finance retired and the work of three people is now being handled by one. To fill the void and provide much-needed assistance, they are proposing hiring a permanent part-time person. This will reduce floater costs while streamlining the workflow. They will move a clerical person from the assessors department to the collector's department and transfer the part-time person there to the health department. This allows for the workload to be handled, continued services to residents and a cost savings to taxpayers of approximately \$200,000. He and Administrator Boyle consider this to be an efficient and effective reorganization of the department. Mayor Bieri stated that she was involved in planning this reorganization which will result in financial savings and continued services without losing any existing personnel. Council President Smolinski voiced objections to the Council receiving this information tonight and questioned why Mayor Bieri did not share it with Council in advance of the meeting. Mayor Bieri replied that the meetings and discussions were preliminary and now that a proposal has been devised, it is being conveyed to the Council. Councilman Jurkovic stated that he is heartened to know that the Administration is considering budgetary constraints while making these decisions but he agreed that

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Council should have had the information in advance of tonight's meeting. He stated that he would like to hear from those employees in attendance tonight if they wish to speak. The Council agreed and Mayor Bieri opened the meeting to the public.

Gale Barth, Tax Assessor's office advised Council that this is the first time she is hearing of this proposed restructuring. She worked for the Township during the revaluation in 1988 and the reassessment in 1993. She stated that the Council has no idea of the work involved in these processes. She lived in the office for weeks handling an incredible amount of work. With Bald Eagle in the mix, the work is thirty times more. She questioned the logic of taking a staff member out of the department stating that there is a significant amount of filing and telephone work involved with this office and opining that three people cannot do it all. She stated that reducing the staff in the Tax Assessor's office now will have a negative impact during the revaluation process.

There being no more comments from the public Councilman Nolan moved to close the public portion of the meeting.

Moved: Nolan Seconded: Ramaglia
Voted Aye: Smolinski, Ramaglia, Nolan, Lichtenberg, Jurkovic.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.

Solid Waste & Recycling - Administrator Boyle advised that the Township Engineer is present to discuss the Department of Solid Waste. Mr. McFadden introduced the new Recycling Coordinator, Dave Stires to the Council. The Council discussed the reduction in the solid waste and recycling budgets and Mr. McFadden explained the process by which revenue is generated through recycling various items including paper, metal and batteries. He reviewed the paper recycling market which has fluctuated significantly during the past few years. Mr. Stires reviewed his job functions and some changes that have been made since he recently assumed this position. He advised that by implementing those changes, recycling has increased and he will continue to strive to increase recycling throughout the municipality. The Council thanked Mr. Stires for attending tonight's meeting.

Engineering – Mr. McFadden reviewed the line items in the engineering budget advising that the appropriation for fees for services has been reduced in the 2010 proposed budget. He explained the process for going out to bid and receiving proposals. In response to Council questions, he reviewed the necessity for certain bridge inspections. Councilwoman Lichtenberg asked if the Warwick Turnpike Culvert has been inspected to which Mr. McFadden advised that this would be under the purview of Passaic County. Council instructed him to find out from the County Engineer about the frequency and results of these inspections.

Mr. McFadden advised that the proposed increase for streets and roads is approximately \$10,000 or 3%. He is proposing increased attention to traffic striping which is a maintenance and safety precaution. Council President Smolinski asked for a breakdown of the related costs and Councilman Nolan asked that Mr. McFadden provide Council with a list of priority roads. Mr. McFadden reviewed the process and described the supplies used. Council discussed overtime policies and practices with Mr. McFadden who advised that there was a reduction in overtime in 2009. He advised that the Engineering department has a greater workload than the staff needed to accomplish it within a standard workweek. Administrator Boyle concurred adding that with people retiring and a hiring freeze in place, overtime becomes necessary especially in DPW where part-time help cannot be used to perform many functions. Mr. McFadden advised that he addressed prior concerns of Council related to snow plow inspections whereby he reduced the number of inspectors to two. Council discussed the work performed by inspectors and Mr. McFadden advised that such allocation of manpower has proven a very cost effective tool in the process. He advised that the inspectors take their jobs very seriously and they monitor the plowing contractors to ensure that the Township is billed for actual time and that the contractors complete the work in a timely fashion. In response to Council queries, Mr. McFadden reviewed the purpose of having mechanics on duty during storms. He also explained acting duty and the instances where certain employees may qualify for acting pay when they work out of title.

Mr. McFadden reviewed the appropriations for maintenance of public property which includes town hall, the DPW facilities, Johner building and all other municipal properties. Costs were reduced by streamlining operations and making modifications.

Mr. McFadden reviewed the snow removal budget with the Council. At this time, snow removal is costing less than last year although that may change based on weather forecasts for the upcoming week. Councilman Weisbecker, who arrived at this juncture of the meeting, questioned the need for supervisors to oversee the plowing contractors and questioned the need for this overtime expense. He also stated that he only sees the supervisors at the end of a snow event despite the Engineer's assertions that they work throughout a given storm. He asked for a breakdown on those overtime costs. Councilman Jurkovic asked about the total cost associated with a snowstorm including contractors, staff, salt, fuel and

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grits. Mr. McFadden reviewed the procedures and costs advising that the snowstorm on February 10th cost \$80,000 for contractors alone. Discussion ensued as to the mixtures of grit and salt used during snow events.

Administrator Boyle directed Council to appropriations for vehicle maintenance which has a proposed 5% increase. Mr. McFadden advised that the municipal fleet is getting older thus requiring more maintenance and parts. Additionally, these costs have risen and many of the newer police vehicles require larger, more expensive tires. Councilman Nolan asked about maintenance of first aid vehicles and Councilman Weisbecker asked if the older police vehicles that transitioned into the municipal fleet are becoming a maintenance burden. Mr. McFadden stated that the Township has four mechanics at this time which stretches resources quite a bit. The recent purchase of a Ford Focus for \$15,000 has resulted in savings for maintenance and fuel. In response to a query from Councilman Nolan about the appropriation of \$16,000 for oil, Mr. McFadden advised that he would have to seek that answer from the Superintendent of DPW and report back. He advised that the tires for the loaders are very large and cost thousands of dollars each and they have to be replaced this year.

The Council discussed the overall budget with Councilman Jurkovic seeking the Administrator's input on what the general outlook is based on the current status of the budget. He also asked about surplus funds. Administrator Boyle asked Council to spend some time on staffing within the DPW. He advised that two employees have retired and sought Council opinion on hiring one person as a replacement. Mr. McFadden advised that district one is currently manned with only two employees with part-time help being utilized as a back up when necessary. Discussion ensued about the feasibility of utilizing permanent part-time help or seasonal help from March to November to save on health benefits and ancillary costs. Mayor Bieri expressed concern about utilizing seasonal help because they may be entitled to unemployment benefits on a regular basis.

Capital – Mr. McFadden stated that there is a balance in the capital funding appropriated in 2009 for Cahill Cross Road and he suggested appropriating that funding toward the proposed traffic signal to be located at Lakeshore Drive & Warwick Turnpike. Additionally, there is left over funding from the appropriations made for dump bodies which he recommends using either for other vehicles or for repairs to Otterhole Road. Council discussed various road projects and areas in need of road repair. The Council asked for and received an update on the Cahill Cross Road repaving and widening project. Administrator Boyle advised that he will ultimately present Council with an ordinance to reappropriate funding as recommended by the Engineer. Council President Smolinski asked Mr. McFadden to discuss replacing the bodies and chassis of certain DPW vehicles with the DPW Superintendent as these replacements can be done for about \$5,000 each. The Council discussed the merits of paving the DPW this year so that vehicles are parked on tar macadam rather than on dirt and gravel.

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.

Doris Aaronson, 19 Bearfort Road, West Milford asked if the grits used during winter storms can be recycled and she asked if the snow plows can be angled so they do not deposit snow and ice in private driveways. She stated that there is no need to plow fire lanes and suggested that this be done after a storm through the Sheriff's work program. She suggested using this program for a host of low level labor projects.

Gary Steele, North Glenwood Road, West Milford asked Administrator Boyle if he could have copies of the notes from the department head meetings held in November to kick off the budget process. Mr. Steele stated that the proposed new fire truck is a large ticket item and he would like to know if it is necessary, if the vehicles are in compliance, and what is proposed for the old truck. Councilman Weisbecker stated that the Township has a replacement schedule which is based on studies done on two separate occasions over the past ten years or so. Mr. Steele cautioned against purchasing such a large ticket item in these economic times if the current truck is still operable. He recommended utilizing part time staff in DPW to reduce the cost of benefits.

There being no more comments from the public Councilman Weisbecker moved to close the public portion of the meeting.

Moved: Weisbecker Seconded: Nolan
Voted Aye: Weisbecker, Smolinski, Ramaglia, Nolan, Lichtenberg, Jurkovic.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.

Agenda No. V

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Council Comments

Councilman Nolan asked if the Administration had ever considered utilizing a flex time schedule to reduce reliance on overtime.

Agenda No. VI

Action Items

None.

Agenda No. VII

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the Township Council adjourned the meeting.

Moved: Weisbecker Seconded: Ramaglia
Voted Aye: Weisbecker, Smolinski, Ramaglia, Nolan, Lichtenberg, Jurkovic.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.

Approved: May 19, 2010

MAYOR BETTINA BIERI
PRESIDING OFFICER

ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA
TOWNSHIP CLERK