
TOWNSHIP OF WEST MILFORD, COUNTY OF PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting
Date of Meeting: February 17, 2014
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 February 9, 2014; 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, Michael Hensley, Vivienne Erk, Michele Dale,
Luciano Signorino, CarlLa Horton, Mayor Bettina Bieri.
Absent: None.
Also Present: Township Administrator Robert Casey, Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia,
Chief of Police Timothy Storbeck, Eric Miller, Supervising Engineering Aide

Agenda No. II

Purpose

Review of the proposed 2014 Municipal Budget.

Agenda No. III

Review of 2014 Municipal Budget

Overview – Interim Township Administrator Robert Casey said he will take a few moments to look at the big picture. He will review the Township's financial condition as of last year. To that end, he has taken the annual financial statements (AFS) from the past five years and created a spreadsheet to allow for comparisons. The spreadsheet shows all cash flows for prior years. He reviewed the history of the Township's surplus funds advising that the 2012 & 2013 numbers almost mirror each other which, he said, is a good thing. Mr. Casey explained that surplus is the funds that are available that are not encumbered by a liability, expense, or expenditure. It varies from year to year depending on expenditures. He reviewed the various sources of surplus funds including MRA (Municipal Revenues Anticipated). He explained that West Milford collected \$186,208 in delinquent taxes above that which was anticipated. The Township collected more in taxes than budgeted in 2013. He reviewed current & prior year cancellations. Municipal budgeting, Mr. Casey said, is a closed circuit. You will either expend what is budgeted or it is held for the next year. In the 3rd year leftover funds are sent back into surplus. At end of 2013 there was \$1,016,000 from the 2012 budget. MRNA (Municipal revenues not anticipated) equaled \$318,000. Generally, MRNA funds come from smaller items in the budget. Inter-funds returned is an accounting issue that sometimes occurs but his research indicates that inter-funds advanced in West Milford this year is zero. That means the books were closed out well at the end of the year. The Township generated \$2.2 million that was sent back to surplus.

Mr. Casey directed the Council to page 2 of his report advising that revenues budgeted and earned in 2013 are almost equal as are the calculations for delinquent taxes. Taxes outstanding for year end are \$1,160,547 which means tax collection has held up well throughout the year. There was \$150,000 in insurance refunds. For three years in a row the claims history has been good but one cannot budget for that under state regulations. FEMA money came in and is properly reflected but more is forthcoming. Staff is attempting to collect \$218,000 from FEMA now.

Mr. Casey said that page 3 provides insight to the status of delinquent taxes. West Milford generally holds a tax sale in March. At the beginning of last year there was \$1.3 million in delinquent taxes and currently there are \$1.5 million in liens owned by the township. That number has been growing at about a rate of \$200,000 per year since 2008. After the Township owns a tax lien for 6 months the Township can institute foreclosure proceedings. The tax collector will be issuing a report soon on the most recent foreclosure list. One budget recommendation is to prepare for the next in-REM foreclosure list. At end of 2013 taxes not collected were \$1.1 million which is good especially in this economy. In other words, 46.48% of outstanding liens were collected which is very decent. He reviewed cash liabilities in the

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current fund. They appear to be in a good position right now based on the 5 year history. State & federal grants receivable is \$1.9 million which is very good. It is important to actually get the grant money.

Interim Administrator Casey reviewed liabilities. He noted that the revaluation had an effect on this number with the number being the same for the past 3 years. All cash positions are in decent shape and the books are looking good. Appropriation reserves is the amount in the 2013 budget that is held to cover expenses from 2013 and will go to surplus next year. That number is down from last year which may ultimately affect next year's surplus.

Mr. Casey advised that the 2013 budget was \$32,174,000. One must back out the reserves for uncollected taxes and anticipate 100% of property tax collection by law. Therefore, the budget, without reserves, is \$30,284,000. The Township is expending 90% of our budget and that is very high. Those numbers indicate that costs & allocations are very close. He opined that most private companies would not operate within such tight constraints. The Council has cut the budget so much that expenditures are pushing up against it. Departmental budgets are very close and are operating within a 4% margin.

Mr. Casey said that the first item he looks at in the capital fund is capital surplus. That is money that has not been committed for any purpose. It can be used in the general or it can be spent. In the past few years Council has moved money from capital surplus to the general fund. The second area that warrants attention is the capital improvement fund. Bond issues require a 5% down and the Council must budget for that. There were no expenditures in this line in 2013. That \$97,000 equates to \$2 million worth of bonds.

The last page of Mr. Casey's spreadsheet pertains to bonds and the good news is collections have remained stable. In his opinion, West Milford has bridged the foreclosure crisis. Collections were healthy last year. From a financial standpoint the Township is starting the year off in fairly good shape.

Mr. Casey said he instructed department heads to make budget requests based on needs. The governing body is getting the complete request. His theory is that each department must educate the governing body about their needs, the administrator tries to achieve balance, and the ultimate decision is that of Council.

2014 Police Department Budget Request - Chief Storbeck addressed the Council saying that he is hoping to restore manpower back to 48 officers. He reviewed the financial outline that delineates the costs and advised that he would need approval to hire 4 officers to achieve the goal. He explained the hiring process which takes about 3 months and said he is hoping to get additional officers into the fall class in Passaic County police academy. Councilwoman Dale asked to obtain a copy of the FBI-Leeda report. Chief Storbeck said that the department is now staffed with 44 officers: 42 are currently on road and 2 are still in the academy. Mayor Bieri asked for history of staffing levels in the police department. Councilwoman Dale asked how levels got low. Chief Storbeck said that there were a lot of retirements in 2010. Mayor Bieri reviewed the history of the staffing levels and the studies done that indicate we need 46 to 48 officers in this jurisdiction. Chief Storbeck said that two officers are eligible to retire this year.

Chief Storbeck said he is asking for a \$15,000 increase in patrol overtime. He said that when manpower became low the Township stopped offering the REAL program which is like DARE. Last year the BOE agreed to assign a retired police officer to that detail. The BOE does not have that funding this year. Councilwoman Dale asked why we don't assign officers to REAL if our force has increased. Chief Storbeck not all officers are available with two in the academy. The Chief is proposing to fund the REAL with existing officers working this detail on overtime on their days off. The police department wants to be involved and wants to offer this program to the youth. By scheduling on officer's off time, he can continue that program. Mayor Bieri said when we had 48 officers the Township offered these programs. Chief Storbeck said the two academy officers will graduate during the first week of March and then do 12 weeks of in-house training. They will not be available for assignment this school year. He said that he and his staff have tried to be creative to keep the program alive. Councilman Signorino said he would like to see a better rapport with police and residents. He would like to see public outreach programs improved.

Councilwoman Dale said she has noticed that call volume is down significantly. Chief Storbeck said that can be attributed to the reduced force which has made the department more reactive instead of proactive. He said that motor vehicle summonses are down. Chief Storbeck explained how the staffing levels affected traffic enforcement manpower and he said that all calls are reflected on the callout sheets.

Chief Storbeck said that the handheld portable radio batteries have exceeded their life expectancy. The medical transport system is used for search & rescue operations. He is asking for an increase for technical supplies because those supplies are also beyond life expectancy. Schools for detectives is a new account that he has broken out to track these costs more effectively. The school for employees provides training for traffic control & services. The increase to fees for services is for medical & psychological testing for officers in the hopes he gets new staff. He said he only requested four vehicles this year and he said it is important to maintain and replace vehicles on a regular basis. We used to

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replace the police cars at 100,000 miles and now it is closer to 130,000 miles before a vehicle is replaced. Mayor Bieri said if we don't replace vehicles regularly there will be one year with a large request to replace old vehicles. Chief Storbeck concurred adding that the police department puts about 100,000 miles per year on vehicles. The cars are rotated in different sectors to keep mileage evenly spread among the vehicles in the fleet. Councilwoman Dale asked if call volume is down, wouldn't mileage be too and Chief Storbeck said mileage is down. The Engineering Aide, Eric Miller said that police cars run for hours so the hours of service on each vehicle is far greater than the mileage but there is no mechanism to reflect that use. Discussion ensued about callouts and traffic enforcement. Councilwoman Dale said there must be some benefit if we increase the staffing levels & vehicles. Mayor Bieri said that the benefits are not always tangible adding that if you have manpower, you are proactive and have more programs. Councilwoman Dale said she would like to understand the decreased call volume and Councilman Signorino asked for data for 4-5 years rather than a 2 year comparison.

Chief Storbeck said that the appropriations for special officers will decrease by \$5,300. Councilman Hensley asked if there is a way to get information about staffing levels, officers, and cars in service from 2000 to date. Councilwoman Dale said that five years would be sufficient but Councilman Hensley said the department has been understaffed for 4 of the past 5 years. Councilwoman Dale agreed saying that it is hard to understand the requests without historic data. She said she has highlighted 15 line items where there are increases being sought including police patrol and clothing. Chief Storbeck said the requested increase for clothing would be to cover uniforms for new officers so it is based on the Council approving his staffing request. Councilwoman Dale asked Chief Storbeck to review his budget line item by line item and explain increases or where money allocated in the past has not been expended. Chief Storbeck said he will update his memo. Interim Administrator Casey said the police budget request, without cars, is up about \$60,000.

Capital requests – Chief Storbeck said the M-16's he is proposing to replace are Vietnam era and he has been requesting that they be replaced at a rate of two every year which has been happening for past few years. The cost is \$2,492 for both. The existing ones are on loan from the federal government and will be returned when we purchase new. Radar units are to replace outdated units and that has been an ongoing replacement plan with a couple every year at a cost of \$5,331 for both. He is requesting replacement office furniture noting that some of the furniture is so dated it precedes at least three chiefs. He is seeking to purchase desks & chairs this year. Chief Storbeck said he is seeking to replace AirSoft equipment which is used for realistic force on force training at a cost \$2,952 adding that this would be a one-time purchase. The training will always be for a limited number of personnel at any one given time.

Chief Storbeck said he will get details to Council as requested and the Council thanked Chief Storbeck.

2014 Engineering Division Budget Request – Interim Administrator Casey said that Mr. Miller will be presenting both the engineering and capital budget requests. Engineering Aide Eric Miller addressed the Council directing them to his memorandum. Mr. Miller said that engineering does not have many operating line items but their biggest issue is personnel. He said he has never asked for staff before because his department has always done more with less. Staff is now reduced to 2.6 people. Last year, an engineering aide was assigned to DPW and it is difficult for the department to maintain the standards with this shortage of staff. He said that as other departments see a reduction in manpower due to retirements, there are more functions assigned to his department. For years the department of public works & engineering was always supervised by an in-house engineer. Engineering has maintained services since the engineer retired. The majority of the in-house engineer's time was spent overseeing DPW and, Mr. Miller opined, DPW is now dysfunctional. The reason he supported the former administrator's decision to send an aide to DPW was that he can see the need for oversight in that department. Engineering is functioning well & Paul Ferriero is great to work with. It is a good system. They are helping many departments with outstanding projects & grants. Mr. Miller said he is proposing that the part time aide be assigned to engineering full time. The person in question is great, he is a West Milford resident, he has a college degree and he is currently assigned part time to engineering and part time to IT. Even if he were assigned full time to engineering, there would still be a decrease from a 3.6 to 3 person staff. Mr. Miller expressed concern that the Township will not be able to retain this wonderful employee if we continue to have his services shared between departments.

Mr. Miller said he recommends that the Council hire a DPW superintendent who has more administrative than technical strengths. In the past it was the town engineer. He recommends that the engineering aide currently assigned in that department stay in DPW as the second in command. Mayor Bieri clarified that Mr. Miller is saying the DPW director should have the engineering aide stay in DPW full time. Mr. Casey said that this is a bridge to be crossed when a DPW superintendent is hired. Mr. Casey said he is looking at using engineering more for the administration of recreation grants. Discussion ensued about the structure of DPW & engineering. Discussion ensued about CPWM certification. Mr. Casey said that the law is written that there must be a CPWM within the municipality but it is not a requirement that the DPW director hold that certification.

