
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: April 19, 2012
Time of Meeting: 6:30 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 published in the Herald News on April 15, 2012; copies were provided to the Record, Star Ledger, Suburban Trends 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, and rear of this room - for use in case of an emergency. Thank you.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Ada Erik, Joseph Smolinski, Michael Ramaglia, Edward Rosone, Luciano Signorino, CarlLa Horton, Mayor Bettina Bieri.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Township Administrator Nancy Gage, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia, Chief of Police Chiosie, Fire Commissioner & EMC Ed Steines, Fire Marshall Ron Svrcek, Fire Prevention Specialist Fred Stewart

Agenda No. II

Purpose

Review of the proposed 2012 Municipal Budget.

- Department of Public Safety
 - Fire
 - First Aid
 - Police
 - Office of Emergency Management

Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

Agenda No. III

Review of 2012 Municipal Budget

Mayor Bieri turned the meeting over to Chief of Police Chiose and Township Administrator Nancy Gage. They were joined by Ed Steines, Ron Svrcek and Fred Stewart.

Fire Department

Fire Commissioner Ed Steines directed Council to his sub account detail with a request of \$120,000. Administrator Gage explained that the request appears to have a \$30,000 increase but this is simply an operating expense that was previously charged to capital. Mr. Steines advised that there is a requested increase of \$5,000 for repair of Township vehicles due to the need to use outside vendors because of the staffing levels in DPW. Discussion ensued about fire company vehicles which include two rescue trucks and twelve cars.

Mr. Steines advised that the largest increase proposed in this budget would raise appropriations for annual physicals. In the past, this was not done annually. Fred Stewart advised that this years request is based on the number of firefighters using an average of \$150 apiece. These physicals include a screening, blood tests, questionnaire, EKG, and an eye test. It provides a good baseline. Increased physicals have already proven beneficial because some unknown medical conditions have been discovered. Ultimately they may possibly reduce the request somewhat because younger people's physicals may cost less. He believes that annual physicals are necessary and he gave the reasons. Councilman Ramaglia stated that we should not cut back on this line item and Councilwoman Horton asked if people can use their individual insurance plans and have their copay reimbursed. Mr. Stewart stated that these tests are conducted by occupational health specialists rather than general practitioners.

Mr. Steines reviewed the requested appropriation for fire alert backup systems advising that this is a system that alerts firemen of calls via cell phone. Only two sirens in West Milford work and this allows for

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response. He also reviewed the insurance appropriations and advised that the requested appropriation for school for employees has been reduced by \$4,000.

Mr. Steines reviewed the capital budget advising that the \$60,000 equates to 10,000 for each company for the purchase of supplies and tools. Councilman Ramaglia asked if we seek reimbursement from insurance companies and Mr. Svrcek stated that we have had no claims this year. Discussion ensued about the lifespan of this equipment and the assignment of such appropriations under capital. The Council discussed a request for a new Chevy Caprice and ultimately instructed that the appropriation be raised from \$30,000 to \$35,000 to fund a Chevy Tahoe instead due to the need for four-wheel drive in West Milford not only to address weather conditions but to address terrain conditions for rescues.

Office of Emergency Management

Mr. Svrcek distributed handouts to the Council. The Council asked about compensation for the OEM coordinator and the deputy. Mr. Steines advised that he does not receive compensation but the deputy coordinator receives a \$3,000 stipend. Discussion ensued about the duties of the OEM coordinator and the deputy coordinator. Mr. Svrcek advised that the Township used to apply for and receive a \$5,000 grant. We no longer qualify because we reduced the compensation to \$3,000. The Council directed that the grant be applied for with \$3,000 for the deputy and \$2,000 for the OEM coordinator. The Council agreed that it does not make sense to forego the grant because it is costing us more not to compensate Mr. Steines.

The Council reviewed the line items for this budget. Mr. Svrcek advised that there is a proposed increase for maintenance of generators because warranties have run out and failure to maintain the generators properly will result in greater cost in the long term. The Council agreed. Mr. Svrcek stated that he had requested an increase in the appropriations for food & provisions and the Council instructed that it not be increased. When discussing the proposed increase for schooling, the Council asked Mr. Steines to provide additional information before they approve the requested increase.

Mr. Steines advised that he has submitted a capital request for a generator for fire company #6 on Ridge Road for \$34,000. This would be the fourth of six generators needed to have each firehouse so equipped. Mr. Svrcek explained the gap in the program and the need to restore it. Companies 4 & 5, he said, need generators. Councilwoman Erik asked if it would be of benefit to purchase all three at once and get a quantity discount.

Fire Prevention

Fire Marshal Ron Svrcek addressed the Council and reviewed the line items of this budget. Discussion ensued about a request for a \$3,000 costume for events. The Council expressed concern about expending funds in this manner at this time. Discussion ensued about the account used to fund repairs to robots & the trailer. Mr. Svrcek reviewed the history of this account explaining the fluctuating charges over the years.

Mr. Svrcek distributed a sheet outlining the budget request for the maintenance of fire alarm systems. He advised that Administrator Boyle had asked him to look into consolidating fire & alarm costs. Originally the Township had multiple alarm companies and diverse costs. We consolidated to AC Daugherty which has resulted in savings and improved services. This is a central station system. His sheet shows monthly fees and annual costs. This would centralize the maintenance and budgeting of costs for maintaining alarms. The \$7,300 is strictly for maintenance but nothing has been funded for repairs. He will provide cost estimates for this type of funding. Moneys previously spent by individual departments for alarm system maintenance has to be removed from the respective lines and centralized in this line item.

First Aid

Ken Cuneo and Rob Jirouschek addressed the Council. Ms. Gage advised that the vehicle maintenance line is funded through DPW because they generate the purchase orders. Mayor Bieri stated that it may be okay to keep it in DPW but have a special line item delineating that it is for first aid. Mr. Cuneo stated that they are asking for an increase to \$25,000 because they have two rigs that need regular maintenance. Mr. Jirouschek stated rig maintenance in 2009 was \$60,000. In 2010 + 2011 that number went down significantly. This year as of tomorrow it will be \$6,000. They purchased a new rig purchased in 2009 and budgeted \$15,000 in prior years. Even if the Township supported the request for a new rig, they would need these funds for repairs because it takes time to get the new vehicle.

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Mr. Cuneo advised that the membership & attendance allowance is higher because they have 80 members now up from about 60. New members require medical checkups. They had 16-20 new members last year and next year they will be asking for more for education because the state has cut funding.

Mr. Cuneo stated that they are seeking one very large capital request. Mr. Jirouschek advised that they have submitted a new ambulance request. If we fund a new ambulance this year we will get the vehicle next year. So he has titled the request 2013 proposed. They have requested \$230,000 but actually want \$235,000. The breakdown is \$205,000 with a power lift of \$25,000 and that includes the estimated potential price increases. The power lift is a new product on the market. This would complement the hydraulic cots that they have been buying. This lift would be in the ambulance and would lift the cots reducing the potential for back injuries to volunteers. The West Milford police department assists very often and patients appear to be getting larger. The capacity of the lift is 800 lbs and the cots are 700 lbs. Rob stated that they are trying to pursue grants to fund the lift. The ultimate goal would be to have these retrofitted and installed in all rigs. This would replace a re-chassis that took place in 2004. The original equipment, he said, is from 1997. It cannot be re-chassied because it is obsolete. Mr. Cuneo advised that they are averaging over 20,000 miles per year on each rig. A minimum call is 30 miles and the trauma center is 60 plus miles away. Volume is constantly increasing and they now often have 2-3 rigs on the street at any one time. They are asking Council to help meet those needs. They are suggesting that and asking for funding for 2 vehicles so they don't come back next year asking for another vehicle. The cost is expected to increase by \$9,000 to \$15,000. Funding 2 now will result in savings in 2013 and they will seek to trade in the old vehicle. They can use the BOE Ford ID number to get discount from Ford. So, ultimately their budget request is for \$470,000 for new ambulances.

Councilwoman Horton asked if the first aid squad has any money they can contribute toward these costs. Ron said they won't own the vehicle so it is not appropriate to ask them to contribute. Councilman Smolinski stated that last year West Milford first aid deferred their request so that UGL could get their vehicle. He took issue with Councilwoman Horton stating that she should be prepared to ask the same question of all the fire departments too. Councilwoman Horton asked if it would be appropriate for West Milford First Aid to buy their own vehicle and get help from the Township rather than the Township funding the cost with no help from the first aid funds. Mr. Jirouschek advised that DCA has indicated that when you co-mingle money there are issues. Councilwoman Horton stated that she is asking these questions to see what can be done to do this in the most cost effective manner. Mr. Jirouschek stated that they do have money in the bank but those funds are for their other expenses. They are asking the Township for funds for town-owned vehicles. Councilwoman Horton asked for other options to be researched and considered. Councilwoman Erik stated that the first aid squad in Edison raises their own money and they seek grants and the Township kicks in \$10,000. In Ringwood the first aid buys their own vehicles. Ringwood just bought a rig for \$180,000 with a lift. Rosone stated that it may be more feasible to purchase only one rig this year. Ron stated that if the first aid exceeds the maintenance budget they contribute the remaining funds. In 2009 they contributed \$45,000 to rig maintenance. He advised that the cost to operate the squad has increased and ranges between \$120,000 and \$260,000. Fundraising has decreased.

Mayor Bieri asked if Council has comments on the operating request and/or the capital request. Discussion ensued about qualifications for members and certifications necessary. Rob stated that West Milford first aid only gets fuel from DPW. They do not get maintenance.

UGL First Aid

Michelle Dale addressed the Council saying that the UGL first aid is asking for a zero increase in 2012. They Appreciate the new ambulance funded by the Township last year. Their goal is to get another new ambulance on their own through fundraising. This year they are asking for funds for power stretchers which reduces the amount of lifting and associated injuries. She commended the police department who always help. UGL does not answer as many calls as West Milford and so power stretchers would be sufficient to meet their needs. The stretchers cost about \$15,000 each and they are asking for two, one for each ambulance. Michelle Dale asked if they could move some funding around. They asked if the line items can be adjusted. Ms. Gage answered in the affirmative adding that it is better to have accurate accounting, but if the bottom line is not exceeded we can fund from any of the accounts to meet the needs.

Police Department

Chief of Police Gene Chiosie addressed the Council. He stated that he has been trying to provide outreach to senior citizens on various matters that may affect them as well as striving to reach to children in various grades.

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The Council reviewed the various line items of the police department budget with the Chief. He said there was a significant reduction in charges made to schools & training because his department availed of many free classes in the past year. Those may not be available in the coming year and there will be extra training necessary because of restructuring. Therefore, he is seeking an increase in these appropriations.

In reviewing the request for clothing allowances discussion ensued about hiring qualified officers. Chief Chiosie stated that we have hired 7 thus far and now staff feels that it would be best to open up to residents and have new recruits sent to the academy. There is one open position but staffing levels are still down from the recommendations in the FBI-Leeda report.

The Council reviewed the requested funding for maintenance contracts. Ms. Gage advised that while this line item is new for the police department, it is not new to the Township. Chief Chiosie stated that there is a new item because the new 911 communication center now requires maintenance.

Chief Chiosie stated that marine patrol was taken over by county some years ago. They stopped in 2010 and we have no patrol now and have no ability to revitalize the program. The State of New Jersey wants to begin lake patrols utilizing a West Milford police officer and he is in favor of this program.

Chief Chiosie stated that he is requesting funding for four vehicles and two SUV's to update the police department fleet. He reviewed the mileage of the vehicles that would be replaced under this plan. Captain Storbeck reviewed the line item that would fund service contracts which are primarily for radios. Chief Chiosie advised that he is withdrawing the request for funding for body armor because he is seeking a grant for this purpose. He also reviewed other requests that were originally submitted as capital but are now moved to operating expenses.

Chief Chiosie stated that he is seeking a capital appropriation for furniture and Ms. Gage advised that she may seek Council consensus to fund this with existing funds. Chief Chiosie stated that for years he has been requesting a SOU command vehicle and he is doing so again this year. He described the vehicle and its possible uses.

Chief Chiosie stated that his department needs a dedicated IT person. Discussion ensued as to whether this would be appropriated under the police department or in the Administrator's budget. Council stated that they would consider a part time person to be subordinate to the current Network Administrator.

Chief Chiosie stated that he is trying to get staffing in the police department up to minimum staffing levels. Everyone is trying to do more with less but there is a need to hire. A recruit who is enrolled in the upcoming academy will not be on the streets until March 2013. He would like all 3 new hires to go through academy. Councilman Smolinski asked if staffing levels were at 46 would there be enough staffing to put officers in schools. Chief Chiosie stated that it would allow the department to dedicate resources to community policing which includes schools. He discussed many of the existing programs with schools, seniors, PAL, organizations, etc. He stated that the department is trying to reach out to the community at large. Councilman Smolinski asked if Chief Chiosie ever met with the schools to discuss officers in schools. The Chief replied in the affirmative and reported that the Superintendent, Mr. Petrillo, was emphatic that he does not want them. However, the teachers do. Discussion ensued about the advantages of having officers in the school. They are not security guards. Councilman Smolinski agrees that having a good rapport with the youth is important. In the past he expressed concerns about the budget impact. Council President Signorino asked about assigning volunteer cops to the schools and Councilman Smolinski stated that "rent a cops" don't get respect. Councilman Smolinski stated that the Chief has requested a lot of money for special operations. If you gave that up, he said, you could get two new officers. The Scuba team, he said, is not rescue, it is recovery and an unnecessary expense when you recognize that Passaic County can be here in a few hours for recovery efforts. The County, he said, should be providing those services rather than looking at a layoff. Chief Chiosie disagreed stating that all police matters fall under emergency services. He stated that it is difficult to tell a parent waiting on the shore line for a child's body that the County is coming in a few hours. Councilman Smolinski stated that the police department cannot cover every situation and Council President Signorino interjected that when there is money you can, when there is no money you can't.

Chief quoted from the statistical reports that show that West Milford has fewer police officers than most New Jersey municipalities per capita. He stated that he is trying to get the department to a minimum staffing level.

Councilman Ramaglia asked Administrator Gage for a spreadsheet of all capital requests sent to Council via email. Ms. Gage stated that she will provide that information as requested. She stated that she will

