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**TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY**

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting  
Date of Meeting: April 23, 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.

Agenda No. II

**Purpose**

Review of the proposed 2012 Municipal Budget.

Department of Public Works  
Division of Engineering

Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

Agenda No. III

**Review of 2012 Municipal Budget**

Mayor Bieri turned the meeting over to Nancy Gage, Township Administrator and Eric Miller, Engineering Aide. Administrator Gage advised that the requested increases to the Engineering operating budget are minimal. Most requests are for capital projects. Mr. Miller reviewed the existing infrastructure in West Milford including 150 miles of paved Township roads.

He advised that the Township was approved for a \$250,000 DOT grant for resurfacing La Rue Road with a \$175,000 municipal contribution. The estimate is preliminary and the deadline to begin construction is August 23, 2012. He stated that the preliminary estimate to effectuate long overdue road work at First, Second and Third Avenues is \$495,000. He stated that these roads are in dire need of repair and will result in significant savings in the DPW maintenance budget. Ms. Gage stated that she will be scheduling a discussion about grant funding that will incorporate a recommendation for funding this work. The Council asked questions about grant funding, Walgreen's developer funds, and block grants. Mr. Miller advised that all options are being reviewed and balanced. It is premature to present the information to Council but he and the administrator are working on a number of options and will be prepared to discuss that as indicated by the Administrator. He stated that as a result of recent census information this area may now be eligible for CDBG grant funding and he is reviewing that potential along with the assessment process. The DPW Superintendent, Gerry Storms, explained the affects heavy rainfall has on this area and estimated the annual costs for maintenance to be about \$24,000 per annum.

Mr. Miller advised that the Township has not appropriated funding for road resurfacing since 2009. He explained that the construction and budget seasons do not align well. He advised that the 2009 funding was spread out over 2010 and 2011 with grants supplementing those municipal funds. He reviewed the 20 year history of resurfacing and reconstruction. He advised that the Township has reconstructed an average of 6.5 miles per year noting that five miles per year equates to a 30-year cycle. He opined that it would not be good to reduce that program. He said that if the municipality were to fall behind on road maintenance it will ultimately cost five times as much to protect the infrastructure.

Mr. Miller stated that there should be a plan for managing the infrastructure and how to plan going forward. Funds are now depleted. Without funding this year the Township will experience difficulties maintaining infrastructure. He is requesting \$1.1 million and noted that the Township seeks insurance

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reimbursement when possible for guard rail damage. Councilman Smolinski asked for an accounting of monies collected through this process.

Mr. Miller, in response to Councilwoman Erik's questions, stated that we have been engaging in crack sealing regularly for 15 years. Mayor Bieri stated that we should not fall behind on maintaining our roads noting that, in her opinion, taxpayers expect road repair and maintenance. She asked if there is a consensus to fund at least five miles this year. Councilman Rosone stated that he did not hear anyone saying to cut that and Mayor Bieri replied that the Council has not funded road maintenance for two years.

Councilman Smolinski complemented Mr. Miller for his paperwork. Mr. Miller stated that if he knows that there is guaranteed annual funding, he can plan appropriately. He distributed a road rating list to Council explaining that roads are rated according to a specific scientific method every three years. Every time a resident complains the road is rated and DPW provides a list of the worst roads every year. Councilman Smolinski stated that every Council person gets calls about bad roads and having the rating helps with the answer. He noted that the lower the number in "rating" the worse the road. Councilwoman Horton stated that she appreciates the Mayor asking for consensus but she has too much information to digest to be able to make a commitment at this time. Councilman Ramaglia stated that any amount that goes to road resurfacing is better than nothing and Mayor Bieri agreed. Roads, she said, affect everybody and the conditions are not improving. Ms. Gage stated that after we hear from all departments Council will get a spreadsheet with all capital requests with the capital impact from the CFO.

Discussion ensued about reconstruction versus construction of roads. Mr. Miller stated that he is proposing to start a pilot program for \$100,000 to deal with drainage projects. These drainage issues are becoming problematic because they are not being addressed. Mayor Bieri asked if anyone has analyzed whether it is more cost effective to bid this out versus increasing manpower in DPW. Mr. Storms stated that the Township used to do one mile per year in-house years ago when there was a staffing level of about 40 men in DPW. Now there have sixteen excluding mechanics. Mr. Miller reviewed spreadsheets explaining the drainage projects noting that the highlighted projects were done in the past year. Manpower, he said, is the main issue getting these drainage jobs done.

The Council asked Mr. Storms to explain how his personnel are assigned and how manpower is determined for projects. Mr. Storms provided an example whereby an ice problem at town hall took two days to address with four men assigned to that project for both days. Councilman Ramaglia asked if there is infrastructure grant money available for Otterhole Road and Pleasantview Drive. Mr. Miller replied that those projects are too small to qualify. Mr. Storms advised that those projects would shut down two crews for him. Mayor Bieri asked if it would be better to hire new DPW personnel to do this and work on other projects too. Mr. Storms recalled prior discussions about hiring part time flag guys in the summer but it has come to naught. Mr. Miller stated that maintenance has suffered over the years and, with existing staffing levels, they cannot keep up with maintenance and construction. Mayor Bieri asked Messrs. Miller & Storms to provide a cost analysis of in-house versus outsourcing for this. That, she said, would help Council make a determination. Councilwoman Horton suggested temporary hires or part time people. Councilman Ramaglia asked about potential shared services with the Passaic County and Mr. Storms advised that they are experiencing greater manpower shortages than we are. He does not think they have the capability of loaning men to us now because they are short staffed. Mr. Miller estimated that we could do 6-8 of these projects for the \$100,000 with DPW doing the smaller ones. He would focus on the ice problems first.

Annual Sediment Control Retrofit Program – Mr. Miller stated that he firmly believes this really needs to be done. Many lakes are experiencing sediment-related problems. Current litigation aside, we need to be proactive and fund an annual program. He reviewed some retrofitting projects that have been completed. The proposed plan would address sediments influenced by gravity and the new tier stormwater regulations. This would be a proactive approach to these increasing issues. He envisions a consistent level of funding every year and proposes \$50,000. Councilman Ramaglia stated that this issue will only become more problematic when the Greenwood Lake litigation is completed. Mr. Miller stated that he will incorporate sediment control in every project. Councilman Smolinski asked if the sediment is all grit and Mr. Miller emphatically stated that it is absolutely not. The grit is a specific rock of a specific size. The sand holds moisture. Grit is heavily influenced by gravity. Topsoil erosion, dirt driveways, road erosion all contribute to this. These sediment control units capture the grits but they don't capture the other natural sediments such as runoff, leaves, etc. Mr. Storms stated that we sampled much of that material and very little was grits. It was mostly everything else. Sticks, leaves, grass clippings, and dirt.

The Council thanked Mr. Miller.

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DPW – Ms. Gage advised that Mr. Storms has a substantial operating budget. Mr. Storms distributed his capital requests to Council.

The Council reviewed a budget overview document provided to them by Mr. Storms. Ms Gage advised that the budget reflects a \$102,000 overtime appropriation. Last year there was no funding appropriated for overtime in this department and they expended \$122,850. DPW, she said, cannot operate without overtime. Ms. Gage stated that the budget reflects an appropriation for road materials. Mr. Storms stated that in recent years these costs were applied to capital to keep operating budget down. He is asking to restore \$100,000 and bring this line to \$120,000 to accurately reflect operating expenses. Snow removal is on page 62 of the Edmunds sheets. Mr. Storms advised that stone use and costs were unusual in 2011 because of undeclared storms and the Township got FEMA funding back to restore the accounts. There are new mandates for street signs and he advised that by 2015 we have to upgrade signs to new Federal mandates. He discussed the plan for sign upgrades. Councilwoman Horton asked about road re-stripping and Mr. Storms stated this is also affected by new minimum standards. We contract out striping and do the signing in-house. Mayor Bieri stated that we have more mandates and fewer staff meeting those standards and doing the other work too. Mr. Storms advised that the signs are guaranteed for 10 years. The mandates are based on an aging population. Discussion ensued about the specialized field of striping.

Public properties – Mr. Storms stated that we just went through an energy retrofit and it was recommended that we install programmable thermostats. He will have final cost within next week. The energy upgrades were paid for with a grant. We had to contribute a lot because of boiler room changes.

Snow removal – Ms. Gage advised that there are surplus funds from 2011 because of the fewer storms in the winter months. She proposes re-appropriating these funds to capital projects. She & the CFO calculated a reduction to salaries & wages of \$65,000 and they recommend reallocating those funds. That would reduce the line to \$150,000. She proposes allocating those funds to capital projects this year rather than bonding. We must be careful not to eliminate the line item because it will affect next year's budget with the 2% cap.

Ms. Gage stated that appropriations were made for calcium chloride but not spent. Mr. Storms explained that calcium chloride raises the temperature of ice and advised that he would like to use calcium chloride to effectuate savings on salt. It is a terrific product that works very well when used for temperatures below 17 degrees. Councilwoman Horton asked if the environmental commission has weighed in on this and Mr. Storms answered in the affirmative advising that they reviewed the concept years ago they were completely on board. He estimates that it will reduce use of salt possibly up to 30%.

Ms. Gage advised that appropriations for snow plow contractors can be reduced to \$150,000 because Mr. Storms is confident that will cover storms at the end of the year. Mr. Storms reviewed the costs for the October storm and advised that we have been approved for FEMA reimbursement funds for that storm. Ms. Gage stated that the goal is to budget responsibly for what is reasonably expected.

Vehicle maintenance – Mr. Storms advised that he is proposing minimal changes in this budget. Discussion ensued about the account for the first aid squad ambulance repair. The Council gave consensus to move that line to another department and instructed the CFO to look into the 2011 expenditures. Discussion ensued about funding for fire truck repairs and what repairs are done in-house.

Solid waste – DPW administrative assistant, Jill Knipp advised that the only changes are contractual. Tipping fees, page 177, should be changed from 750,000 to 705,000 and the reduction in salaries & wages is due to a retirement. Councilman Rosone asked how the revenue generated from the recycling center is reflected in the budget and Ms. Gage advised that she will be providing a spreadsheet with revenues. Discussion ensued about breaking down materials in recycling to generate income from copper, steel, aluminum, etc. It would have cost over \$250,000 to dispose of paper through garbage disposal but instead we generated \$150,000 through recycling. Ms. Knipp advised that the Township is also generating revenue from metals. Ms. Knipp advised that the fees for services is the appropriation for the lease of the recycling center.

Capital Requests – Mr. Storms advised that he is seeking to purchase an Elgin Eagle Sweeper to replace a 1993 model. The existing machine has been refurbished on 3 occasions and he will look at trade in value to offset the ultimate cost. With pressure from lake communities, we should seriously look at purchasing a new sweeper. In season the Township is sweeping about 168 miles of roads and we have one operational sweeper right now. Discussion ensued about the ability to repair the 1995 model that is now broken down. Mr. Storms advised that the Township has only ever had two sweepers and that is sufficient to accomplish the tasks. Ms. Gage stated that the request amount will be reduced because Mr. Storms will get up to date cost estimates. The Council instructed that Mr. Storms check into the

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possibility of getting a used sweeper and to determine the cost. Councilman Rosone stated that it makes sense to buy a new sweeper because of life expectancy, warranty, and savings from trade-ins.

Mr. Storms stated that he has submitted a request to replace truck 33 which is one of two trucks he is seeking to replace. This truck cannot be refurbished any further. These trucks #33 and #34 have been fully utilized and he is also asking for a new utility body for one other truck. The costs are \$155,000, \$183,000 and \$30,000 respectively. He stated that before submitting these requests a full analysis is done and a report generated from the mechanics to make sure that we are making the best, most cost effective decision. He will have that report before Council makes a decision. He stated that he will only know trade in prices when the bid goes out.

Staffing – Mr. Storms stated that he is seeking to replace one full time clerk typist in recycling. Mayor Bieri if we can just add another part time person. Ms. Knipp advised that when the part timer is not in and Mr. Stires is out on the road, the office is not manned. Mayor said if you have part time persons, you can staff full time by adjusting hours but you save on benefits. Ms. Knipp stated that there is high call volume on the seven lines in the DPW department. They average 200 to 300 calls per day.

Mr. Storms stated that his wish list is for five new people. He would like to replace the mechanic who retired in January 2010. He reviewed how they have been filling the void by using a DPW person who has the skills and he reviewed the distribution of work and who does what. Councilman Smolinski stated that Mr. Storms requested and got a lift last year. He stated that it does not make sense to have mechanics if you don't have space. Mr. Storms stated that he did not ask for a lift. Most of the work, he said, is done on the floor. The concrete floor cannot handle the load. We are getting by but are behind and there is a lot of equipment to be maintained. The work is there. If Council says we cannot afford it this year, he understands but he will request it again next year. Mr. Storms said the mechanics do a lot of work outside so they can get it all done.

Mr. Storms stated that he is requesting approval to hire four laborers. In 2009, he said, DPW had a staff of 34 and he is looking to get back to that number. He said that staffing levels are so small he has to combine crews for some jobs to meet minimum requirements. Described what a crew generally comprises of. Supervisor, equipment operator, laborers, etc. Their assignments are affected by seasonal machinery functions such as mowing, etc. Mayor Bieri asked if we can reduce costs by getting part timers or seasonal staff. Mr. Storms answered in the affirmative adding that the work load would certainly be positively affected with seasonal flag men. Councilman Rosone asked if Gerry is off-setting equipment operators with laborers and Mr. Storms answered in the affirmative. Councilwoman Horton asked Mr. Storms for a plan that includes cost factors.

Councilman Smolinski asked where we stand with the fuel system. Mr. Storms replied that he doesn't know. Ed Steines made a presentation. Councilman Smolinski took exception saying that Council gave additional funding for this purpose. Mr. Storms said it was a massive project. He spent five weeks of his time and was ultimately told that Council pulled funds. Councilman Smolinski said that the funding was given and there was no activity. He asked Mr. Storms how he inventories fuel deliveries. Ms. Knipp said she gets tickets for each delivery and creates spreadsheets to monitor the delivery, cost, and usage. Mr. Storms said they stick the tanks at the main garage and Ms. Knipp said that her records show regular usage and a discrepancy would raise a red flag.

The Council thanked Mr. Storms and Ms. Knipp for their attendance.

Ms. Gage stated that the major parts of the budget are done. She will provide information for the health department and will answer any questions on other budgets and staffing. She will have a summary of capital requests and the CFO is working on an analysis of costs and capital. She stated that she would like to meet with Mr. Ferraioli & the CFO on debt service & revenue before bringing that to Council. Discussion ensued about services provided by the health department. Ms. Gage advised that the tax department, planning and IT have all asked for staffing. She will have most of the information for Wednesday and will work with the auditor on how to apply the revenues. She would like to start strategy discussions. Councilman Smolinski stated that he wants to know the bottom line. Discussion ensued about the potential for cuts and Ms. Gage advised that the departments are saying they are cut to the bone. Councilman Smolinski stated that all departments appear to be submitting personnel requests and he lamented that with every full time hire you are adding the cost of benefits. He cautioned against hiring if it will result in laying people off as a result. Ms. Gage stated that we may have to look at other options and outsourcing is an option. We have civil service, unions, etc. She suggests outsourcing for the work Mr. Miller is proposing so that we can use that as a barometer.

The Council stated that they need to understand the bottom line before they can make decisions. Councilman Ramaglia stated that he will look at the spreadsheets the administrator will be providing to

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look for cuts. He needs actual numbers associated with each budget request and he believes that outsourcing is an option because the costs of hiring will only increase over time. Ms. Gage stated that she thinks we need to find a million dollars to achieve a workable budget. She will work with the CFO on that.

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.

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

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Moved: Signorino Seconded: Rosone  
Voted Aye: Erik, Smolinski, Ramaglia, Rosone, Signorino, Horton.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

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Agenda No. V

**Council Comments**

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 at 9:30: p.m.

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Moved: Ramaglia Seconded: Signorino  
Voted Aye: Erik, Smolinski, Ramaglia, Rosone, Signorino, Horton.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

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Approved: August 1, 2012

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MAYOR BETTINA BIERI  
PRESIDING OFFICER

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ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA  
TOWNSHIP CLERK