
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Governing Body Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: March 20, 2018
Time of Meeting: 6:30 pm
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The Special Meeting of the Governing Body was called to order by Mayor Bettina Bieri.

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 advertised in the Herald News in its issue of March 4, 2018; copies were provided to the Suburban Trends, the Record and Star Ledger 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, front and rear of this room - for use in case of an emergency. Thank you.

Agenda No. I

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Agenda No. II

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Andrena Pegel, Mike Hensley, Tim Wagner, Luciano Signorino
Patricia Gerst, Mayor Bettina Bieri
Absent: Peter McGuinness
Also Present: Township Administrator/Clerk Antoinette Battaglia

Agenda No. III

Purpose

2018 Municipal Budget

Agenda No. IV

DPW Equipment Capital Requests and Operating Budgets

Mr. Casey said that the memo he provided to the Governing Body stated that they would discuss the capital and operating budget together. He noted the three areas that need to be discussed in the DPW's budget; capital needs, non-funded employees and the increase in material costs. Mayor Bieri asked Mr. Steines to prioritize his requests, and discuss what the department truly needs to function at a higher capacity and more efficiency. Mr. Steines expressed the department's need for manpower. He mentioned that because of the lack of manpower, he was operating a plow truck during the most recent snow storm. He noted that last year, five employees were out on workers compensation. He explained that some of his employees are getting older so injuries happen; the department needs younger manpower to keep up with job demands.

Councilman Wagner explained that the Township's budget is very unique compared to other townships. He asked if expanding the subcontractors would help out during the storms. Mr. Steines noted that there have been issues with contractors not supplying the equipment that was stated in the contract. Administrator Battaglia explained that Mr. Steines requests are not only for the winter storms. His requests are based on the level of work all year round and the aging manpower. She noted that the department also needs a certain level of expertise for the stormwater drains. She suggested that at some point in time, the Governing Body should consider an overlap before employees start to retire so the new employees have an understanding of the level of expertise required and they receive the proper training. Councilman Hensley said it is a window of opportunity to hire new blood and let them learn from the veterans so they could perform safely and professionally. Councilman Wagner noted that it would be hard budget wise to make that work if employees don't start to retire, or if they could identify cuts in the DPW's budget. Mr. Steines explained that in the past twenty four years, there has not been hiring in the department. Councilman Wagner said he would support hiring entry level employees if they could identify additional cuts in the budget. He explained that the Township is very unique, they don't have state funding, and this would fall on the taxpayers. Mr. Steines noted that in 1985 the department had forty eight men, and currently they have eighteen.

Mayor Bieri said that calling out the contractors is micromanaging, and it's up to Mr. Steines to decide if he needs to call more contractors. Councilman Signorino said it is part of the Governing Body's purview under the direction of the Governing Body. Councilman Wagner said if a contractor is not performing according to the agreement, he would like to be notified. Councilman Signorino noted that they all vote for the contractors, so the Governing Body should be informed of any issues with the contractors.

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Mayor Bieri explained that she understands budget needs, and when she hears complaints, they expect more from the DPW with only half the staff. She said that half the manpower can't be expected to do double the work. Councilman Hensley said that forty eight men had once been taking care of the Township's needs and the staff is doing twice the work from a historical stand point and that is a huge testament to Mr. Steines. He explained that as a Council, they have to be cautious moving forward and not rely on outside contractors and outsourcing private entities. When they start depending on the private entities, their prices will rise dramatically.

Administrator Battaglia said in prior years they have effectively reduced the staffing throughout the municipality in every department. She explained that Mr. Steines requests are based on the increased demands all year round. His requests are not limited to the winter operations; the department is struggling, and the DEP stormwater regulations are becoming more cumbersome. They are looking at the future, and they have had discussions on the stormwater regulation demands. She said Mr. Steines is asking for an increase of one man per depot especially because the department is having difficulty managing the stormwater drains throughout the year.

Councilman Signorino noted that they have had this discussion year after year and the Council approved hiring extra help. Administrator Battaglia explained that the Governing Body funded seasonal workers for the DPW from May-October. Mr. Steines request is for full time employees all year round and not seasonal employees. Mr. Steines noted that the funding was depleted for two seasonal workers that he would have liked to hire permanently full time. Administrator Battaglia explained that the Governing Body approved a certain amount of money for seasonal workers, and once those funds are depleted, the seasonal workers contract is finished and she can't extend beyond the funds that the Governing Body approved. Councilman Wagner asked Mr. Steines if hiring two entry level full time employees and not hiring seasonal employees would help the department. Mr. Steines said that would absolutely help the department. Mayor Bieri noted that they can't depend on an employee retiring until such employee submits their paperwork.

Administrator Battaglia noted that the Governing Body's request is a cost comparison of two full time employees verses the cost of the seasonal workers and to identify what the additional needs are so the Governing Body could identify additional costs in the budget to offset that cost. Councilwoman Pegel asked if the timeframe for seasonal workers could be adjusted. Administrator Battaglia said contractually most of the seasonal workers maintain CDL licenses and there is a level of expertise for the snow removal operations. She explained that most of the employees are cognizant about the amount of work and the demands during the winter months, so they schedule their vacations during the summer time, so that reduces the amount of staff during the summer for the stormwater work.

Councilwoman Pegel suggested that they add a line item in the DPW's budget; they should have the money available in the budget to fund a seasonal employee to become a full time permanent employee. Administrator Battaglia noted that if those funds are not expended they become surplus. Councilman Wagner recommended funding seasonal workers out of the snow trust account. Councilman Signorino said he would like Mr. Steines to have that capability and funding if he feels that a seasonal employee should be hired permanently. Mayor Bieri noted that is a trust factor, they are funding something that might not get filled and it will be the decision of the Administrator and DPW Director. If the funding is not there, the decision is removed from their purview. Councilman Wagner said he supports hiring two employees if they could remove the seasonal employees and identify additional cuts in the budget.

Councilman Signorino asked if there was a way to determine how many employees could possibly be retiring in a few years so they could plan more efficiently. Administrator Battaglia said that Councilman McGuinness asked her to prepare a spreadsheet on every employee in the municipality stating their start date, current earnings and projected earnings. She noted that it's a very detailed process and payroll is working on the spreadsheet. The report will provide an idea of employees scheduled to retire but it is not a true depiction of who will retire on what date.

Mr. Steines said that he would be satisfied with a truck, roller and loader. Mr. Casey said the cost for those three pieces of equipment is approximately \$500,000. He said a roller and one large dump were funded for and that is still within the budget. Mr. Steines said that he would be okay with a roller and a loader. Mr. Casey noted that if they don't replace one big truck a year, it will cost the Township more money in future years. Mayor Bieri said they need the long range planning for the expensive equipment in each department. Mr. Casey noted that the capital budget is projected six years and every year there will be a truck and mason dump in the budget. They recently replaced two sweepers and there is a life cycle on the sweepers.

Administrator Battaglia said each year that they prepare the capital budget it is prepared with a five year projection so they see each year systematically reflecting the truck replacements. She explained that one point in the budget is \$247,000 as a tax point, and if they were to take one truck and add it to the operating budget they are looking at close to one point in this current year. Next year they wouldn't have that point because it would be in the budget but the increase would reflect in the initial year. Mayor Bieri noted they could avoid debt but not the tax point.

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They have a great process in place and they project for the future. Mayor Bieri mentioned that there are no changes in any department in the proposed budget and any increases reflected are contractual.

Councilwoman Pegel asked if anyone has researched leasing versus purchasing the office equipment. Administrator Battaglia explained that a staff member in the Clerk's Office did the research for the most cost effective way and determined that it was to purchase the equipment and not lease. Councilman Wagner said that he is not in favor of adding or replacing vehicles this year, it will be a test year, and if they need to double up next year they can. There should be a point when all the cars are pulled together and signed out with better maintenance records. Mr. Casey suggested that they start to explore a leasing purchase program for all the vehicles. He noted that the numbers are very good and there are tax advantages. Councilman Wagner asked the amount that is in the snow trust account. Mr. Casey explained that there were requests out of the capital budget for a brine truck and equipment, and they suggested that it comes out of the snow trust account for approximately \$90,000; following the same method that was used last year. Councilman Wagner requested if any department has additional cuts or suggestions that they refer back to the Governing Body by the next meeting to see if they could pull money out of surplus. Councilman Hensley asked if they are funding the replacement of the dispatch phone system, and Mr. Casey said they put that off for another year depending on the options.

Councilman Hensley asked if they could research professional services to outsource the dispatch so they could plan for the next budget next year. If they could professionally and safely address the dispatching needs through a professional service it could be a substantial tax savings. He believes they should have the information this year to prepare for next year. Administrator Battaglia explained that Chief Storbeck reached out to Passaic County in reference to shared services, it is preliminary right now and they are uncertain if Passaic County has the ability to meet the Township's needs. She noted that Chief Storbeck visited the County to take a look at their dispatch system. Councilman Hensley said it takes a long time for a lot of the steps so he would like to make multiple steps at once. This should be on the table to see if there is a private entity that could provide the services in addition to the County. He doesn't trust the safety of our residents to Passaic County. Mr. Casey said there are certain requirements that apply by the Attorney General and he will refer back to the Governing Body with that information. He mentioned that he does not know of anyone in the state that provides dispatching service.

Administrator Battaglia noted that based on Councilman Wagner's suggestions they have cut \$385,878 from the budget, and the Governing Body is seeking to reach \$800,000. She mentioned the upcoming snow storm; the meeting tomorrow could possibly be cancelled so she asked the Governing Body to consider a day next week to have the meeting if they have to cancel the meeting tomorrow. The Governing Body agreed on Monday, March 26th at 6:00 pm. Administrator Battaglia noted that they will not update the packets and they will carry the same agenda, change the dates and advertise. She asked how they would like to proceed with the budget meeting schedule. Councilman Wagner said he would like to review the status of the surplus. Councilman Signorino mentioned that he would like to get the employee spreadsheet information. Administrator Battaglia noted that payroll is working on the spreadsheet.

Councilman Wagner asked the amount of the Parks and Recreation laborer that was added. Mr. Casey said they added a laborer but they decreased the summer help. The request was for a full time laborer because the parks are expanding. Mayor Bieri said some of the parks are maintained by the County and Board of Education. Councilman Wagner said if they are funding the DPW with additional employees they don't need a full time Parks and Rec laborer. Mayor Bieri asked if the workload has increased and if there is a need for additional staff. Mr. Casey explained that the request from Mr. Roetman was hiring a full time laborer that could work all year rather than spending \$20,000 on part-time salaries because of the maintenance off season. Councilman Wagner said they approved \$40,000 for mowing equipment that is sitting in the Johner Building. Mr. Casey said there is limited cutting done by the DPW, and outside is all contracted out. Administrator Battaglia spoke about the contract services for economy reasons. She explained that staff could not accommodate the work, the manpower was reduced, and she doesn't believe they could provide the service without upgrading the equipment. Mr. Casey said the cost per hour for a contractor is significantly less. He said if they keep the mowing services it would be a better management decision. Councilman Wagner said they could discuss exactly what's being mowed at the next meeting. Mayor Bieri asked what exactly the Parks and Rec crew does in the middle of winter. Mr. Casey explained that they work at the DPW and heavy maintenance is done in the off season, so they don't interfere with the people. Mr. Casey said they will refer back to the Governing Body with further information.

Councilman Wagner requested an email of budget amounts for the last thirty years, in five year intervals with the total budget amount. He said in the future he would like to incorporate Bubbling Springs and the Day Camp into the trust account. Councilman Signorino requested that the Public Health Immunizations be reduced to half.

Councilwoman Pegel noted that fees for services have increased dramatically. Mr. Casey said it needs a discussion. Mrs. Mageean explained that in the past, their banking agreement paid a certain amount towards payroll processing. Last year, the Township was charged for everything for payroll services, and the company charges per employee.

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Mayor Bieri said the terms were negotiated when they had the agreement; the agreement expired, so she recommended finding another payroll company to provide the services. Mayor Bieri noted that the local banks hold all of the Township's money throughout the year, so there should be some negotiating there. The Governing Body agreed that it is time to look for a new company to provide payroll services.

Mr. Casey recommended that the Governing Body introduce the budget at the first meeting in April, and after that they could incorporate the changes in the budget like they have done in the past. He expressed that they have to begin the process. The Governing Body gave consensus. Administrator Battaglia asked the Governing Body if they wanted to have another budget meeting before they adopt on April 4th. The Governing Body gave consensus to introduce the budget on April 4th with no prior budget meetings.

Agenda No. V

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 one wishing to be heard, Councilman Signorino moved to close the public portion of the meeting.

Moved: Signorino Seconded: Gerst
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote
Voted Nay: None
Motion carried.

Agenda No. VI

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the Governing Body adjourned the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Moved: Signorino Seconded: Gerst
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote
Voted Nay: None
Motion carried.

Approved: April 4, 2018

Respectfully submitted:

Sherry Zbrzeski, Keyboarding Clerk I

MAYOR BETTINA BIERI, PRESIDING OFFICER

ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA, TOWNSHIP CLERK