
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: March 11, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 3

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.

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Philip Weisbecker, Joseph Smolinski, Michael Ramaglia, 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 this meeting is to continue the review of the proposed 2010 Municipal Budget. Tonight's discussion will center around the Department of Community Services & Recreation. She deferred to Administrator Boyle.

Administrator Boyle directed Council to information that was placed on the dais for them before the meeting. He advised that this comprises the information requested at the last meeting and addresses issues of police retirement liability and the process by which a police officer can be hired. He asked for Council direction with regard to a possible layoff advising that affected employees would have to receive a Rice notice if discussion were to center around specific positions or people. Council President Smolinski asked if a new police officer hired with training would start at a higher rate of pay than an untrained officer entering the academy. Mr. Boyle answered in the affirmative. The Council discussed the advantages and disadvantages of hiring a trained officer. Administrator Boyle stated that the Chief has an appointment to meet with Mayor Bieri within the next two weeks to discuss hiring more than one officer.

Agenda No. III

Review of 2010 Municipal Budget

Administrator Boyle stated that the Director of Community Services & Recreation, Keith Knudsen, has submitted a budget that is less than the 2009 budget for his department. Mr. Knudsen advised that this budget has been cut to the bare minimum. Councilman Jurkovic stated that additional cuts are needed and stated that it would be helpful to have a list of programs sorted from most utilized to least utilized, profitable to least profitable. He added that Council would like to see the utilization and costs relative to each program. Council discussed programs and participation. Mayor Bieri urged the Council to be cautious about stepping into administrative territory. Mr. Knudsen reviewed specific line items pertaining to programs. He also reviewed revenue figures related to the programs.

Councilman Weisbecker asked Mr. Knudsen for an update on the coffee house. Mr. Knudsen advised that the coffee house is operational. He has reduced the staffing and is making every effort to increase attendance. Council President Smolinski stated that he reviewed the reports that indicate there was no attendance for thirty consecutive weekends. He questioned why attendance dropped off and why the Director continued to staff the program that was not being utilized. Discussion ensued about contractual obligations and staffing the coffee house in accordance with the terms of the bargaining unit contracts. The Council discussed the need to have these issues addressed in contract negotiations. Councilman Ramaglia expressed concern that there has been a long-term decline in attendance yet the Township continues to expend funds on the coffee house. He cited May 15th as an example whereby no one attended but payroll costs to staff the facility were \$425. Mr. Knudsen stated that he is working hard to get this facility up and running and is taking steps to motivate the kids in town to attend. The first step will be to complete the renovations and update the facility. Councilman Ramaglia questioned the logic of staffing this facility before people are using it. Councilman Jurkovic agreed suggesting that the coffee house should not be staffed until the construction is completed. The Council instructed that the coffee house be shut down until all construction has been completed. They removed a \$5,000 appropriation from that line item in the budget. Council President Smolinski questioned what efforts have been made to increase attendance. He stated that he did not see any advertising. He questioned the renovations at Westbrook stating that reconstruction projects generally include a plan created by a professional with

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: March 11, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 2 of 3

experience in that field. Mr. Knudsen stated that the Township Administrator and Township Engineer both agreed that such professional assistance is not necessary in that regard. Council President Smolinski disagreed with Councilman Jurkovic's affirmation. Councilman Jurkovic expressed concern that this project, costing a significant amount of money is being handled in a piecemeal fashion without the Director of Community Services & Recreation having experience or knowledge about related issues. He questioned the logic of proceeding with expending \$171,000 on renovations to a building without fully comprehending ADA requirements. He stated that there may be federal requirements that would demand an elevator in that building to allow access for persons with disabilities. Mr. Knudsen explained the research he conducted and advised that in the past monies were appropriated for repairs to this building. He stated that he does not expect an issue with having an elevator installed at some future date. Councilman Jurkovic expressed concern that additional funding sources would not be available and asked why this had not been considered an expense that should be funded with the available funding. Mr. Knudsen stated that he has spoken with the Sheriff's department and they may be able to provide licensed people on work-release programs to do some of this work thus effectuating a savings for the township. Councilman Weisbecker questioned how Mr. Knudsen can devote such time to these renovations while continuing with his other obligations. Ultimately, he said, it may be more cost effective to hire an architect and he stated that he would prefer to see Mr. Knudsen perform the functions related to his employment rather than managing a construction project. Councilman Jurkovic agreed and expressed concern that this building is subject to such renovations while more widely used municipal buildings are subject to greater demands while they have significant needs. He stated that he would like to see the building utilized and available for West Milford children and he cautioned that the repairs should be scrutinized for maximum benefit with priority repairs taking precedence. The Council discussed the funding that is available for exterior projects at Westbrook. The Council instructed that the work at Westbrook be halted and asked Administrator Boyle to schedule a future workshop discussion of this topic.

The Council continued their review of the Department of Community Services & Recreation operating budget and Councilman Weisbecker requested additional information about part-time personnel which will be provided by Mr. Knudsen. He advised that he will prepare a list of part-time personnel with rosters, expenses and revenues for each of the various programs. Councilman Nolan asked about the revenues and expenses relating to Bubbling Springs particularly the concession stand. Mr. Knudsen advised that he hopes to bid out the concession stand and discussion ensued about rental fees and costs. Mr. Knudsen advised that he does not anticipate historic overtime costs for Bubbling Springs this year and discussion ensued about the reserve account. Administrator Boyle advised that the shortfall in past budget cycles was due to these items not being budgeted to cost. Mr. Knudsen stated that he is also reviewing streamlining the services including use of lifeguards especially on rainy days. Council President Smolinski confirmed that the Council did receive some information from the Administrator but advised that more detailed information is required. The Council discussed stationary and supplies for the department.

Administrator Boyle directed the council to the Hillcrest budget. The Council asked that the accounting be more specific so that expenses related to specific properties are reflected in the proper accounts. Mr. Knudsen advised that Thunder in the Highlands will cost \$21,000 and he expressed concern about being able to fund that in 2011. Councilman Jurkovic noted that this fireworks display is a community event that he would like to see continue in West Milford. He asked if more revenue can be generated to offset costs. Discussion ensued about advertising and vendor fees. The Council reviewed various suggestions about revenue generation, donations, reducing expenditures, staffing, assignments, and utilization of resources. They encouraged achieving better efficiencies by streamlining processes.

Council President Smolinski questioned the duties and responsibilities of the Director's administrative assistant asking if certain issues should be broached with the Director rather than his subordinate. He suggested that matters should not be filtered through clerical positions but should go directly to the department head. He questioned why the Director changed that structure from the practices of the former Director. He asked if any other structural changes have been made to the department under the direction of Mr. Knudsen. He stated that he would like to see Mr. Knudsen trim certain events such as the Halloween Parade, Halloween Event and Easter Parade. He asked to see a roster of staffing for these events and stated that Council would like to look at events that are not attended or under-utilized. Councilman Jurkovic agreed adding that people are losing their homes in this economy so the Township should provide services that we can afford. Council President Smolinski asked Mr. Knudsen to explain how compensatory time and overtime records are maintained which he did. Council President Smolinski stated that the Director's administrative assistant utilizes significant overtime to generate reports and Ms. Pordon, who was in attendance, explained her overtime and the circumstances which result in overtime work. Discussion ensued about benefits to union and nonunion employees as well as duties and responsibilities of management personnel.

Mayor Bieri thanked Mr. Knudsen and Ms. Pordon for attending and they bid the Council good night.

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: March 11, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 3 of 3

Administrator Boyle recognized the Township Auditor, Charles Ferraioli, who addressed the Council. Mr. Ferraioli directed the Council to the debt statement he prepared for them and he discussed declining values and the upcoming bond sale. He stated that West Milford has maintained a positive credit rating. He reviewed preliminary budget numbers and anticipated revenues. He advised that the tax levy is up while the garbage levy is down this year. He discussed the status of tax appeals and their impact on the budget. He advised the Council of measures being taken by other municipalities to address the CAP levy as well as the current economic conditions. Council President Smolinski asked Mr. Ferraioli to elaborate on cutting services and increasing revenues. Mr. Ferraioli expanded upon comments made about elimination of overnight dispatch services and court mergers. He reviewed the cuts in State aid and advised that the State of New Jersey is experiencing significant budgetary and fiscal problems which is impacting municipal budgets.

The Council thanked Mr. Ferraioli for attending tonight's meeting.

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.

Gary Steele, North Glenwood Road, West Milford stated that the new police communication system will be obsolete by the time it is installed. He asked that the project be halted and subject to review before continuing.

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

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

Agenda No. V

Council Comments

None.

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: June 16, 2010

MAYOR BETTINA BIERI
PRESIDING OFFICER

ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA
TOWNSHIP CLERK