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

Minutes of: Township Council Special Meeting  
Date of Meeting: March 9, 2016  
Time of Meeting: 5:34 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 Regular meeting was advertised in the Herald News in its issue of March 7, 2016; copies were provided to the Suburban Trends, the Record and Star Ledger 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, front 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.

Agenda No. I

**Roll Call**

Present: Councilmembers Ada Erik, Mike Hensley, Tim Wagner, Michele Dale,  
Luciano Signorino, Marilyn Lichtenberg, Mayor Bettina Bieri.  
Absent: None.  
Also Present: Township Administrator/Township Clerk Antoinette Battaglia,

Agenda No. II

**Purpose**

Review of the proposed 2016 Municipal Budget.

Agenda No. III

**Review of 2016 Municipal Budget**

DPW Budget – Mr. Robert Casey addressed the council and provided an overview. He said we are going to start off talking about the structure of the Public Works department, capital portion of DPW facilities and buildings, and then operations. He indicated that we have a goal before us of the 3 topics; overview, capital, and operations.

Ed Steines from the Department of Public Works addressed the council. He said that he would like to touch briefly on how the department is currently structured. Mr. Steines said that the way the office is currently structured; he is the Interim Director of Operations. He said that he is in charge of the manpower, job assignments, equipment, as well as the administrative part of billing and prepping the budget. He noted that since he has taken over the position, he has reorganized the 4 districts to include certain manpower and experience together to be more productive. Mr. Steines explained that he has also put together a structured plan with the sweepers because of the issues in the past. He said instead of the sweepers being confined, they're going to be 3 sweepers in the 3 sections of the township at the same time so they are visible and effective.

Mr. Steines said that he has followed up on a few items. He said that he met with the MUA yesterday and we are now permitted to use the fire hydrant for filling our sweepers and our vactor. He explained that last year the equipment was sent to Ringwood to retrieve water and it was wear and tear on the vehicles. Mr. Steines noted that he has an update on the truck washing. He said that he did make contact with Roxbury Township and we are able to go there for \$25 a vehicle and wash our trucks as many times as we want. Councilman Signorino asked how the grass cutting is being applied with the plan. Mr. Steines said that there are going to be 3 separate operators in 3 different sections of the town as well. Mr. Casey said that if you look in the budget, there is a section for assigned man power. He said that it also raises the issue about how many additional assignments that they can get. He explained that between the vactor, sweepers, mowers, and resurfacing prep crew, there are limitations because the manpower is committed out of those jobs. Mr. Casey said that you also have to understand is that the town discourages people

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from taking vacation in the winter so the vacation load falls during prime construction season in the summer.

Councilman Hensley asked if there is a number less than 4 that would be more adequate for the road resurfacing crew. Mr. Bakker said that a minimum crew is 4 and sometime we have to add the flaggers so it would be 6. Mayor Bieri suggested the flag people to be seasonal, summer help, or part time. She said that we don't need our full time workers doing the flag work. Mr. Casey said that we currently don't have any part time people budgeted. Mayor Bieri said that she has suggested it in the past and we can hire seasonal help that can then assist the full time workers. Then, put the seasonal guys on that are much less per hour as the flag men to keep our guys safe. Councilman Wagner said that in the past, there have not been 3 sweepers or 3 mowers operational once. He asked that going forward when that's not happening, are some of that personnel get moved to road resurfacing prep or something else that is needed. Mr. Bakker said that there is always catchup work and there are times where there are only 2 pieces of equipment functioning at one time. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that the other issue with that is while we are hopeful that we are going to have 3 sweepers out but one sweeper is outdated. She said that it's fully anticipated that we will have 2 sweepers to do the entire town because the one sweeper is questionable. She added that Mr. Steines and Mr. Bakker will assign the operator of that sweeper, should the sweeper go down, to other tasks. Councilwoman Dale said that we have had a very mild winter so we are getting the opportunity to start a lot of these projects compared to previous years. From a staffing standpoint, that should be taken into consideration as well. Mr. Casey said that one of the main issues is that when there is a project that is a priority, they are committed on that project for a certain amount of time and nothing else. He said it is a constant juggle and especially with vacations as well.

Councilman Signorino said that if we have the third street sweeper for a couple of weeks it is still helpful and hopefully that other manpower can be used for other things as well. Mayor Bieri said that she agrees that the winter was mild and the changes are proactive good changes. Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that the other change is the investment that has been made in DPW. She explained that even know this is the first year, we are starting to see the evidence of that investment. Councilman Signorino said that he sees more willingness, more coordination in the department and thinks it is going to be a good year and get a lot done.

Building and Grounds - Mr. Casey said that he would now like to move on to buildings and grounds. He stated that he went through the new rating forms and there was a wide diversity in the answers from the governing body. Mr. Casey distributed a handout to the council and said that the items that have not been discussed yet in detail. He described what the ratings of importance are for the items ranging from highest to not needed. Mr. Casey said that he would like Mr. Steines to talk about capital improvements.

Mr. Steines addressed the council about capital improvements. He said one of the items that we started to talk about is our facilities and they are in really bad shape. He said that one of the items that we have requested is the replacement of the old single pane windows in the township garage. A lot of the windows are broken, don't work, or don't open and we would like to replace them to be more energy efficient. In addition, he is requesting that funding be made available to outfit the space being provided in the new library. Mr. Casey said that it is an issue that we talked about originally and we are trying to get the details. Hopefully within 2 weeks we will have a definitive number. Mr. Casey said that the missing piece now is the connectivity between all three buildings. He explained that as soon there is an exact number, we can take out that \$100,000 and put that exact number right in. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that she thinks that the number is very close because primary numbers indicate that the furniture and the other accessories will be in the region of \$35,000 and the connection for all three buildings will be in the region of \$55,000, therefore the number is right around \$100,000.

Mr. Casey said that the next item is remediation. He said that it currently has a question mark in the budget because it is pending and hopefully by the end of this year the tank will be formally closed out as well as the museum. He explained that the museum is at the point now where the water test has come back clean. He explained that if there is another test in the spring that comes back clean, we can get a no further action letter from the DEP. He noted that the remediation is in the general services budget for \$35,000. Mr. Casey said that there is also money budgeted to seal the wells. He explained that the 2 sites are now resolved and the remaining site is the public works facility. He said that there is a proposal that will come before the council very shortly of a detailed plan to address that issue. Mr. Casey said that a number of years ago, there was a full analysis of that site and it ended up having a long list of areas of concern. Those areas of concern have now been filed with the DEP and have to be delineated and further investigated and remediation plan comes. The DEP concurrence and a remediation plan will be phased in to the next 3 years or so.

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Mr. Casey said that the next issue is the septic replacement at public works. The septic system has failed and a new one was put in. He said that the engineer and the health department have look at the site and the area that they are looking at for the septic field happens to be a contaminated site. Mr. Casey said that we have to do is delineate the site, excavate the contaminated material, get a clean bill of health, and then fill the area back in with appropriate pecculation soil. He said that the estimate for the septic is about \$60,000 including that excavation and removal.

Mr. Steines addressed the council about the Town Hall piping. He said that there is material floating through the piping in Town Hall. All of the matter that is flowing through the piping is getting into the heat exchangers that were recently replaced and it is causing them to fail. Mr. Steines indicated that something really needs to be done about that system. Mr. Casey said that the long range capital budget has \$25,000 for piping and \$25,000 for asbestos abatement for 4 years going forward. Mr. Casey said that you might not need it for the 4 years, but you won't know until you go in and expose the pipes. Mr. Steines said that they are also asking for \$10,000 to upgrade the air conditioning system in the police department. He said that there have been numerous issues with it and it is old, inefficient, and it doesn't provide the proper cooling.

Mr. Casey said that the next item is a small pickup. Mr. Steines said that they are asking for \$22,000 for a small pickup truck to be used by the maintenance worker in Town Hall. Mr. Steines said that a lot of times the maintenance worker has been borrowing something from the DPW or he is using his personal vehicle to go get supplies. Mr. Steines said that they also asked for \$20,000 for the replacement of these windows in the meeting room in Town Hall. He explained that they are very inefficient and old. Mr. Casey noted that those are all of the items that were in the public buildings for the budget.

Police – Mr. Casey noted that we did not finish the discussion about police even know the Chief was present for the previous discussion. He said that in the operations budget, there was discussion about replacing 5 vehicles in the amount of \$166,000. In addition, there is also a request to a large Tahoe, scuba gear, radar trailer, and body armor. He explained that similar to the issues in the fire department, the body armor has a recommended shelf life 5-7 years and we are at the point now where a lot of it needs to be replaced. Mr. Casey said that there is a certain amount of sets that need to be replaced every year for the next several years to get on a replacement schedule. Mayor Bieri asked what the Tahoe is used for. Mr. Casey said that it is used by the shift supervisor and is utilized to hold equipment. Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that our expectation is that the vehicle will have greater longevity than other vehicles because it would have lower millage. Mayor Bieri said that because the vehicle is not on the road all of the time, a new Tahoe should not be needed. Mr. Casey said that we are replacing a vehicle that is 5 or 6 years old. Council President Dale said that her understanding is that they were going to take the one that is currently being used and utilize it for something else. Mr. Casey explained that the vehicle is going to be used as stand by car by the special police for non-primary pursuit activities and then down to DPW. Council President Dale said that one of the initiatives that we were trying to accomplish is to utilize some of those vehicles for other departments so we wouldn't have to keep getting new vehicles. Mayor Bieri suggested using the Tahoe for Animal Control. Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that they are still researching the Animal Control vehicle and it would be purchased out of the Animal Trust account because the funds cannot be used for other purposes. She said that there is still research being done on what type of vehicle to purchase.

Staffing - Mr. Bakker addressed the council about staffing. He noted that there has already been discussion about needing additional personnel because of a retiree. He said that they did hire 2 people last year but there was another retiree and one person who didn't work out so they are still in need of additional person. Mr. Bakker explained that they still need additional personnel to complete all of the missions that the department is tasked with. In addition, there is a request for additional laborers and one mechanic at this time. The council discussed if retirees are automatically replaced in the budget. Council President Dale asked about the street and roads overtime. She asked why the line item is being requested for \$100,000 if there was only \$49,000 used. Mr. Casey said that it was a light winter and if you look at the year before that, \$113,000 was used. He said that we put \$100,000 in the budget to because we don't know how the next winter will be. There was a discussion from the council about the amount to allot for snow removal. Council President Dale said that she would like the previous year's history to make a better judgement. Councilman Signorino said that he would like to also have a 5 year overview because right now the council only has a 2 year history. Mr. Casey said that if you look at the total budget in 2015 for streets and roads, the budget was \$555,000 and now we are down to \$490,000. He noted that the biggest difference between the two years was in stripping and road materials. Councilman Signorino asked what exactly constitutes as road materials. Mr. Bakker said that road materials would be drainage pipe, catch basins, frames, grates. Mayor Bieri asked if they keep an inventory of the stock and if there is any left from last year. Mr. Bakker said that yes there is additional inventory left over. Councilman Signorino asked what the plan is with the additional inventory. Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that if

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you fund this year, what is stockpiled now would be replenished later in the year so we can do the road work in 2017. She explained that if you waited until 2017 and it's not funded, we wouldn't be able to do the road work until the budget is adopted. Council President Dale said that we had that problem last year.

Councilwoman Erik asked about the Greenwood Lake maintenance line item and said that there are 3 different numbers in the budget. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia explained that the maintenance of the machine went over the allotted amount so we used some of the salary funds to fix the machine. Mr. Casey indicated that now the operator is one of our regular employees and was cross trained last year. Councilman Hensley asked if there is a desire from the Bi-State Lake Commission to seek funding from the State of NJ. Councilman Signorino said that they always looking and they are working hard to get that funding. Councilman Signorino said that because it's a Bi-State lake, the money that comes in for the NY side is only for the NY side of the lake. They will not spend it for the NJ side.

Councilwoman Erik said that the other thing that she has a question on the school for employee line item. Mr. Bakker said that the increase in that line item for the CPWM for Mr. Steines. Mr. Casey said that the reason he reduced it is because he has already missed the first semester. He said that the amount will be enough to get him some classes in the spring and fall and it will take a couple of years to achieve. Mayor Bieri asked if it is worth get the CPWM and if it makes sense at this time. She said that the strength that Mr. Steines brings is his experience. Mayor Bieri said that if it takes years for him to get it and it taking away time from the job, it might not be worth it. Township Administrator/Clerk said that this should be a discussion when there is discussion about the structure of the department. She said that she is scheduled to meet with Mr. Steines and Mr. Bakker next week. They have started to touch on those discussions and in the very near future they are hoping to come to the governing body to get a handle on how the department should be structured and what the needs will be.

Mr. Bakker said that there are other issues regarding streets and roads. Councilman Signorino asked what the plan is for the storm drains and catch basins right now. Mr. Steines said that the plan is to find out how we are going to work with the Morris County co-op. He said that we are going to put together a team to go out and tackle those jobs and whatever else is remaining will be going on catch basin repairs. Mr. Bakker said that we also have to get caught up on our mandated traffic signs. He said that we have not gotten a sign authorization in 7 years and we need to get caught up. He explained that many of the signs are missing or they are not reflective. Councilman Signorino asked if they have done an evaluation on how much time it is going to take and if it is it going to just be one season. Mr. Steines said that he has not had a chance to do an evaluation yet. Mr. Casey asked if they have reached an agreement with Erik Miller from the Engineering Department on what roads they are going to do this year. Mr. Bakker indicated that he had provided a list and it is his understanding that 5 miles of roads will be completed this year. Mr. Casey asked how long it took for them to do 5 miles of roads last year. Mr. Bakker explained that it took a majority of the season and the season is considered April to November. Mr. Steines noted that the problem with that is that we did not have a dedicated crew and the workers were bouncing them from one job to the next. He said that this year, he would like to dedicate a crew just to this project so it can be done a lot quicker and more efficiently.

Council President Dale added that this goes back to operations. She said that the council has made an investment in the DPW and there are certain goals that we wanted to be reached. She suggested for the DPW to come back with a plan showing what the investment in additional staffing will change and improve. She said that they are seeing positive changes from the investment that they have made already. Councilman Signorino said that he would like to know the number of workers that are needed to get the job done. Mayor Bieri suggested subbing out the work to get the job done. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that there are lots of areas that are behind and regardless of the man power and any investment, it is going to take time to catch up to where you see results. Mayor Bieri said that the council is trying to find the most cost effective way to get the work done and to get caught up. Councilman Signorino said that he would like to see a cost analysis of both.

Mr. Bakker addressed the council about public properties. He said that there has been an increase in the Johner Building line item to \$5,000. He said that \$3,600 was spent last year and there has only been \$1,000 allotted in the budget in previous years. Councilman Signorino asked what that amount covers. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that it covers maintenance and supplies. Mr. Casey said that the next line item is the Museum and there is a request for \$3,000 to fund the museum building maintenance. He said that in the past they have funded with the trust account and other events/fundraisers. He explained that the museum used all of their funding and needed some help with the routine maintenance activities. Mr. Casey said that he put a new line item in the budget for \$3,000 for ongoing maintenance activities and for the upkeep of the building.

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Mr. Casey advised Mr. Bakker talk about parks and equipment. Councilman Signorino asked about property fees for services. He said that last year it was charged \$33,831. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that in previous years there have been temporary fixes and in 2015, there were professionals called in to make repairs. She said that we are really starting to see the repercussions of the band aid repairs and we are trying to effectuate real repairs that are more cost effective in the long run. Mr. Casey said that the next item is building improvements. He said that \$20,000 was requested and \$15,000 was allotted. He said that it goes along with what Ms. Battaglia said relative to postponed lock replacements, doors, and windows.

Snow Removal – Mr. Casey addressed the council and said that if the weather continues like it is and this warm spell lasts, the budget can most likely be reduced. Mr. Casey said that when the budget was put together in January and there is no way of way of knowing how the weather will be. He said that the budget that is currently less than last year and we will visit it by the end of the month again to give an idea of what was actually spent.

Mr. Casey said that the next item is vehicle maintenance. Mr. Bakker explained that this division takes care of just the garage and at this point they are asking for an additional staff member. Casey said that there are 2 issues here because the fire department put in a budget request that the annual inspections of the vehicles be done by a third party contractor rather than the garage. He said that the reason for that is because of turnaround time. Mr. Casey said that the DPW has also put in for more manpower because of the additional service to the fire department. Mr. Casey said that the vehicle checks are normally not only mechanical but also pump checks, and others. He explained that it is usually done by a certified fire mechanic or a third party contractor because it becomes a safety issue with the equipment. Mr. Casey asked Mr. Steines to talk about that topic as the Fire Chief. Mr. Steines said that he is personally not in favor of using a mechanic unless the person that is going to be hired is certified to work on the fire apparatus. He said that he doesn't see any gain if another normal mechanic is hired and in the past there have been issues with how long repairs have taken. He noted that it is not only the fault of the mechanic but also the problem with sending and receiving parts. Mayor Bieri said that there would be no need for another mechanic if the fire trucks were taken out from there. Councilman Signorino asked if it would change the timing of the repair significantly and would it be a cost increase to go out to the vendor as opposed to doing it in house. Council President Dale said that she thinks it's a liability issue because you have the same mechanic working for the town that is certifying the equipment. Township Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that the proposal is for the appropriations to remain the same but instead of using those funds for the mechanics to buy the parts in house, the trucks will go out. She explained that this was done years ago and there was a process whereby there was a mechanism for approval for those trucks to go. She said that they didn't just bring in the trucks arbitrarily for unnecessary repairs and there was an approval process. Mr. Casey said that there was an increase in the fire department budget of about \$10,000 to fund that annual inspection. He said that right now the budget has the \$10,000 plus the \$57,000 for the mechanic so it is a council decision and the budget will then be adjusted accordingly. Mr. Casey said that that is the only big issues here otherwise the numbers are pretty much the same as last year.

Solid Waste – Mr. Casey addressed the council and said that we have put money into this account should it be necessary to settle a major piece of litigation that is pending. He said that the revenue screen has been the same and there is no change in revenues. In 2014, there was a part time person funded in solid waste and there needs to be two clerical people there to cover the phones. Mr. Casey said that the additional person was funded this year and otherwise everything else is similar to last year.

Mr. Casey said that during the session on the capital, Council President Dale asked for the cost of the maintenance of the trucks that were requested to be replaced. Mr. Casey handed out a handout to the council providing the vehicle maintenance information. Council President Dale thanked Mr. Casey for getting the information and asked how much the replacement totals are for these trucks. Mr. Casey said that it is \$193,000 to replace one truck. Mr. Bakker stated that some of the trucks are beyond repair and they are going to become more expensive than the numbers that we are looking at. In time, we will realize savings with the new vehicles. Mr. Casey said that there is a phasing program requiring a specialty converter for all diesel trucks by next year. He explained that the he issue is that if you keep these trucks, it's about \$25,000 to \$30,000 to retrofit the trucks to meet the requirements. Council President Dale said that she would rather have an efficient use of the money and is not in favor of spending \$30,000 to retrofit the trucks. She said that if the trucks are dying and are not going to last, there is no point in spending the money. Councilman Signorino said that he didn't see anywhere that the trucks are dying and the life expectancy of a truck is just a number. He noted that it doesn't mean that we need to buy a new truck and spend an extra \$200,000. Mr. Bakker said that the issue with the trucks goes down to the frame and the frames are rotting out. Mayor Bieri asked Mr. Bakker if he is talking about textbook life expectancy or if he is talking about the actual life expectancy of the vehicle. Mr. Bakker said that they are currently using

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them and will continue to band aid them together if needed. Mr. Casey said that there is a request to replace 4 vehicles and there is the ability to replace 2. He noted that that if you order it this year, there is a 10 month lag from when you order them to when you actually get them. Council President Dale said that these 2 vehicles would need to be retrofitted this April in the amount of \$60,000. Councilman Signorino asked how long the vehicles would last if they were retrofitted. Mr. Steines said that if you got a couple of years out of it that would be pushing it. Councilman Signorino asked if they are planning on getting the same trucks as before. Township Administrator/Clerk said that we are not planning on getting the same vehicles. She explained that in the past we have gone international and we are veering away from that now and we are insuring that all of the undercoating is on the trucks. Mr. Wagner invited the council to come look at the vehicles in the DPW department to see the condition to make an educated decision.

Councilwoman Erik asked Mr. Steines if they would invest \$25,000 to retrofit each of those 2 trucks. Mr. Steines said that no, he does not think it is not worth investing the money. Mayor Bieri explained that if the trucks last another 2 or 3 years than we can budget accordingly. Mr. Bakker said that we need to get on a replacement cycle of some type. Councilman Hensley said that he is not interested in the retrofit of the old vehicles. He explained that he would like to spend our money wisely and the DPW department has been neglected for many years. He said that we need to push forward, bite the bullet, and give the department what it needs so you can get to work safely and get the job done. Councilwoman Lichtenberg asked that if we order the new trucks and it takes time for them to come, would we still have to retrofit the old vehicles by April. The council agreed on that being a valid concern in the discussion. Mr. Casey said that this discussion concludes the Public Works. Councilman Hensley noted that the extra mechanic will not be needed and would like the road crew to be fully functional. He expressed that he would like to see a timeline and plan because it would be important in determining the staffing need. Councilman Hensley said that he is also inclined for the seasonal staff and he would like to know what they would be able to do whether it's the mower or the flag. The council discussed the pros and cons of hiring seasonal workers. Administrator/Clerk Battaglia said that we can review the stack of resumes that are on file.

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.

Doris Aaronson, 19 Bearfort Road, West Milford said that there was a problem with the township land fill. There was polluted soil around it and the fill was not completely removed. She suggested looking into that further.

There being no comments from the public, Councilwoman Erik moved to close the public portion of the meeting.

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Moved: Erik Seconded: Signorino  
Voted Aye: Unanimous voice vote.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

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Agenda No. V

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Council, the Township Council adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

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Moved: Signorino Seconded: Lichtenberg  
Voted Aye: All in favor.  
Voted Nay: None.  
Motion carried.

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Approved: June 8, 2016

Respectfully submitted:

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Nichole Hanrahan Clerk Typist

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MAYOR BETTINA BIERI, PRESIDING OFFICER

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ANTOINETTE BATTAGLIA, TOWNSHIP CLERK