
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: February 19, 2008
Time of Meeting: 7:30 P.M.
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Mayor 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 January 31, 2008; 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.

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Philip Weisbecker, Joseph Smolinski, Salvatore Schimmenti, Marilyn Lichtenberg, Robert Nolan, Carmelo Scangarello. Mayor Bettina Bieri.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Township Administrator Richard Kunze, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia, Chief Financial Officer Arthur Magnotti.

Purpose

Mayor Bieri advised that the purpose of this meeting is to review the proposed 2008 Municipal Budget and she deferred to Richard Kunze, Township Administrator. Administrator Kunze recommended that the first aid budgets be reviewed first.

West Milford First Aid

Council President Smolinski recused from this discussion.

Mr. Ken Cunio of the West Milford First Aid addressed the Council. Mr. Cunio advised that the appropriation for equipment is used to purchase, maintain and repair the squad's equipment. They plan to continue their replacement program. The school for employees is used to do CPR training and obtain EMT certifications and re-certifications. This line item also pays for manuals and supplies. The insurance line item pays for malpractice, umbrella liability and insurance on small equipment. They get fuel from the Township and the Township also repairs their radios. He stated that they have an old ambulance with high mileage that should be replaced this year. He stated that there are 65 volunteer members in this organization who devote over 700 hours to West Milford. Each applicant is required to undergo a physical at a cost of \$65 each. He anticipates ten new members this year and thus has requested a \$650 appropriation for physicals. Councilman Nolan noted that the document he has before him does not contain the information being presented. Administrator Kunze advised that fuel, insurance, and vehicle maintenance are reflected in the appropriate sections of the municipal budget. Mayor Bieri asked the Administrator to insert supplemental sheets in future budgets to assist Council during these meetings. Administrator Kunze directed the Council to tab 14 in the budget document to review the capital request of \$150,000 for a new ambulance. Mr. Cunio reviewed the types of vehicles previously purchased and advised that, because they wish to have a diesel operated vehicle, they have to order an "F" series pick-up truck. This new vehicle should last about 5-7 years. Councilman Scangarello noted that the current vehicle has 135,000 miles, has a 2000 chassis and a 1992 box. Mr. Cunio advised that the first aid squad spent \$31,000 on repairs for all four rigs in 2007. The Township paid for \$15,000 of the repairs. Administrator Kunze advised that this is reflected in the vehicle maintenance budget and advised that the process is that the first aid squad presents their bills and the Township reimburses them up to \$15,000. With regard to the stipend given to each squad, they present their expenses and if they meet or exceed \$25,000 the township pays them that amount. The clothing allowance is based on criteria but each eligible member gets approximately \$427. Mayor Bieri asked the CFO to provide her with a copy of the financials filed by the West Milford First Aid. In reply to a query posed by Mayor Bieri, Mr. Cunio advised that they use fundraising money to pay for operating expenses not covered by the stipend received from the municipality. In addition to the insurance coverage included in the municipal JIF coverage, the first aid squads pay for supplemental insurance. Mr. Cunio provided an overview of first aid squad activities in 2007 advising that the volunteers invested approximately 6,842 hours. The Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Cunio for attending tonight's meeting.

Upper Greenwood Lake Ambulance Corps.

Mr. Ted Hajek, President, addressed the Council on this budget. He advised that this volunteer ambulance corps serves Upper Greenwood Lake and is funded with public donations and an annual allowance from the Township. He reviewed their activities in 2007 and their duties. He advised that, in addition to those activities, they provide mutual aid to other communities. All members are volunteers who must attend mandatory training. They actively raise funds through fund drives and

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renting their meeting room out. Their facility is also used as a polling site and an emergency evacuation site. He reviewed last year's expenses totaling \$63,270. The Township contributed approximately \$45,000 and all other expenses were paid with funds raised. He reviewed the line items in the budget noting that the budget request this year is equal to that of last year. He advised that the UGL Ambulance Corps is seeking capital funding for renovations to their building. He advised that the Health Department did not approve their kitchen for functions and events because it must be updated. He is requesting \$3,868 to purchase and install a three compartment sink and a washer/dryer so that they can meet local and state requirements. The UGL Ambulance Corps owns their building and vehicles. They spent \$6,400 on vehicle repairs last year. The vehicle is getting old and they will be requesting that the Township purchase a new ambulance for their use in 2009. Councilman Nolan asked why UGL pays for their own insurance while the West Milford First Aid ambulance is covered by the Township. Administrator Kunze advised that, if the Township owns the vehicles and the buildings, then the Township can assume the maintenance costs. If not, the law only allows a certain level of contributions from the municipality to the volunteer groups.

Fire Prevention

Michael Woch, the Township Fire Marshal, addressed the Council on this budget. Mr. Woch advised that the stationery line item is used to purchase NFPA codes which are being converted to a web-based system this year. The clothing allowance is required and the clothing must be NFPA rated. While most training is done through the state at no cost, some courses do have an associated fee. Fees for services is primarily used for printing pictures which are now digital. In response to Council President Smolinski, Mr. Woch advised that overtime is usually the result of fire investigations, Township events, night calls, and nuisance complaints. Administrator Kunze advised that the overall salary appropriation is reduced this year because Mr. Woch will be retiring.

Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

Mr. Woch advised that there are no proposed increases in this budget this year. The appropriation for equipment is used for any equipment needed in an emergency situation. Food and provision is used if there is a major incident where a shelter is needed, during search and rescues, or large fire events. Training for search and rescue is quite expensive. The appropriation for hazmat supplies purchases the consumables used. He advised that it is difficult to predict for this budget because most events are unforeseen. Councilman Smolinski asked if OEM has billed insurance companies for reimbursements. Mr. Woch advised that, just last week, his office billed for cleaning up a spill. When the funds are received, they will be used to replace the equipment used. He stated that the insurance companies generally pay. He has requested a capital appropriation to purchase a new generator for the Macopin fire company. He has requested a capital appropriation for an emergency response vehicle that can be used for off-road rescue operations and at Township events. Basically, it is a rescue ATV with a built-in backboard for medical supplies. This vehicle would be housed at the West Milford First Aid building and would likely be used more often by the First Aid responders. The Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Woch for attending tonight's meeting.

Volunteer Fire Companies – Fire Company Administration

Fire Commissioner, Ed Steines, and Deputy Fire Commissioner Peter McGuinness, addressed the Council on this budget. Mr. Steines reviewed the mission of the volunteer fire companies. He advised that there are six fire stations in West Milford with 200 volunteers who fall under the direction of the office of public safety. Members must be trained and ice and water rescue is part of that training. They are trained in motor vehicle extraction, hazmat incidents, and rescue training. They have nineteen pieces of fire apparatus. Members are subject to officials. He advised that cuts have been made to the budget that will not affect the day-to-day operations of the department. He has reduced the fire sirens appropriation by \$1,000 because the system will be obsolete when the radio system updates are complete. The clothing allowance pays for replacement items for the Commissioner and Deputy. The appropriation for chemicals, drugs, and cleaning supplies fluctuates depending on the number of incidents in a given year. These funds are used for speedy-dry and flares. The appropriation for repair of vehicles is used for the chief and squad vehicles and that line item can be reduced by \$1,000. In response to Councilman Nolan, Administrator Kunze advised that he will provide Council with a listing of the vehicles provided by the Township. Councilman Nolan expressed concern that he has seen these vehicles outside of town. Councilman Scangarello noted that some companies have their own vehicles. Administrator Kunze stated that, with the exception of attending training, those vehicles funded by the Township should not be seen outside of West Milford. Mr. Steines advised that all pumps, ladders and hoses must pass NFPA testing and, if they fail, they must be repaired. The school for employees line item pay for both annual training for existing members and new members. Alarm to recall is an insurance expense and the appropriation for maintenance contracts covers annual service contracts on equipment. Mr. Steines advised that he has requested an increase in the closing allowance to bring the individual appropriation in line with that paid to the first aid squads. Mr. Kunze stated that the expenditures over the past few years have been consistent so the current level of funding is sufficient. The council requested that they be provided with the number of qualified people so that it can be assured that each received \$427. Mr. Steines advised that the appropriation under the Graves Act is the annual replacement program for

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turnout gear. This program anticipates replacement of thirty sets each year and he expects that this appropriation will be reduced in future years because most members now have new turnout gear. Future allocations will be for new members or replacement gear. The funding for physicals is for new members as there are no current requirements for existing members to be retrained. However, physicals are offered to members who request one when a Fire Chief requests one for a member. The appropriation for communication repair may be reduced next year when the new communication system is fully in place.

Administrator Kunze advised that there are a number of capital requests for this budget. The first capital request is for the annual equipment allocation wherein each of the six fire companies is provided with \$10,000 to help meet their capital needs. The next is a replacement engine for West Milford volunteer fire company #6. In response to Councilman Nolan's query about the high estimate for this replacement, Mr. Steines advised that the request is for a replacement tanker which can carry more water. The current equipment has 33,000 miles and 1,320 hours and the replacement is part of the schedule. Mr. Steines recommended that the Council consider reviewing the entire replacement schedule. He noted that some years ago, a study was conducted that resulted in the recommended replacement schedule of twenty years. There have been recent changes that have resulted in vehicles being given longer life if they pass the inspections. The Council discussed the possibility of having a new study conducted to determine the need to replace those vehicles scheduled for replacement within the next five years. The down payment for this fire truck would probably cover the entire cost of the study. The study could rank all trucks that are scheduled for replacement in upcoming years. Discussion ensued about standardization and concerns were raised that this practice has caused a recent trend of receiving only one bid in response to our specifications. Mr. McGuinness explained his vision of standardization and the benefits to the community. The Council noted that the Pierce vehicles have the same life span as other fire trucks but cost more. In response to Councilman Nolan, Mr. Steines advised that the Chiefs develop the specifications for the trucks but he believes that the Commissioner's office should be more involved in the process. Mr. McGuinness stated that each firehouse should have a rescue vehicle and a specialty vehicle. Mr. Steines commented that West Milford owns a lot of fire apparatus at this time and he recommended that the entire program be reviewed. Mayor Bieri asked Mr. Steines to make recommendations to the Council to be discussed at a future workshop meeting.

The next capital item is for air masks. Mr. Steines and Mr. McGuinness showed the Council the air masks currently being used. They advised that each firefighter does not currently have his own mask and OSHA recommends that each firefighter be fitted with his own mask. Mr. Steines advised that he expects that this will soon be mandated. He is asking that a program be established to purchase sixty masks per year at a cost of about \$6,000 each for about three years. A request is submitted to purchase an SUV for the Fire Commissioner who is currently using a surplus police vehicle with 109,000 miles to respond to emergency calls. The final capital request is for six thermal imaging cameras which are used to assist in locating victims in a smoke-filled environment and to locate hot spots in buildings. The current cameras are now nine years old. Councilman Nolan stated that he would be more amenable to spending more money on equipment, especially air masks and thermal imaging cameras, if the purchase of a fire engine is deemed unnecessary. The Mayor and Council thanked Mr. Steines and Mr. McGuinness for attending tonight's meeting.

Police Patrol

Police Chief Paul Costello addressed the Council on this budget. Chief Costello commended the Council for questioning the need for a new fire truck. He advised that the police department works twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year. They respond to every call including emergencies and in 2007 handled approximately 13,600 service calls. He has begun the process of revamping policies in procedures in this department that have not been updated since the 1970's. He reviewed the staffing levels in his department and advised that he anticipates two retirements in 2008. Training was a challenge in 2007 because of increased mandates and the impact on overtime has been significant. He reviewed statistics for the patrol division, investigation unit, and detective bureau. He advised that the police department remains very active in the Township schools.

Administrator Kunze advised that there has been a decline in overtime expenditures since 2005 due to increases in staffing, effective management, improved contracts and supervision. The salary and wage line item has increased because staffing levels have been brought up to approved levels. In response to questions from Council, Chief Costello explained patrol differential, unused comp time, holiday pay, and staffing for court appearances. Chief Costello reviewed the individual line items in the police patrol budget. He noted that he is continuing efforts to attain accreditation from the state chief's association which will result in premium savings. The fees for service line item increased because of the need for medical and psychological evaluations in 2007. He advised that police vehicles logged about 515,000 miles last year and each car lasts approximately 2 years.

Detective Bureau

