
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: May 17, 2007
Time of Meeting: 7:30 P.M.
Minute Page No: Page 1 of 4

Council President Smolinski called the Special Meeting of the West Milford Township Council to order.

Adequate Notice Statement

Council President Smolinski 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 advertised in the Herald News in its issue of May 13, 2007; 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

Council President Smolinski led all in attendance in a salute to the flag.

Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Philip Weisbecker, Joseph Smolinski, Salvatore Schimmenti, James Warden, Robert Nolan, Carmelo Scangarello.
Absent: Mayor Joseph DiDonato.
Also Present: Township Administrator Richard Kunze, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia, Township Attorney Fred Semrau, Chief Financial Officer Arthur Magnotti.

West Milford Board of Education Adequate Notice Statement and Roll Call

Mr. Steve Cea read the BOE's adequate notice statement and took a roll call of the Board members. The Board did not have a quorum but Mr. Cea advised that one member is expected to arrive late. Mr. Semrau advised that the meeting can continue, a roll call can be taken again when that member arrives, and the Board can then, if they have a quorum, join in the discussion.

Purpose

Mr. Semrau advised that the purpose of this meeting is to review the defeated school budget and to discuss municipal business. He noted that Council President Smolinski had previously recused himself from discussion of the school budget. Therefore, he will not chair that portion of today's meeting. Under this form of government, the Chair nominates a Council person to Chair the meeting in his/her stead and will seek the advise and consent of the Council. Council President nominated Councilman Scangarello to chair the meeting during the discussion of the defeated school budget.

Voted Aye: Smolinski, Schimmenti, Scangarello.
Voted Nay: Weisbecker, Nolan, Warden
Motion carried.

School Budget

Councilman Scangarello invited Mr. Donohue forward to discuss the defeated school budget. He explained that the Township Council had hired Mr. Donohue to review the budget and recommend cuts to the Council. Mr. Donohue directed the Council and the Board to his report and reviewed the line items therein. He recommended cuts in the amount of \$135,000 and noted that the Board is not bound by specific line item reductions. They must abide by the total cut recommended by the Council but they can make those cuts to line items in the budget as they see fit.

Mr. Cea advised that Board member Murray had arrived. He took another roll call of Board members and the Board of Education had a quorum of members in attendance.

Councilman Scangarello opened the discussion to the Board of Education. Schools Superintendent, Mr. Kamp, read an opening statement. He expressed surprise that Mr. Donohue had initially proposed cuts in the amount of \$75,000. He noted that voter turn-out was very low for this election even though the Board had made presentations to many varied segments of this community. He reviewed the steps taken to share information with residents. Last year, he said, the budget was defeated by 300 votes; this year it was defeated by 3 votes. This budget was crafted carefully with no new programs or initiatives. The average increase to the average home is \$160. The budget is below the CAP and the per-pupil cost in West Milford is \$1,289 less than the state average. West Milford has the leanest administrative cost per pupil in Passaic County and he requested that the Council make no further cuts to the budget presented.

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Mr. Cea distributed his response to the proposed budget cuts to each Council and Board member. He reviewed the items in his report individually and asked the Council if they had any questions. Councilman Nolan asked why the budget does not anticipate income from the worker compensation pool to which Mr. Cea replied, that line item is driven by the Division of Insurance. Claims must age for five years before being collected. The percentage of reimbursement for claims is determined on a case by case basis and the numbers have been steadily dropping. The Board is not expecting any income in that line for the next year. The school has a record of having fewer claims than premium payments.

Councilman Schimmenti advised that he is a father, voter and Councilman. He concurred with the statements made by Mr. Kamp but noted that the Council has a job to do. To that end, the Council hired Mr. Donohue to review the budget and recommend cuts. Some Board members interjected that the voters will not feel the impact until September when services are being cut.

Councilman Weisbecker thanked the Board of Education for meeting with the Council tonight. He reminded everyone that the budget was defeated by 3 votes, which is still a defeat of the budget. He stated that he is not confident that the budget should be cut by \$135,000 and recommended cuts of \$62,500. Councilman Nolan stated that he believes that Mr. Donohue's first recommendation of cuts in the amount of \$75,000 seems reasonable. Councilman Warden stated that the Council hired Mr. Donohue to recommend cuts. He noted that Mr. Bailey came before the Council last fall asking for support for the installation of an artificial turf field at the school. At that time, Mr. Bailey indicated that the school would find the \$35,000 down payment in the school budget. He asked why the school had not found that money in this budget. Mr. Kamp noted that the school anticipated realizing savings in maintenance of fields had the artificial turf field been installed. Councilman Warden expresses support for Mr. Donohue's recommended cuts in the amount of \$135,000.

Councilman Nolan stated that the Board did a good job drafting this budget. He stated that he is not surprised that there are not a lot of cuts that can be made. He recommended cutting line numbers 07550 and 07626 for a total cut of \$61,640. Councilman Scangarello expressed empathy for the Board of Education's sentiments. He noted that the Council is still working on the municipal budget. Mr. Donohue originally recommended cutting \$75,000 from the school budget and the Council recommended that he find additional cuts. He recommended that the Council cut the original \$75,000 and an additional \$10,000 in the cafeteria aides line item. A poll vote of the Council resulted in a majority recommendation that the school budget be cut by \$67,500.

The Board members expressed appreciation for the Council's consideration of their budget. They noted that the cost for gas recently escalated by \$0.09 per gallon and heating oil saw recent increases of \$0.04 per gallon. If one additional child were to come into the school in September, there is an associated cost. The BOE cut the budget to the core this year.

Councilman Scangarello asked for a five-minute recess to have the Council's resolution amended to reflect the proposed cuts. After the break, the Council and Board resumed the meeting with all present as before.

Agenda No. IV

~ Resolution 2007-169 ~

RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, STATE OF NEW JERSEY CERTIFYING THE 2007 / 2008 SCHOOL TAXES TO THE PASSAIC COUNTY BOARD OF TAXATION

WHEREAS, on April 17, 2007, the general fund tax levy for the base budget and additional spending proposals of the West Milford School District were defeated by the voters at the annual school election, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A et seq. the Board of Education did submit the budget documents to the Municipal Governing Body for review and certification of the taxes to the County Board of Taxation; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council of the Township of West Milford have reviewed the defeated school budget and have hired a consultant to assist them in reviewing the aforementioned budget; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds and determines that the following line items contained in the annual school budget for the school year 2007/2008 can be reduced without negative affect upon the thorough and efficient provision of public education in the Township of West Milford School District:

