
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: April 12, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 4

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 April 11, 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, Joseph Smolinski, Michael Ramaglia, Marilyn Lichtenberg, Daniel Jurkovic, Mayor Bettina Bieri.
Absent: Councilman Robert Nolan
Also Present: Township Administrator Kevin Boyle, Municipal Clerk Antoinette Battaglia, Chief Financial Officer Arthur Magnotti.

Agenda No. II

Purpose

Review of the proposed 2010 Municipal Budget

Formal action may be taken at this meeting

Agenda No. III

Review of 2010 Municipal Budget

Administrator Boyle provided the Council with documents tonight advising that he and the CFO have been working on new budget dated April 12th. Tonight he and Mr. Magnotti will take questions and are seeking direction from the Council. He stated that he would like to put numbers into context. The municipality works within a \$31 million budget and of that there is a significant amount that cannot be touched. Legal expenses, insurance, utilities, debt service, library, police, salary & wages. \$17.5 million is beyond the control of this budget process. After subtracting salary and wages we are left with \$8 million that is discretionary. This year that equates to an increase of only \$2 million in a \$31 million budget. The Township lost almost two tax points due to lost ratables and has made cuts to the budget. He directed Council to preliminary proposed revenues. Before the Governor's cuts, with revenue adjustments and proposed cuts, the average taxpayer would have seen an increase of \$116 on the average house. After the Governor's address and cuts, including watershed aid cuts there is an increase of \$234 to the average household. If watershed aid is restored, it would result in a \$168 increase to the average house.

Going forward, he and the CFO have prepared a proposed new budget. The original budget was up 5.3% or if you calculate solid waste 3%. Now, it is now \$1 million or 3.5% increase over last year or 1.16%. This is very lean. Mr. Boyle provided copies of department comments regarding proposed cuts. The Township Engineer has reduced the budget by \$171,000 but those savings were offset by the need to increase the budget by \$200,000 because of increased snow removal costs. The Fire Marshal saved about \$20,000.

Mr. Boyle reviewed a document entitled "2010 preliminary budget 4/12/10" which was prepared by himself and Mr. Magnotti. This budget proposes no funding for the heritage committee, cuts appropriations for the treasurer's office by \$39,770 and reduces funding for historic preservation. ALF and Thunder events remain with stable funding. He stated that he has talked to staff about reducing manpower including police. The proposed budget zeroed out any funding for the Environmental Commission. Finding that it was not possible to cut funding for fire departments because of the current structure, he would seek to look to restructure fire departments in the future possibly consolidating some fire houses. Ed Steines will propose changes the fire department's capital request this year. He reminded the Council that the Health Department had changes to personnel earlier in the year which resulted in savings and advised that they are looking at that budget for additional savings. The Health Officer has reached out to Chilton Hospital to speak about outsourcing certain clinics. Chilton may be overpowered and cannot commit at this time but will present a plan. The Director of Community Services & Recreation made changes to realize savings especially related to the concession stand at Bubbling Springs. He is researching the feasibility of outsourcing the PRIDE program to realize state and federal funding to run the program. Mr. Boyle is looking to eliminate the veterans bureau to realize savings and hoping for savings in transportation by virtue of the bid to outsource. Mr Boyle has spoken with Ringwood officials about potential shared services in court, dispatch, and health. There is little else that can be controlled. He stated that he has

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: April 12, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 2 of 4

thought out of the box and considered outsourcing and grant funding for programs. Mr Knudsen has looked to restructure the preschool program to effectuate salary savings without cutting the program. Proposed changes to fire department are radical but should be looked at to realize long-term goals.

Mr. Boyle stated that he has decimated the capital budget. Mayor Bieri interjected that she believes that the Council wishes to proceed with the gas security measures. Mr. Boyle advised that the Cahill Crossroad project is ready to proceed and direction is needed. These projects have been funded and approved. He has spoken with the Network Administrator about cuts for technology and to save money he recommends resurfacing the basement with vinyl as opposed to more expensive options. He is proposing to eliminate road resurfacing for this year adding that the bikeway project is state funded. The Marshall Hill Road sidewalk is ready to go as is the traffic signal on Lakeshore. He proposed reducing funding for the fire truck from \$450,000 to \$350,000, and is eliminating the request for new copiers. In this proposed budget he has eliminated capital for police and first aid for the year which will reduce the budget to \$1 million in debt for capital projects this year. He stated that the net debt has been doubled in West Milford in less than ten years which has resulted in a 116% increase in less than 10 years. He stated that he looked at everything including smaller line items and now needs Council direction relative to staff reductions. To proceed he must know what Council is willing to cut in terms of services to residents. Most departments, he said, have seen personnel cuts and are working with less. He recommends looking at Community Services & Recreation and Construction adding that he does not believe that DPW can be cut any further.

Councilman Jurkovic asked how much we have to cut to bring the budget to \$0 increase. Mr. Magnotti estimated the need for a \$2.7 million cut to achieve a zero percent increase to which Councilman Jurkovic responded that we need to make those cuts. He appreciates the work done but noted that primarily the increases are related to employment, salary, benefits, pension, and equipment. He noted that substantial savings were realized by contracting out sanitation services without making future commitments and added that it is important to think long term. He stated that it is imperative to take a serious look at staff cuts. He would like to see ideas and recommendations from the Administrator about staff cuts. He stated that he has been asking for information about engineering time and tasks to no avail despite the fact that the Council has a fiduciary responsibility to residents.

Council President Smolinski asked Administrator Boyle what needs to be done to realize savings this year and in future years. Mr. Boyle recommended that the Council approve his recommendations and the actions he discussed tonight. He stated that he proposes a recreation utility rather than funding recreation costs as well as researching changing how the Township charges solid waste and recycling costs. Council President Smolinski asked if changes can be made to DPW and road work to reduce costs questioning if salaries and wages be charged to grants and projects to eliminate taxpayer costs. Mr. Boyle stated that he will review the feasibility of these queries and report back to council. Councilman Jurkovic stated that there is an urgent need to address long-term problems and he asked that revenue and expenditures be reflected on the same document so that Council can obtain a better financial picture.

Mr. Magnotti stated that the Township has realized savings in restructuring certain depts. He stated that the documents presented to Council tonight reflect a decrease in treasury and an increase in administration as a result of the personnel administrator's recent retirement. Councilman Jurkovic suggested that the planning and zoning board budgets should be cut by at least 50.

Council President Smolinski asked Administrator Boyle to elaborate on shared services for health and recreation. Mr. Boyle advised that this is a broad concept which is in its preliminary stages. He has begun the process of researching the potential for environmental and health services and will also research similar initiatives pertaining to recreation programs. He believes there is potential for shared services which would result in greater attendance at recreation programs at higher fees. Will report back with more ideas. He stated that it may also be possible to outsource and engage in shared services for dispatchers as well as the municipal court. All of these potential changes will require study and work and he does not have details at this time but will research further. Discussion ensued about the PRIDE program and potential grant initiatives. Mr. Boyle advised that more research necessary.

Mayor Bieri recalled that she has requested a free DCA study of the police department which is very thorough. The Council has the authority to request additional reviews and as such they determine if it is necessary to pay those costs. She recognized comments made by Council President Smolinski about making cuts that will not be realized this year. We have budgeted 47 police officers and if those who have indicated they will retire actually retire their severance packages eat up all the extra money. Adding staff is actually increasing budgets. Councilman Jurkovic stated that this proves that there is a problem with the information being relayed to council. Chief Costello indicated that there would be a savings if people were hired upon the retirement of police officers. Mayor Bieri confirmed that and added that Chief Costello did not reflect termination pay in his cost analysis. The savings he spoke about are related to

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Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: April 12, 2010
Time of Meeting: 7:00 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 3 of 4

salary only. Councilman Jurkovic stated that we need to change the way we do business because decisions made today impact future budgets as well as this year's budget.

Discussion ensued about the necessity for certain programs such as those run by Community Services & Recreation. Some programs are nice but not necessarily required. Mr. Boyle stated that he is evaluating every program and cutting those that are not self-sufficient. Councilman Jurkovic asked to discuss salary ordinances at the next workshop meeting. Councilwoman Lichtenberg recalled that last year the Council agreed that each member would pay for his/her own attendance at the NJLM convention. Mr. Boyle advised that appropriations for staff to attend this year's convention have been eliminated as well as funding for seminars and certification classes. Mr. Boyle stated that he is researching the feasibility of outsourcing street sweeping services to save on these capital purchases, the maintenance, and the related litigation costs.

Council President Smolinski asked Mr. Boyle to determine how the Council can legally discuss staffing cuts. Discussion ensued about contract negotiations and Mr. Boyle explained that there has been difficulty in scheduling meetings around everyone's schedule. He advised that they are now scheduled to meet next week. Council President Smolinski expressed surprise at the concept of consolidating fire departments saying that this is the first he is hearing of this concept. Mr. Boyle stated that this is entirely his idea and he needs some time to research it further before engaging in discussion about the logistics. Councilman Weisbecker asked Mr. Boyle to research merging departments and eliminating department head positions to effectuate savings.

Councilman Jurkovic stated that pension obligations are too expensive and as such we cannot continue to fund staffing at these levels because of long term pension obligations. Mayor Bieri stated that it is imperative that unions make concessions to contributions to benefits. Councilman Weisbecker stated that the private sector is cutting personnel and compelling employees to assume costs. Councilman Jurkovic stated that the Township pays \$1.2 million in pension contributions plus \$0.8 million in buyouts. That is \$2 million that the taxpayer must assume. We cannot afford those numbers.

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 noted that Councilman Nolan has been taking issue with the Zoning Board attorney fees at each Council meeting and she concurred with his opinion that the Township should reduce those costs. She suggested that the Council research shared services for drain vacuum services for lake communities and asked if it is possible that grits swept up could be recycled resulting in a cost savings. She suggested that a four-day work-week for municipal employees could result in savings.

Jim Novack Larchmont Drive, West Milford stated that he is speaking as a resident not as a member of the Recycling Committee. He suggested reducing the number of hours and days the West Milford recycling center is open especially during winter hours and in times of inclement weather. He stated that most people do yard work on the weekends so closing the recycling center on certain week days may be another option. He stated that many municipalities have merged their planning and zoning boards reducing the cost for professional services, secretaries and sundry expenses. This may be particularly effective in West Milford because the Highlands Act has impacted the number of applications filed. He stated that there should be discussion about cutting the staffing levels in the tax assessor's department which he believes to be overstaffed. He also recommended that the Township research the feasibility of using shared services for animal control

Gary Steele, North Glenwood Road, West Milford advised that in his quest for election to the Board of Education he has been speaking one-on-one with many residents. He stated that the Council should realize that residents are on the verge of a tax revolt and people want to see budget cuts. He suggested cutting garbage pick-up to two days per week and reduce town hall hours to four days per week.

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, Lichtenberg, Jurkovic.
Voted Nay: None.
Motion carried.
