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

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting  
Date of Meeting: May 9, 2012  
Time of Meeting: 6:30 P.M.  
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 6

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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, Mayor Bettina Bieri.  
Absent: CarlLa Horton.  
Also Present: Township Administrator Nancy Gage, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia.

Agenda No. II

**Purpose**

Review of the proposed 2012 Municipal Budget.

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 Monica Goscicki, CFO.

Ms. Gage stated we are close to an combined increase of 1.5% which equates at this point to about \$100 increase for the average home. The Auditor recommends trying to get the increase under \$100 even though it is hard to determine averages this year as a result of the revaluation. Discussion ensued about vacancies and the effect of filling those or leaving them vacant. Ms. Gage stated that she has taken out appropriations for a LUA because she has not had an opportunity to fully assess the need for that position. She will make a recommendation for next years budget. She has budgeted for a health officer because we must fill that position. Other than that she recommends maintaining the status quo for staffing until she can get a better command of needs.

Ms. Gage directed Council to information provided by Ms. Goscicki about staffing. The police department is asking for four new officers; two to replace the retirements of Chief Chiosie and Sergeant Celano. They are asking for an additional two entry level officers to bring the department to 46 officers. Administrative staff requests come from planning, tax & recycling. All are seeking part time personnel. DPW has requested four laborers and a mechanic. IT has asked for a part time employee to assist with police needs. Questions arose about the need and demand for more assistance.

Councilman Smolinski asked how we would schedule a part time person in IT. Ms. Gage stated that the hours and scheduling would evolve during the interview process which would include Brian Jenkins, our Network Administrator and herself. Ms. Goscicki estimated the cost for a 28-hour week and at a rate of \$20 per hour which is the average in that business. Council President Signorino stated that revenues are down and he is not looking to add anyone new. This is for a new program. Discussion ensued about specific IT needs for West Milford Township. The proposed IT hire would be primarily to focus on police department needs but also serve as a backup to the Network Administrator. Ms. Gage stated that it is a reflection of the world today that we are becoming more dependent on technology. Councilman Ramaglia stated it may be more logical to start someone at 15 hours per week and then go from there. The Council agreed giving consensus to try a new person for 15 hours per week for six months to backup the Network Administrator. Councilman Smolinski asked that the person be subject to a background check.

Ms. Gage stated that there is one laborer vacancy in DPW. They have asked for four laborers, plus replacing the vacant position and a mechanic. For the salary for the vacant position we could almost get two laborers or one mechanic. She stated that staff has decreased in DPW but so has the workload. Eric Miller recommends that preparation work for road contracts be bid out as part of the contracts and the

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Minute Page No: Page 2 of 6

---

Administrator agrees with that concept. Mr. Storms, she said, agrees that at current staffing levels DPW cannot do that work. Councilman Smolinski stated that he would like to know the justifications and the difference between the functions of a laborer and those of a mechanic. Ms. Gage stated that those are two different issues. The head mechanic is excellent but the workload continues to increase. Our fleet is larger and older. Unlike laborers, she believes there is a need for a mechanic. Councilman Rosone agreed and said he believes that outsourcing for the laborers is a win/win for contractors and the municipality.

Mayor Bieri reviewed the recommendations and synopsised the comments. She asked if there is consensus to hire a mechanic and outsource laborers for road jobs. Councilman Ramaglia asked if Mr. Storms gave the Administrator a proposal for seasonal flagmen as promised. Ms. Gage stated that she has not received that data as yet but will follow up with Mr. Storms. Council President Signorino agrees that there is a need for a mechanic but he does not want to increase the manpower in the department. Ms. Gage stated that she agrees about flagmen but Mr. Storms should be able to accomplish that in his operating budget. The consensus of the Council was that Mr. Storms has to present a plan for flagmen as he promised.

Ms. Gage advised that in various administrative offices some departments feel that they have staffing needs. She has not heard complaints from public to substantiate that. This is a bad economy and we all have to do more with less. She cannot justify appropriations to add additional staff. She would like to maintain the status quo and the Council agreed.

Ms. Gage advised that there is a request for four police officers to replace two retirees and hire two entry-level officers. Councilwoman Erik stated that the retiree vacancies must be filled. Councilman Rosone stated that the Chief has asked to fill these vacancies through police academy. To do that it would be 9 months before an academy officer is on the road. He asked if it would be best to fill the retiree positions with seasoned officers. Chief Chiosie explained why he has recommended seasoned officers in the past and why now he believes it best to send new candidates to the academy. He stated that they interviewed potential candidates who have great skills, some college degrees, and the pay scale will be lower. Now they have a strong supervisory base and could operate with academy recruits. Ms. Gage opined that the cost to staff at 46 officers would be \$79,000 annually which would be half this year based on the time of the year. She stated that the operating budget reflects the ancillary costs for new officers. Council President Signorino stated that he would ask for some sacrifice and Chief Chiosie discussed the problems encountered by understaffing. He stated that they already encounter problems. Council President Signorino stated that he is not in favor of hiring two more police officers. Councilwoman Erik favors four new officers while Councilman Ramaglia agrees with Council President Signorino as does Councilman Rosone. Chief Chiosie asked them to reconsider. Mayor Bieri stated that bringing in the four would provide the proper service. Councilman Smolinski stated that he agrees that staffing should stay at 44. Mayor Bieri asked Chief Chiosie's opinion and he stated that the department needs 46. He recommends hiring two new officers to begin the academy.

Ms. Gage asked Council to look at the police operating budget. She provided new Edmunds sheets so that Council could compare to the old sheets and see where she made cuts. All proposed cuts are to operating expenses. Councilman Ramaglia stated that he did propose cuts to the Administrator and what strikes him in reviewing the data is that when there is a given appropriation they spend slightly over and then request a greater amount next year. Departments should not reallocate funds but should limit their expenditures within the appropriations. Discussion ensued about current policies for purchase orders. Ms. Gage stated that her policy throughout town is to do more with less.

Councilman Smolinski stated that last year the Council adopted more temporary budgets which caused belt tightening. He asked where we are with the temporary budgets. Ms. Gage said that we have some balances in some accounts and others have not been spent. Councilman Ramaglia asked about the annual \$800 appropriation for HPC noting that it is never spent and yet is repeatedly appropriated. Mayor Bieri stated that you have to have contingencies for unanticipated expenses. Council President Signorino lamented that cutting requests as opposed to cutting appropriations is not reducing the budget. Mayor Bieri stated that the CFO & Administrator have gone through the budget and made cuts that will not impact services. Now Council has to look at requested increases and capital requests and give direction for cuts. Discussion ensued about budgeting philosophies and contingencies. Council President Signorino stated that from a policy standpoint he is not looking at putting in any new programs.

Ms. Gage advised that the police department has requested six new vehicles; 4 cars and 2 SUVs. She met with the mechanic who agreed that we should replace two police cars but thinks we can extend this year on the other two. He agrees that we should purchase two new SUVs. The SUVs would be funded in capital. We rotate old police cars into our fleet for other departments. Some departments are complaining that their vehicles are in need of replacement. Councilman Rosone agreed that if there is a

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Minute Page No: Page 3 of 6

---

dire need to replace 2 police cars and he supports that. Council President Signorino asked the Chief to find some money in the operating budget to put toward the two new cars and the Chief said that would be impossible.

Ms. Gage stated that the maintenance contract line has increased because some of those funds used to be in IT accounts. There are some new contracts because of new equipment where warranties are expiring as part of the communications overhaul. She spoke extensively with the Captain and Chief about the necessity and they believe it necessary to maintain those contracts. Verizon will not service their equipment without a maintenance contract.

Appropriations for the clothing allowance did go up in anticipation of hiring new officers and to comply with contractual obligations.

School for employees in the police department is significantly up and the chief did outline the proposed need and she noted that the equipment line went down. Ms. Gage outlined the proposed training and the justifications. Councilman Smolinski stated that FBI Leeda report suggested DRE training. Chief Chiosie stated that we are getting that through the state police. There will be cost to get the officer to the location there will be no cost for the classes. Mayor Bieri stated that we had a DRE in the past and she advocates for more than one DRE.

Ms. Gage stated that she is seeking direction and input with regard to proposed increases in the police department budget. To attain an increase of \$100 to the average household she needs to cut \$122,000. Cutting the 2 police vehicles gives us \$80,000. If Council is okay with the police department budget she has other suggestions for cuts.

Ms. Gage noted that the fire departments and first aid have asked for significant operation increases. Fire companies have asked for an additional \$30,000 this year and their capital requests have not decreased. Their increased operating request does not contain justifications. Under statute we cannot go over \$120,000 and West Milford has been traditionally giving them \$90,000. They are now asking for the maximum. She thinks it is a lot in one year. Councilman Ramaglia stated that they did not all take advantage of cost saving measures through JIF so they are not making an equal effort. Ms. Gage stated that they have not fully used prior capital appropriations which can be made available to them this year. Signorino stated that times are tough. Nancy asked for permission to work with fire departments to reduce their requests including physicals every year. She will ask them to consider rotating physicals every three years to spread that cost. These annual physicals are not required nor do we get an insurance reduction. The Council gave consensus.

Ms. Gage noted that the West Milford First Aid is seeking more in clothing allowance. They have not spent allocations in the past. Councilwoman Erik stated that cadets should not be getting clothing allowances or LOSAP. Councilman Smolinski stated that there is a 100-point system and driving an ambulance is not a requirement to make the points. Ms. Gage stated that they are asking for more than they need.

Ms. Gage noted that the fire departments ask for \$80,000 every year. Last year they expended \$57,000 and the year before \$66,000. She recommended appropriating \$70,000 this year. First aid has been allocated \$22,000 every year and has historically expended \$20,700. This year they are asking for \$35,000 which is a significant increase. She thinks they are over estimating their needs. They are also asking for stipend increase from \$25,000 to \$35,000. That is another large percentage increase. The Council gave consensus to have Ms. Gage cut their request. Councilman Smolinski stated that membership has increased thereby compelling their request. The Council noted that UGL did not ask for increases and gave consensus not to increase annual appropriations.

Ms. Gage thanked Council for these policy decisions noting that she is happy with these numbers now. She has consulted with Chuck Ferraioli who has advised on the goals. These cuts get us to our goal. She asked if Council wants to introduce a budget close to that number next week. Ms. Goscicki will update her report and email it to Council. She will give changes to Mr. Ferraioli to prepare the budget document. The Auditor, she said, is eager for us to introduce. Cuts can be made between introduction and adoption and those dates will prevent us doing estimated tax bills which is another cost.

Ms. Gage stated that she has reviewed the capital requests made by departments and finds that they are for the most part legitimate. She directed Council to a list of old capital accounts with balances. Some departments did not know that requests had been approved. The first request on the capital list is for a street sweeper. She spoke with Keith Hansen, the head mechanic, who recommends a different sweeper which can also be used as a backup VAC. It has more capacity. Mr. Hanson is estimating the cost to be less than requested and he will research the potential of purchasing a demo for a greater savings.

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Minute Page No: Page 4 of 6

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Councilman Smolinski questioned why Mr. Hansen is doing this work adding that he thought it was someone else's responsibility. Ms. Gage advised that she assigned this task to expedite the process and the Council gave consensus to proceed.

Ms. Gage noted that the 2011 operating budget contained appropriations for snow removal that we did not use this year. She & Mr. Ferraioli agree that we should not remove that from operating because of the impact next year. She recommends using that in excess of \$500,000 to address funding capital requests along with old ordinance funds. Additionally, we have the request to begin a road program including road work and the sedimentation basin projects. To prevent increasing debt she recommends not exceeding \$250,000 beyond the \$1.24 million. Discussion ensued about specific capital requests. Ms. Gage advised that she did not include the police SOU truck which would cost \$20,000. She took that out based on comments she heard from Council at the last meeting. Her proposed funding includes all requests except the SOU truck. The capital program includes a new sweeper, one new dump truck, new dump bodies, a mason dump truck a new SUV for OEM, 2 SUV's for police and other equipment, an ATV for recreation, funding to complete the new fuel security system, and a generator for company 6. All to be funded from old capital and the snow account.

This brings the increase to below \$100 and keeps debt level. Councilman Smolinski stated that he asked for additional information that he never received for special operations in the police department. Ms. Gage stated that information did come in today and the Chief is available to address questions. Chief Chiosie stated that his staff has been gathering information. The department deployed the SWAT team once this year. Manpower hours are hard to calculate because they are called in after the initial assessment. They were called 3 times last year and 4 in 2010. He listed some of the cases that required the SWAT team. Training does not incur overtime. When a team is called out they try to use officers who are on duty. It is not recommended to use volunteers to protect safety and evidence and they need that precision for the safety of officers and citizens. Councilman Smolinski stated that he wants a breakdown of annual costs. Chief Chiosie said that the cost of training annually is bullets, \$2,000. The man hours are part of the regular shifts. Training is a major component of law enforcement. Councilman Smolinski stated that he has no numbers so doesn't know what to say. He is not disputing the need but wants to know the costs. Councilman Smolinski stated that he has estimated that this training costs a quarter of a million dollars annually. Chief Chiosie stated that training is for new members and the current officers get training on regular shifts. He said that when you have your certification you have it for life it is not a continual cost. Councilman Smolinski stated he did not broach this subject, it was highlighted in the FBI Leeda report. Chief Chiosie stated in 2005 the cost was \$2,600, in 2007 it cost \$3,999, in 2008 it cost \$4,998, in 2009 \$4,500 and in 2010 the cost was \$850. Last year they upgraded masks to communicate with those above water at a cost of \$7,150 for a total that year of \$8,700. The mask upgrades will last 7-10 years. So far this year the program has cost \$1,284.72.

Ms. Gage recommended that proceeding with the budget and having the Police Chief give more detailed information in the interim. Councilman Smolinski stated that he wants a list of calls and the manpower assigned to each call. He also wants an average per man cost per hour.

Ms. Gage asked if she has consensus to proceed with the capital requests. Councilwoman Erik stated that she has a problem with the ambulance. Councilman Smolinski stated that West Milford First Aid needs two new ambulances now. Councilmembers Ramaglia, Rosone & Smolinski stated that they support purchasing a new ambulance this year. Councilwoman Erik stated that she contacted vendors and believes that the estimate is very high and will fund a vehicle that has all the bells & whistles. Councilman Smolinski stated that it does not have bells & whistles, it is to provide for the safety of all first aid responders. He said that because of Councilwoman Erik's relationship with first aid she should recuse because she is using her position for a personal vendetta. He stated that he asked for a legal opinion and was advised that he does not have to recuse. Councilwoman Erik stated that she spoke with vendors and was told that the body has a lifetime warranty. West Milford First Aid already got rid of two ambulances that had warranties. Councilman Smolinski stated that the lifetime warranty covers the frame, sheet metal and structure. Those two bodies were remounted in past and they are 1997 & 1998 put on 1993 chassis. Councilwoman Erik stated that she is on a rig committee for other squads and in her opinion no one has looked at options. The price being estimated is wrong. The basic cost for an ambulance is \$150,000 not \$230,000. When you add all the options it comes up to \$230,000. Ms. Gage said she will ask for a quote. Councilman Ramaglia stated that Councilwoman Erik should have gone through the Administrator and followed protocol rather than reaching out to vendors independently. Councilman Smolinski took issue with Councilwoman Erik stating that she has a vendetta. Mayor Bieri stated that there are 3 votes to proceed and we can get additional information. The budget can be amended if we find out that it will cost less.



