

A special meeting of the East Amwell Township Committee came to order at 6:00 PM. Present were Mayor Richard Wolfe, Deputy Mayor Tim Mathews, and Committee members Kevin Ostrander, Peter Miller, and Chris Sobieski.

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Municipal Clerk Teresa R. Stahl announced that this is a special meeting, and a copy of notice of this meeting was filed in the Clerk's Office, posted on the bulletin board, and sent to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Times of Trenton, and Star Ledger on January 22, 2019. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the 2019 budget with the CFO.

The pledge of allegiance was recited at this meeting.

CFO Margaret Pasqua was present, and she previously provided an updated copy of the budget earlier in the week.

Mayor Wolfe said that for the first ten minutes Lisa Davis would be speaking about the Environmental Commission request for funding for the Environmental Resource Inventory. The meeting will stop at 7:15 p.m. and allow comments from the public at that time until the end of the meeting.

Mayor Wolfe said that Mr. Ostrander and Mr. Miller are stuck in traffic at this time.

(3:40) Lisa Davis, 32 Stony Brook Road, also a member of the Environmental Commission, previously provided information to the Clerk for distribution prior to the meeting. She had additional handouts this evening. She said that she would review some key points and highlighted the information in the handouts, as attached to this set of minutes. Ms. Davis said that the intent is to have all the objective, comprehensive information on environmental conditions in one place. ANJEC recommends updating the material every ten years and using the ERI to outline benchmarks to utilize in development. The document can be used by developers, for education/students, and for neighboring municipalities (9.30) The current ERI is over 40 years old and needs to be updated to current standards. The request for \$500 is based on what the Planner advised (last year and this year) as the amount necessary to her initial review. There is a member on the Environmental Commission with some planning/engineering background who can assist after the initial review. Additionally, Ms. Davis tried to find some funding sources for the work, but the money was earmarked through Sustainable NJ for Green Teams. (12:55) The Environmental Commission will do the work themselves after the planner does the initial review.

Ms Davis mentioned the cases in her handout, saying that the Sourland Mountain zoning challenges was upheld because of the data they were based upon. (15.01) She mentioned that the Township could have used their ERI to challenge the proposed helistop.

(16:03) The Mayor said that he had read Ms. Davis's previous material and has some familiarity with ERIs. The Committee will review what she has submitted but the meeting would be moving on to discuss the budget.

Ms. Davis concluded that the ERI would be helpful with the re-examination of the Master Plan and with any work done by the Ringoes Village Committee.

Deputy Mayor Mathews asked if conservation easement inspections could be done without the ERI; Ms. Davis said yes.

Mr. Ostrander and Mr. Miller arrived at 6:18 p.m.

Ms. Pasqua provided an updated budget sheet with changes from the last meeting and included the grant from Hunterdon County for Clawson House – the grant addition doesn't change the tax rate but just adds the grant to the document.

Ms. Pasqua mentioned a question about the audit, and she contacted the auditor. He does not anticipate any changes in the audit this year.

The Tax Assessor's budget will show a reduction in the legal line item from \$40,000 to \$14,000. The CFO mentioned revisiting the Planning Board and Emergency Management budgets, which were discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Pasqua also wanted to know about the dollar amount for capital improvement fund. Based on a figure for the NJ DOT grant, possible chip sealing and routine maintenance, she came up with a figure for the budget. She asked about the Planning Board budget.

(19:12) Mayor Wolfe commented on too much work being done by professionals who charge excessive fees and on having significant amount of in-house talent on the Board. The Planning Board will take first cut on applications, i.e., an application sub-committee review and a land use ordinance review committee will allow the Planning Board to take more control. The expectation is that the Planning Board budget will go down with more in-house work. The Planning Board budget will remain the same as the CFO has in the budget with the hope that it will be reduced next year.

(22:05) Ms. Pasqua asked about the emergency management budget. Deputy Mayor Mathews said it could be reduced to \$500 for a seminar or conference, and if a disaster occurs, there could be emergency appropriations.

(22:39) Ms. Pasqua said that she used a figure of \$275,000 for the capital improvement fund in the budget and it was offset by surplus. There is a NJ DOT grant in the works, and The Township will still need to put money towards it so as not to go into debt – Ms. Pasqua allocated \$75,000 towards the grant; \$50,000 for routine work, \$125,000 for chip seal and \$25,000 for anything else or to start to rebuild the capital account.

(24:07) The Mayor spoke about the list of roads for chip sealing that need to be completed or they will degrade. Road maintenance was pushed off for years, and he agreed that the \$275,000 in the capital improvement fund was appropriate. He suggested meeting with the DPW Superintendent to review the list of roads again and proceed with the road repairs. Deputy Mayor Mathews suggested inviting the Engineer with the DPW Superintendent to discuss bidding for bulk repair and make a decision to go forth.

(26:10) Ms. Pasqua said as the budget stands now, there is a flat tax rate, basing her figures on the assumption of the same state aid as has been given in the past. She mentioned issues with submitting the budget because of the state's electronic submission system. She mentioned that the state allows municipal debt up to 3.5% of the municipalities equalized valuation, and East Amwell is at one-half percent. The state hasn't posted forms for the annual financial statement to be submitted, and budgets cannot be completed until the statement is submitted; additionally, the on-line budget tools are not yet available. Ms. Pasqua hoped that the budget could be introduced in April; the Deputy Mayor suggested assuming that what was discussed tonight be considered the budget for spending purposes. Ms. Pasqua said that this budget might go up or down \$5,000 in the interim and felt that they were in good shape.

(29:00) On a question from the Mayor, Ms. Pasqua said that the state approved the Clawson House Trust Fund and it was set up. On a question from the Deputy Mayor, the fund is only for items related to Clawson House. The Mayor mentioned "a naming fundraiser" for the rooms at the house to raise about \$60,000. He added that the roof on the house needs to be repaired; additional lighting and 21 parking spaces are being added for more visitors, and either grants or use of the Open Space Trust Fund might be an option to pay for items. The tennis court will be replaced with a multi-purpose court that may be funded through a multi-year grant, and the DPW Superintendent is getting estimates – some of the work will be done by the DPW and volunteers. The Mayor is looking grants associated with parks, and there may be funds for 501(c)3 groups; while his firm would do the initial filing of the application for Clawson Park, there are on-going annual costs for these types of non-profits. The goal is to make the park and the house self-funding and have access to grants, and have the Recreation and Parks Committee have fundraisers at the park to provide funds.

(35:43) Mayor Wolfe said that there were no security cameras on the building and this is a liability issue. Ten cameras with night vision (for outside and inside the building) cost around \$13,000; DPW Superintendent Silverthorn is looking for another estimate too.

(36:57) Mayor Wolfe spoke about a state program the DPW Superintendent told him about, where an energy assessment of the building could be done and pay for 70% of costs for upgrades. The assessment was done, and the Township qualified for all lights to go to LED, have an energy-efficient gas fired storage water heater installed, programmable thermostats, and pipe wrap insulation, etc. for \$15,393.93 and the Township's share would be \$4,607.00, with a payback period of 1.44 years. All were in agreement to move forth. Ms. Pasqua said that there was an old ordinance that will cover the majority of the energy improvements and the cameras, and she would be able to find the balance in the budget. The Mayor would also like to pursue other energy efficient items for the municipal building, mentioning solar on his house, and perhaps looking into solar would be an option. Mr. Sobieski mentioned an agreement at Hunterdon Central High School to purchase solar power, and he was willing to reach out to the third party involved with the agreement for information.

(41:53) Deputy Mayor Mathews asked about the perimeter of land around Clawson House that would be covered by revenue. The Mayor offered to physically show the Deputy Mayor the area considered the East Amwell Museum. The Deputy Mayor commented that JCP&L offered a grant for the soccer field lighting, which was never pursued and suggested reaching out to them for a grant for the house. Mayor Wolfe said that there were lights there now that are not bright enough and lights are needed on the parking lot.

Motion by Mr. Ostrander, seconded by Mr. Sobieski, and carried unanimously to open to the public.

(43:53) Rich Spiegel, 1 Mountain Road, spoke about a statement at the last meeting regarding figures going down by \$1,000 from the state for recycling; he said that was because tonnage was down.

Mr. Spiegel mentioned committees requesting more money, asking about the Environmental Commissions budget for last year; the Mayor said it was \$1800 for Salary and Wage and \$700 for OE. Mr. Spiegel said that Raritan and East Amwell Township are not good comparisons. Mr. Spiegel spoke about the Master Plans never being sent back from the state for deficiencies, saying that he would call them "Double A." He mentioned it was 13-15 years since he left office, when there was 43% preserved land and \$450,000-460,000 off the tax books for preserved land. He spoke with the CFO about a check to be received from the DEP every October as an in lieu payment which is a little known program. According to Mr. Spiegel, the program began in 1974 and can be googled by searching DEP In Lieu of Tax Program, a sliding scale program. As land is preserved, the percentage goes up, and when he was in office, it was \$23,000-25,000 a year for having half a million off the tax books. Mr. Spiegel spoke about the end of year transfers for \$250 from health insurance fund and \$250 from another source. He suggested that they be a little more careful on how they spend their pennies.

(51:01) Mayor Wolfe said that the Committee was looking at all of the budgets to reduce costs; Mr. Spiegel and the Mayor exchanged comments about being taxpayers, with Mr. Spiegel saying he could talk about and OPRA anything he wished.

(51:40) Mr. Spiegel said that when he was in office, Clawson Park was his project because of his background in labor. The approved drawings were sealed and certified by the state, and they could not be changed until the Committee looks at the drawings. The drawings have a ball field, another building, and more parking on them. He added that the lights in the parking lot and Clawson House could be addressed by finding the main source of power. If you are within 180 feet of the power source, the Township sells the power company the easement to put a pole up, comparing this to the installation of a pole and light installed on the municipal property when he was in office. Mayor Wolfe said that they know where the power source at Clawson is located. Mr. Spiegel reiterated the information in case a pole is needed in the future, commenting on his experience with 40 years in the industry and the way that the power/easement works.

(54:29) Mr. Spiegel commented on a memo regarding chip-sealing roads, saying it was not a suitable means to equate a job cost, i.e., saying chip and seal would cost \$40,128 – is that material or wages. He referred to \$48,000 for Snyderstown Road and asked if this was material or material and labor, commenting on rounding out salary for workers and the DPW Superintendent is "non-productive" as a salaried employee and not computed in the numbers. Mr. Spiegel wanted to know the figures for the man-hours. The Mayor said that the figure of

\$40,128 is the cost for chip seal work once the roads are prepped, using 280 man-hours for East Amwell staff. The \$40,128 is the contractor cost to chip seal the road. Mr. Spiegel said that he was familiar with the roads and asked how long of the road would be done, adding that more figures were needed, i.e., length of road, yardage/mileage of work to be done, etc. He asked why the prep work wasn't done by the contractor at a more economical price (i.e., \$800-1,000 a day). Mr. Spiegel spoke about work he has done as a contractor in many places at high costs and his experience in the industry.

(1:02:40) Patsy Wang-Iverson told Mr. Spiegel that the Township will be receiving 800 free trees and hoped that he would be picking up his 5 free trees. She mentioned his comments tonight and based on how he believes the Township Committee can save money, they should be able to give the Environmental Commission ten times what they requested. She stated that the Commission was not asking for a great deal of money, only for the support of the Township to help update the foundation for continuing to protect and preserve the Township that they all love. Ms. Wang-Iverson hoped that the Township would take into consideration, when setting up the lighting, that it was not detrimental to wildlife flying overhead at night and hoped for a gravel parking lot or at least porous paving to keep the impervious coverage to a minimum. Ms. Wang-Iverson asked about geo-thermal for the municipal building; Mayor Wolfe said that it was expensive and recovery time is longer. They will talk to people, with both the Mayor and Mr. Ostrander saying that they were looking at all options to reduce costs, and Mr. Ostrander saying it would be a step wise strategy. On a question, the Mayor said that no decision was made about the Environmental Commission's request for funding the ERI.

(1:06.40) Andrea Bonette, 17 Ridge Road, would speak about time priorities at another point. She wished to speak about money priorities and asked the CFO how much money was being budgeted for Ridge Road. Ms. Pasqua mentioned two capital ordinances, one for \$270,000 and \$290,000 and \$425,000 is grant money, to be paid back. The cost is \$560,000 and \$425,000 is state aid. Ms. Bonette reported that she spoke to about 5 residents on Ridge Road last fall, and none believe the work is needed. She commented on spending over a half million dollars with \$100,000 being local money but can't find \$500 for the Environmental Commission's request – she asked that the Township Committee think about their priorities.

(1:08.36) Barbara Sageser, 15 Welisewitz Road and Chair of Historic Preservation Committee, just wanted to give some information. The Committee is requesting a \$200 increase in their budget. The Quick Collection is being moved from the municipal building to the East Amwell Museum, and additional archival materials are needed for storage and for use of the materials and maps. The Committee is working with their archival expert, Alexis Antracoli. They are watching expenses, going for grants as they can; eliminating a membership to keep the budget lower; and trying to be responsible with township funds. The museum is active and more residents are involved with dealing with the Quick Collection. Mayor Wolfe recognized the value of the Historic Preservation Committee and the dynamics between this Committee, the Historical Society, and the Museum. The Mayor believed that at some point the East Amwell Museum, which used to be called Clawson House, will be self-funding. Ms. Sageser spoke about shifting as much as possible to the Historical Society for fund-raising, and she was grateful to the governing body for all their support. Mayor Wolfe thanked Ms. Sageser for taking the lead on some of the grant applications over the years, adding that the Committee and Society "are doing a great job." Ms. Sageser spoke about an amazing history and the museum and park can be a rallying place for the town. She spoke about the many gifted people in the Township. The Mayor highlighted some of the art shows taking place at Clawson House.

(1:15.56) Toni Robbi, 144 Lambertville-Hopewell Road, spoke about the request for the ERI, adding that the Township redoes the Master Plan every 10 years, and while environmentally the Township doesn't change that rapidly, the ERI is over 40 years old and was the first big project of the Environmental Commission back at that time. The report is a bedrock for zoning and the Environmental Commission to use for site visits for potential development impact on the environment. It would be useful to have something more up to date than 40 years old, adding that they haven't asked for any money to update it in that time. He added that lots of information is in the files but not in one place, adding that there were updates for the mountain zone but not in the area across Route 202 in the western area of the township since 1972-74.

(1:19.03) Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, applauded what has occurred last year in terms of transparency, mentioning the audio and video taping of minutes and the availability on the

website. She spoke about a large cost driver in the budget as the 2 – 3 percent increase for salary for employees each year as the Committee tries to keep the budget flat. She spoke about shifting to a less labor intensive world (i.e., dog records collected in a tin can) to having them renewed on line along with paying taxes on line to use technology to reduce the burden on the staff and allow them time to “dig through the basement and in the back” for records. She mentioned an application for Linvale Farm with \$1,000,000 spent by an applicant on environmental studies and maps. Additionally, county offices have maps that can be used as resources. Ms. Gavigan spoke about the previous ERI, which she “cobbled together” and scanned. She spoke about working also with West Amwell to access their report. She added that there are ways to work kinder and smarter, including putting digital minutes on line to reduce administrative work and using newer software to do minutes; she thought that Raritan Township might have access to newer technology. She concluded that the East Amwell Historical Society would benefit from having all of the Township Minute books scanned as a digital resource for residents and for research.

Motion by Deputy Mayor Mathews, seconded by Mr. Sobieski, and carried unanimously to close to the public.

Motion by Mr. Ostrander, seconded by Mr. Sobieski, and carried unanimously to close the special meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk